



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

2025 Annual Charter Schools Report
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Every public school student in North Carolina will be empowered to accept academic challenges, prepared to pursue their chosen path after graduating high school, and encouraged to become lifelong learners with the capacity to engage in a globally-collaborative society.

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The mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education and the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction is to use their constitutional authority to guard and maintain the right to a public education for every student in North Carolina and to support public school units in providing every student an excellent education that prepares them for success in their next phase of life.

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2025 Annual Charter Schools Report Executive Summary

Three decades after the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Charter Schools Act of 1996, the state's charter schools have evolved from a promising experiment in educational innovation into an essential pillar of the public education system. Characterized by consistent enrollment growth, broad geographical reach, and an expanding array of instructional models, the charter sector today is a mature and dynamic landscape that continues to demonstrate the transformative power of school choice and personalized learning.

The Annual Charter Schools Report is prepared by the Office of Charter Schools and presented to the Charter Schools Review Board and the State Board of Education prior to its submission to the General Assembly. This 2025 edition summarizes the status of North Carolina charter schools during the 2024–2025 school year and, where available, presents data for the current 2025–2026 academic year. The report details charter school authorizing and monitoring, provides comprehensive data on student demographics, and evaluates academic performance and funding. Finally, it highlights best practices and recognitions from across the sector while addressing barriers to access and the challenges facing continued growth.

Initially capped at 100 schools, the sector saw a significant turning point in 2011 when the General Assembly removed the growth limit. This policy change triggered a period of rapid expansion; since then, the sector has grown by 113%, reaching a peak of 213 schools at the start of the 2025 academic year. The overall trajectory reflects a sustained demand for education tailored to individual student needs and specialized missions. However, this growth has not been without friction. The sector continues to navigate persistent hurdles, including funding and staffing strains, enrollment competition, and the high cost of facility acquisition. Addressing these complexities requires a sustained, collaborative effort between policymakers, school leaders, and community stakeholders.

In the 2025–2026 school year, charter school Average Daily Membership (ADM) reached 161,057—representing 10.5% of North Carolina's total public school enrollment. This milestone underscores the sector's significant role in the state's educational landscape. Furthermore, 138 charter schools reported waitlists at the start of the 2025–2026 school year, totaling 59,081 students. (Note: These figures may include duplicate entries, as students may apply to multiple charter schools simultaneously.)

The Office of Charter Schools and the Charter Schools Review Board remain committed to partnering with the State Board of Education and the General Assembly to ensure every North Carolina family has access to a high-quality school that fits their child's needs. Building an educational landscape that genuinely values choice requires investing in the conditions that allow diverse models to flourish. By keeping innovation, equity, and excellence at the center of this work, North Carolina's charter schools continue to prove they are up to the challenge, to the lasting benefit of the state's students.

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HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Historical Development

North Carolina established its charter school framework in 1996 with the passage of N.C. General Statute § 115C-238.29 (recodified as Article 14A of Chapter 115C), making it one of the earlier states to adopt charter school legislation. [Article 14A](#) outlines how the system of charter schools must operate. The initial legislation was relatively restrictive, capping the number of charter schools at 100 statewide. However, the 100-school cap was eliminated in 2011, leading to substantial growth in charter school numbers.

The 1996 Charter Schools Act passed by the NC General Assembly authorized 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.”

Legal Framework

Charter schools in North Carolina operate under both state and federal legal requirements. The primary governing statute is Article 14A of Chapter 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes. This comprehensive legislation addresses:

Authorization and Application Process

- Purpose of charter schools; establishment of NC Charter Schools Review Board and NC Office of Charter Schools
- Eligible applicants; contents of applications; submission of applications for approval
- Opportunity to correct applications; opportunity to address Review Board
- Fast-track replication of high-quality charter schools
- Final approval of applications for charter schools
- Appeals to the State Board of Education

- Notice of the charter school process; review of charter schools

Charter Management and Modification

- Review and renewal of charters
- Material revisions of charters
- Nonmaterial revisions of charters
- Causes for nonrenewal or termination; disputes
- Dissolution of a charter school
- Identification of low-performing and continually low-performing charter schools

Operations and Governance

- Charter school operation
- Charter school exemptions
- General operating requirements
- Civil liability and insurance requirements
- Open meetings and public records
- Display of the United States and North Carolina flags and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance
- Driving eligibility certificates
- Remote charter academies

Student Access, Rights, and Academic Requirements

- Admission requirements
- Charter school nonsectarian
- Nondiscrimination in charter schools
- Student discipline
- Course of study requirements
- Accountability; reporting requirements to State Board of Education
- North Carolina School Report Cards
- Operation of NC Pre-K programs

Facilities, Finance, and Transportation

- State and local funds for a charter school
- Charter school facilities
- Reservation of water and sewer capacity for proposed charter school facilities
- Public approval for private activity bonds
- Charter school transportation
- Charter school transportation grant program
- Employment requirements

G.S. §115C-218.110 requires an annual review of charter schools due annually no later than June 15 to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee¹. This report serves as the annual review submission.

Charter schools must operate within the bounds of the North Carolina Constitution, particularly Article IX concerning education. The state constitution requires the General Assembly to provide "a general and uniform system of free public schools." Charter schools are considered part of this public school system.

Further, charter schools must comply with federal civil rights statutes including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, or national origin), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (prohibiting sex discrimination), the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. They must also follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ensuring appropriate services for students with disabilities. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires charter schools to participate in state accountability systems, including standardized testing and performance reporting.

The State Board of Education and Charter Schools Review Board have regulatory authority over charter schools and adopt rules implementing the statutory framework. These regulations address operational details, reporting requirements, and compliance standards. Charter school boards are also subject to North Carolina's Open Meetings Law and Public Records Act, reflecting their status as public entities.

Each charter school operates under a legally binding charter agreement with the State of North Carolina. The charter serves as both the authorization to operate and a performance contract subject to renewal, modification, or revocation.

¹ An extension was granted to August 15, 2026.

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. These statutes were once again revised after the passage of [Session Law 2025-80](#).

General Statute outlines the duties and responsibilities of the CSRB²:

- (1) To propose, recommend, and approve rules and policies regarding all aspects of charter school operation, including time lines, processes, standards, and criteria for acceptance and approval of applications, monitoring of charter schools, and grounds for revocation of charters.*
- (2) To review and approve or deny charter applications, renewals, and revocations.*
- (3) To make recommendations to the State Board on actions before the State Board on appeal under G.S. 115C-218.9.*
- (4) To undertake any other duties and responsibilities as assigned by the State Board.*
- (5) To conduct hearings and make findings and recommendations pursuant to subdivision (a1)(5) of this section.*
- (6) To contract for and employ legal counsel, including private counsel, to advise, represent, and provide litigation services to the Review Board, without the need to obtain permission or approval pursuant to G.S. 114-2.3 or G.S. 147-17.*

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 duties³:

- (1) Rulemaking. – To adopt all rules for the operation and approval of charter schools. Any rule or policy adopted by the State Board regarding charter schools shall first be approved 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.

² https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115C/GS_115C-218.pdf

³ https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115C/GS_115C-218.pdf

(5) Review of financial assistance. – The State Board shall assign the Review Board to conduct any hearings pursuant to 20 U.S.C. § 1231b-2, including making findings and recommendations regarding those hearings.

The CSRB consists 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 finally, 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	Eric	Guckian	June 5, 2025	June 30, 2027
State Board of Education	Eric	Sanchez	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
Superintendent (Non-Voting)	Jeremy	Wall	March 10, 2025	June 30, 2027
Lt. Governor	Stephen	Gay	January 1, 2025	December 31, 2028
House	Bruce	Friend	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
House	Hilda	Parlér	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2027
House	Lindalyn	Kakadelis	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2027
House	Shelly	Shope	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
Senate	Gerald	McNair	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2027
Senate	John	Eldridge	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
Senate	Rita	Haire	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
Senate	Todd	Godbey	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2027

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 an 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 Review Board.
- V. Assist approved charter schools and charter schools seeking approval from the Review 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.

N.C. General Statute §115C-218(c) establishes the Office of Charter Schools (OCS) and outlines its core duties as outlined above. While these statutory responsibilities are substantial, they represent only a portion of the work the Office performs on a daily basis. In practice, the OCS functions as the central hub of communication and support for every charter school in North Carolina with a staff of just nine people.

The Office routinely goes well beyond its enumerated statutory duties in order to ensure that charter schools, their staff, students, and families have meaningful access to support and oversight. This includes:

- **Site Visits.** OCS staff conduct in-person visits to charter school campuses across the state. These visits require significant preparation, travel, and follow-up, but they are essential to informed oversight by providing context and relationships that no report or data submission can replicate.
- **Stakeholder Assistance.** The Office serves as a direct point of contact for parents, students, and school employees who have questions, concerns, or complaints about charter schools. Responding to and resolving these inquiries is time-intensive and falls outside any specific statutory mandate, yet it represents a critical service to the public.
- **Statewide Communication Conduit.** OCS functions as the primary communication link between the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and all charter schools in the state. Diverse types of state correspondence including policy updates, reporting deadlines, regulatory guidance, and program announcements flow through this office. Managing this volume of communication for schools is an ongoing and demanding responsibility.
- **Legislative Guidance and Implementation.** When the General Assembly passes new laws affecting charter schools, the responsibility to communicate, interpret, and assist often falls to this Office. This is not a minor administrative task; it requires staff to develop guidance documents, answer school-level questions, and in some cases build entirely new workflows

from scratch. The 2023 authorization allowing charter schools to operate remote schools required the Office to develop completely new application, review, and oversight processes where none previously existed.

- **School Closure Processes.** When a charter school closes — whether voluntarily or involuntarily — OCS leads the closure process. This involves coordinating with school leadership, notifying relevant stakeholders and impacted groups, managing timelines, and ensuring obligations to students and staff are met. These processes are complex, high-stakes, and demand sustained staff attention over an extended period.

- **Relocation Requests.** The Office assists charter schools seeking to relocate and manages the review and approval process for those requests. Relocations often involve community impact considerations, presentations to the Charter Schools Review Board, facility assessments, and coordination across multiple divisions and stakeholders.

- **Bond Hearings.** The Director and Assistant Director serve as the designated bond hearing officers for bond hearings required for bond financing. This work requires travel across the state throughout the year.

- **Public Records Requests.** The Office assists the Department in processing public records requests related to charter schools on a regular basis. When taking into account over 300 charter schools have existed within the state at different points in time, and records can and are often requested for not only operating but closed schools, this represents a time and labor intensive workflow.

- **Student and Employee Records.** OCS handles records requests for current and former charter school students and employees, including situations involving school closures where no other custodian of records exists. Ensuring that individuals can access their own records — particularly in cases where a school has closed — is a significant and sensitive responsibility.

- **Cross-Division Collaboration and Committee Service.** OCS staff regularly assist other divisions within the Department of Public Instruction by reviewing charter school materials and serving on department-wide committees and initiatives. Examples include reviewing Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) plans submitted by charter schools, providing assistance with grant proposals such as Golden Leaf funding, serving on the Driver Education Advisory Committee, and participating in scholarship and awards committees. These contributions support the broader work of the Department but draw directly on OCS staff time and expertise.

With nine staff members currently overseeing 211 schools⁴ the OCS operates at a ratio of approximately one staff member for every 23 schools — a workload that compares unfavorably to best-practice benchmarks for authorizing offices of similar portfolio size⁵. When the full scope of the Office's actual work is considered, not just what statute requires but what responsible and responsive oversight demands, the staffing picture becomes even more striking. Further, the

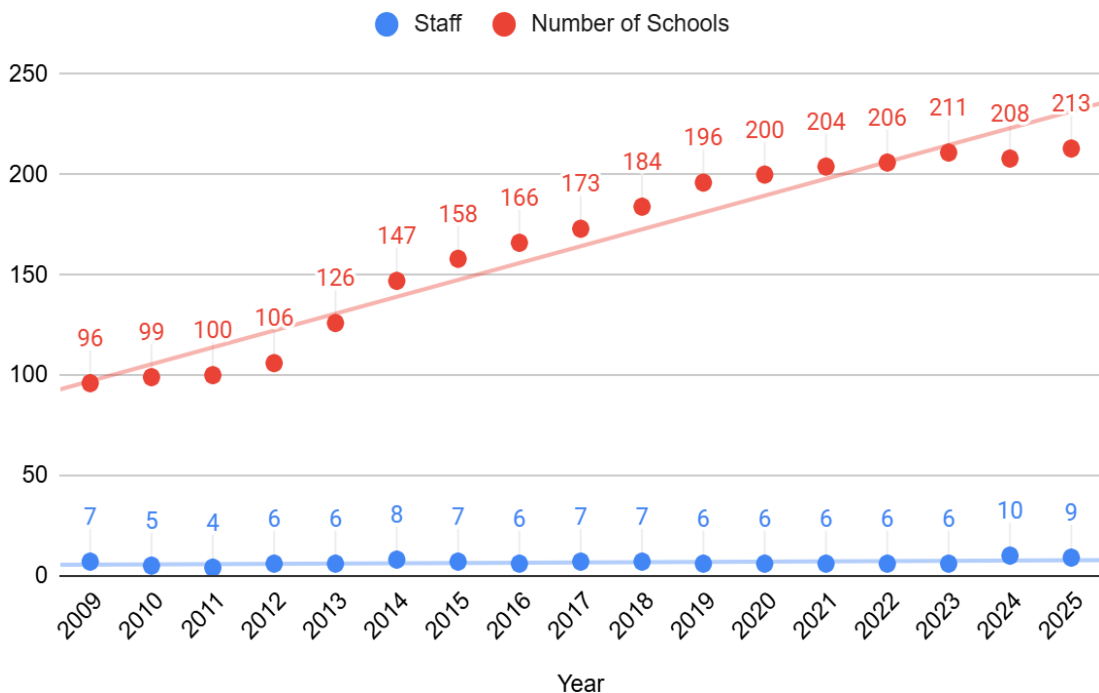
⁴ As of May 1, 2026. At the start of the 2025-2026 school year, there were 213 charter schools in operation.

⁵ The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) conducts an annual survey to inform their Annual State of Authorizing reports. Per its mission, NACSA advances and strengthens the ideas and practices of authorizing so students and communities - especially those who are historically under resourced - thrive. According to the [2024 State of Authorizing survey](#), the majority (59%) of surveyed respondents (overseeing approximately 60% of charter schools nationally), serve fewer than five charter schools per staff member. Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents oversee ten or fewer schools per full-time staff member.

ratio above also does not include support provided to boards applying for charter schools, interested applicants, planning year schools, external stakeholders, nor does it take into account the rising number of remote charter academies falling under the Office's workload.

The Office of Charter Schools is committed to fulfilling its mission with the resources available. But understanding the true breadth of that mission is essential to any honest conversation about the Office's capacity, effectiveness, and needs.

Figure 1: Office of Charter Schools Staffing v. Charters Schools in Operation, By Year



Organizing Work to Ensure Efficiency and Effectiveness

The Office of Charter Schools is currently staffed by seven consultants, an Assistant Director, 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. Responsibilities include:

1. Applications - Facilitates the new school application process, provides technical assistance and training to applicants, hires and trains external evaluators, and works with the CSRB to implement the charter application interview process.
2. 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 the CSRB with updates several times a year to ensure newly approved schools are making progress towards a successful opening.
3. Amendments - Facilitates the process for material changes to a school's charter application including review of required documents and adherence to the approval process.
4. Rules/Reports - Produces reports required by legislation and/or CSRB/SBE requests. Works with the Department of Public Instruction Rules Coordinator and Rules Commission to facilitate the process as it pertains to charter-related rules.
5. SBE/CSRB - Plans, implements, and manages the CSRB meetings. Prepares and presents SBE materials.

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. Responsibilities include:

1. Performance Framework - Facilitates the yearly collection and audit of documents from schools to ensure compliance with statute, policy, and the Charter Agreement.
2. Renewals - Facilitates the two-year charter renewal process including renewal data collection, renewal site visits, renewal interviews, and training. Prepares renewal documentation and presentations for the CSRB and SBE.
3. Risk Assessment - Conducts site visits and monitors at-risk schools. Manages agency-wide compliance team meetings; tracks and analyzes Department of Public Instruction charter school compliance data. Manages closure process and revocation appeals.
4. School Improvement – Analyzes academic data; monitors and supports low-performing charter schools. Conducts site visits and assists with review of School Improvement Plans.

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. Responsibilities include:

1. Stakeholder Support - Manages grievances and inquiries from stakeholders. Produces OCS Guidance Documents and tools/resources.
2. Partnerships/School Support – Coordinates training and events for Charter School leaders; collaborates with other Department of Public Instruction Divisions. Facilitates projects such as Teacher and Principal of Year, scholarship committees, and mentorship groups.
3. 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. Assists with public record requests.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Throughout the 2025 Legislative Session, the General Assembly passed several bills impacting the North Carolina charter school community, including, but not limited to the following:

[SESSION LAW 2025-46 | HOUSE BILL 378](#) | Various Ed Law/Tax Acct/NIL Changes

- Section 1.1(f) - G.S. § 115C-218.33 requires charter schools to adopt a policy evaluating technology purchases including:
 - Long term cost of ownership
 - Flexibility for innovation during its life, and
 - Anticipated resale or salvage value at the end of the targeted life span of the acquired technology, computer hardware, and software.
- Charters must also report information about their technology devices each year by August 15, including:
 - How often devices break and need repair
 - Total number of devices in use
 - How many devices needed repairs
 - How much money was spent on repairs and replacements

[SESSION LAW 2025-38 | HOUSE BILL 959](#) | Various Ed Changes

- G.S. § 115C-81.26. Social media and mental health. The standard course of study shall include instruction on social media and its effects on health, including social, emotional, and physical effects. Instruction shall be provided once during elementary school, once during middle school, and twice during high school.
- G.S. § 115C-76.100. Regulation of wireless communication devices. Charters must create policies that prohibit students from using, displaying, or having cell phones turned on during class time, with exceptions allowed for:
 - Teacher-approved educational use
 - Emergencies
 - As required by a student's IEP or 504 plan
 - And documented medical conditions
- Requires schools to establish consequences for policy violations which may include:
 - Confiscating phones
 - Disciplinary action when students violate the policy

[SESSION LAW 2025-80 | SENATE BILL 254](#) | Charter School Changes

- Amends: G.S. 115C-218.8; G.S. 115C-218.105
- *Section 1* Clarifies State Board of Education (SBE) and Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB) authority:

The CSRB now approves both rules and policies adopted by the SBE and conducts hearings and makes findings/recommendations regarding financial matters that impact charter schools. CSRB may also contract for and employ legal counsel and the Office of Charter Schools Director serves at the pleasure of CSRB rather than the Superintendent.

- *Section 2* Charter School Relocations:

Charter schools can now move to a new location within 10 miles of their approved location without it being considered a major change to their charter—as long as they stay within the same school district. This makes it easier for charter schools to find better facilities without going through extensive approval processes.

- *Section 3* Written Charter:

Rewritten to include the terms of the written charter under which a charter school operates, shall be approved by the CSRB.

- *Section 4* High School Transcripts

Amended by adding a new subsection which exempts charter high schools from the requirement to list class rank on a student's official transcript of record.

- *Section 5* Teacher Evaluation

Amended by adding a new subsection which allows charter schools to develop and use any evaluation for conducting evaluations of teachers provided it includes standards and criteria similar to those used in the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and Evaluation Process.

- *Section 6* School Improvement Plans

Amended by adding a new subsection which exempts charter schools from the requirements of G.S. 115C-105.27. Charter schools identified as low-performing or continually low-performing shall prepare and report on plans to improve the performance of the school to the CSRB.

- *Section 7* Funding Transfer Procedures

The Charter Schools Review Board (not the Superintendent of Public Instruction) is now responsible for standardizing how money is transferred from local school districts to charter schools. The Board must consult with both regular school districts and charter schools to develop these procedures. Local school districts must transfer funds to charter schools electronically whenever possible, making the process faster and more efficient.

- *Section 8* Initial Financial Data Reporting Expenses

Adds 115C-218.106 which requires the Department of Public Instruction to provide a charter school access to any required financial data reporting platforms at no cost to the charter school during the charter school's first year of operation.

- *Section 9 Remote Charter Academy Amendment*

Adds a new subsection which allows an existing charter school who is operating, or plans to operate, a remote academy with 250 or more students in the remote academy to request a separate charter for the remote academy.

- *Section 10 Remote Charter Academy Evaluation*

Adds a subsection for schools operating under a charter that includes in-person instruction and a remote charter academy, the remote charter academy shall receive a separate school performance grade and be treated as a separate school for the purposes of assessing the performance of the remote charter academy.

[SESSION LAW 2025-2 | HOUSE BILL 47](#) | School Extension Learning Recovery Program

- *Section 2G.1 Hurricane Helene Relief:*

This program helps students in 13 western North Carolina counties affected by Hurricane Helene catch up on learning they may have missed.

- The program is for students in grades 4-8 in the following counties: Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, and Yancey.
- Charter schools in these counties can choose to participate.
- Participating LEAs and charter schools must develop and submit a plan to the Department of Public Instruction.

CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Regulatory Accountability

As schools of choice, charter schools are accountable to parents and guardians, who may withdraw their student(s) should the school not meet expectations. Additionally, the North Carolina General Assembly, the Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB) and State Board of Education (SBE) have approved several concrete measures through which charter schools are held accountable to stakeholders.

- Many charter school accountability requirements and processes are outlined in [NC Administrative Code](#).
- [General Statute](#) mandates charter schools meet academic, governance, and operational accountability requirements including, but not limited to, open meetings and public records law, employment requirements, academic standards, and health and safety requirements.
- [State Board of Education policies](#) expand upon charter school accountability measures in 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.

Academic Monitoring

Charter schools are subject to a number of academic accountability standards, including:

- Performance Standards (§ 115C-218.85) Charter schools must design their programs to at least meet the student performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education and the student performance standards contained in the charter.
- Student Assessments (§ 115C-218.85) Charter schools shall conduct the student assessments required by the State Board of Education.
- Low-Performing Designation (§ 115C-218.94) The State Board identifies low-performing charter schools annually as those that earn an overall school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth".
- Continually Low-Performing Status (§ 115C-218.94) A continually low-performing charter school is one that has been designated by the State Board as low-performing for at least two of three consecutive years.
- Renewal Requirements (§ 115C-218.6) The Review Board may deny a charter renewal if 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.

- Performance-Based Accountability (§ 115C-218) One purpose of charter schools is to hold them accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results and provide them with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.
- School Report Card Requirements (§ 115C-218.65) A charter school shall ensure that the report card issued for it by the State Board of Education is provided to the public. A charter school shall ensure that the overall school performance score and grade earned by the charter school for the current and previous four school years is prominently displayed on the school Web site. If a charter school earned an overall school performance grade of D or F, the charter school shall provide notice of the grade in writing to the parent or guardian of all students enrolled in that school. So charter schools must not only make their performance data publicly available through multiple channels (press distribution, website posting), but they also have a specific obligation to directly notify parents in writing when the school receives a D or F grade. This ensures transparency and accountability, particularly when academic performance falls below acceptable standards.

These requirements ensure charter schools maintain academic standards comparable to traditional public schools in their districts. The Office of Charter Schools supports and monitors charter schools to assist in ensuring academic accountability. This work includes the renewal process and school improvement processes.

All charter schools undergo an extensive two-year renewal process that includes a comprehensive review of each school. This review encompasses a thorough analysis of academic data, the submission of goals in a self-study, and a data report presented to the Charter Schools Review Board regarding the school's governance, operations, and academic performance.

Yearly state accountability reports identify schools as low-performing or continually low-performing. SL 2025-80 revised legislation related to low-performing charter schools. While the definition for low-performing schools remains the same, other requirements were revised. Specifically, G.S. §115C-218.94 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

(c) The Review Board shall require charter schools that are identified as low-performing or continually low-performing to prepare and report on plans to improve the performance of the school. The requirements of G.S. 115C-105.27 shall not apply to charter schools.

Low-performing schools must notify stakeholders of low-performing status, develop a school improvement plan, and be prepared to report to the Review Board. Schools identified as low-performing may also receive support including site visits and ongoing progress monitoring.

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.

Two charter schools had their charters revoked in 2025: Triad International Studies Academy (Guilford County), closed October 2025 and Monroe Charter Academy (Union County), closed December 2025.

Since 1998, there have been a total of 96 charter closures. 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 through January 2026

Revoked	Relinquished	Assumed	Non-Renewed	Total
24	55	1	16	96

The following data gives additional insight into charter school closures in North Carolina:

- **Average years opened for revoked charter schools: 4.29**
 - Most common reasons for revocation: Financial and/or compliance related; Student Enrollment is now becoming a frequent reason for early revocation and cause of financial problems.
- **Average years opened for relinquished charter schools: 4.11**
 - 23 of 55 relinquishments never opened
 - 3 of 55 opened less than one year
 - Most common reason: low enrollment and/or facility acquisition
- **Average years opened for nonrenewed charter schools: 10.69**
 - Primary reason: Academics

Charter School Closure Impact

Charter schools operate under a charter agreement which is a contract with the state that establishes the terms of operation and makes clear that nonrenewal or revocation are possible outcomes when accountability standards are not met. Since 1998, nearly one hundred charter schools have closed for a variety of reasons, some before ever opening their doors and others after years of serving students and communities. In 2025, two charter schools closed. The complexity and human cost involved in even a single closure underscores why the state must maintain dedicated capacity to manage these processes well.

Closure is never simply an administrative event. When a charter school closes, the effects ripple outward impacting students, families, educators, and the broader community in ways that are immediate, disruptive, and sometimes long-lasting. At the same time, the administrative burden placed on state agencies is substantial and often underestimated. Each closure requires the Office of Charter Schools to coordinate across multiple departments and stakeholder groups simultaneously, often under time pressure and with limited resources. The primary impact areas associated with charter school closures in North Carolina include:

- Employment Impact
- Student Records Management
- State Administrative Burden
- Financial Consequences
- Community Impact
- Regulatory and Legal Impact

Employment Impact When a charter school closes, teachers, administrators, support staff, and specialized personnel face sudden job loss often with little time to plan. The timing of closures is critical, which is why the Office of Charter Schools strongly encourages end-of-year closures with maximum advance notice to all stakeholders. Even when closures are handled responsibly, affected employees may experience gaps that disrupt retirement contributions, health coverage, and professional development. The Office of Charter Schools frequently steps in to assist with

employment verification and records when schools are unable or need guidance to manage these responsibilities.

Student Records Management The secure and accurate transfer of student records is one of the most operationally complex aspects of any closure. Academic transcripts, exceptional children program documentation, graduation tracking, and course completion records must all be properly transferred. This process is often made more difficult when a school's students are distributed across multiple counties. Ensuring continuity of student records requires significant coordination and follow-through that falls heavily on state staff when schools lack the capacity to manage it themselves.

State Administrative Burden Closure activities ranging from student record transfers to proper asset disposition requires dedicated staff time and expertise from multiple divisions. The Office of Charter Schools must simultaneously coordinate with the closing school's governing board, receiving schools, families, and community members while continuing to fulfill all of its other authorizing and monitoring responsibilities. As the charter sector grows, the Office's capacity to absorb these demands without additional dedicated resources becomes increasingly strained.

Financial Consequences The financial implications of closure vary considerably from school to school. Some schools close with limited financial complications, while others leave behind significant obligations including vendor contracts, facility leases, outstanding employee compensation, and unresolved debt. Asset disposition adds another layer of logistical and legal complexity that requires careful oversight to resolve appropriately.

Community Impact Families who chose a charter school based on its educational philosophy, specialized programming, or location are often left scrambling when that school closes particularly when closures occur mid-year and enrollment options are limited. Transportation logistics frequently become a source of additional stress, as families navigate new routes, adjusted schedules, or longer distances. The loss of a school community also means the loss of relationships that cannot easily be replaced. Students may lose access to extracurricular activities or specialized programs that were central to their educational experience.

Regulatory and Legal Impact Charter school closures involve a layered set of compliance requirements: public notification procedures, stakeholder engagement, documentation, and in some cases, formal appeal processes. When these processes are not managed carefully, they create risk for the state as well as for the families and staff affected.

Charter School Closure - Considerations Going Forward

Analysis of closure causes and other patterns can inform better authorization practices, enhance oversight, and improve support systems for struggling schools. Charter school closures represent complex events that require coordinated responses across multiple systems and stakeholder groups. While closures may be necessary when schools fail to meet academic, financial, or operational standards, the process generates significant challenges that extend well beyond the closing institution. Effective management of these impacts requires robust planning, adequate resources, and clear communication among all affected parties. Understanding and preparing for these multifaceted consequences is essential for education leaders, policymakers, and communities navigating the charter school landscape.

The Office of Charter Schools believes the data regarding charter school closures reinforces the following:

- Rigorous authorizing practices and adequate planning time with sufficient support and training are critical safeguards against charter school closures.
- Operational, governance, and financial support is especially important during the first five years of operation. Authorizing should include a thorough vetting of applicants' educational programs, financial projections, governance structures, and operational capacity before approving new schools.
- Academic support is critical for low-performing schools, especially during the three years preceding renewal.
- Facility acquisition is a continued challenge for schools that must be considered carefully by boards.
- Low enrollment is a leading cause of closures. Authorizing practices should include a thorough review of the applicant's knowledge and understanding of enrollment demand and current market conditions in the school's proposed county.
- The Office of Charter Schools and Department of Public Instruction must have sufficient staffing capacity to manage the complex administrative burden that follows closures. Without adequate staff resources dedicated to closure management, the impacts described above are unable to be adequately mitigated. It is essential to build both strong front-end authorization processes and back-end closure management capacity at the state level.

2025 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 2024-2025 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 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 OCS and DPI staff. The overall compliance statistics are then captured in the final School Performance Framework Report presented here.

2025 Performance Framework 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, governance, 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 applicable to all public-school units.

The Performance Framework reports on 51 operational, governance, 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), 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, governance 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 and Governance Annual Monitoring Criteria

Two hundred and three (203) of 208 charter schools, or 99%, achieved at or above 80% in the category of operational and governance annual monitoring criteria. One hundred and

twenty-one (121) charter schools , 58.2% , were compliant in every single applicable measure. Five schools fell below the 80% threshold, scoring 76.3% respectively. All charter schools were measured against a maximum of 25 operational and governance criteria, of which some were not applicable to a given school.

Operational and Governance Annual Monitoring Results by Measure

Sixteen (16) of 25 criteria yielded a charter school compliance percentage above 80% but below 100%. Of the 25 operational and governance criteria, seven criteria measured as having 100% of charter schools in compliance, with one measure being identified as N/A for all charter schools.

The following criteria OP 8 (School Risk Management Plan) was listed as N/A. Given the comprehensive review and coordination required by SERA web-based analysts for each school's profile, an extended timeline was provided to accommodate the duration of the analyst review process within the web-based platform. This measure was designated as non-applicable for all charter schools, as the State Emergency Response Application (SERA) requires schools to upload building plans, document facility data, and provide information regarding the school's profile, critical assets, vulnerabilities, and response procedures for various natural hazards and threats.

The following criteria OP 5.5 (Student Health and Safety) was the lowest scoring. One hundred and sixty-two (162) of 208 schools, 77.88%, met this target. The DHHS nurse consultant, along with OCS Consultants work closely to remind schools of the importance of having a ReturnToLearn protocol in place and is accurately reporting on the annual self-report, which cannot not be amended once it is submitted to DHHS by the school.

Table 3: Operational & Governance Compliance Results by Measure, 2024-2025

Measure	Percent Compliant
OP1. The NC Report Card and Letter Grade are prominently displayed on the school's website.	99.50%
OP2. Schools with “D” or “F” SPGs have sent a letter to notify parents along with a plan for improvement.	98.33%
OP3. The school adheres to all testing and accountability policies for state assessments.	100%
OP4.1. The school implements mandated programming as required by state or federal law (Title I).	100%
OP4.2. The school implements mandated programming as required by state or federal law (Title II).	100%
OP4.3. The school implements mandated programming as required by state or federal law (Exceptional Children).	98.08%
OP4.4. The school implements mandated programming as required by state or federal law (School Nutrition).	98.56%

OP4.5. The school implements mandated programming as required by state or federal law (Multilingual Learner).	100%
OP5.1. The school is compliant with all student health and safety requirements as defined by current North Carolina statute, rule, and/or policy (Immunizations and Health Assessment)	91.83%
OP5.2. The school is compliant with all student health and safety requirements as defined by current North Carolina statute, rule, and/or policy (CPR Training)	91.83%
OP5.3. The school is compliant with all student health and safety requirements as defined by current North Carolina statute, rule, and/or policy (Epipen Training and Equipped)	91.83%
OP5.4. The school is compliant with all student health and safety requirements as defined by current North Carolina statute, rule, and/or policy (Diabetes Training)	92.79%
OP5.5. The school is compliant with all student health and safety requirements as defined by current North Carolina statute, rule, and/or policy (ReturnToLearn (handling concussions))	77.88%
OP5.6. The school is compliant with all student health and safety requirements as defined by current North Carolina statute, rule, and/or policy (Annual Fire Inspection)	97.57%
OP6. The school meets the required number of instructional hours or days in accordance with State law.	99.52%
OP7. The school has submitted required documentation to demonstrate compliance with the Parents' Bill of Rights per GS §115C-76.70 and PRNT-002.	92.23%
OP8. The school has submitted the School Risk Management Plan per SL 2023-78.	N/A
OP9. The school has submitted the annual School Mental Health Plan per SL 2020-7.	96.63%
GOV1. 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.	100%
GOV2. The non-profit board has a current grievance policy.	99.52%
GOV3. The non-profit board has a current conflict of interest policy that complies with G.S. 115C-218.15.	100%
GOV4. The non-profit board has a current nepotism policy.	100%
GOV5. The majority of the non-profit board members primary residence in NC.	99.52%

GOV6. The non-profit board holds current, active civil and liability insurance with the minimum coverage as defined in the signed charter agreement.	98.56%
GOV 7. The non-profit board has a criminal history check policy that mirrors the LEA in which the school is located.	99.52%

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

Of the 208 operating charter schools, sixteen schools were reported as having cautionary or disciplinary financial status.

Conclusion

Overall, the vast majority of charter schools show compliance in operational, financial, and governance 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 Performance Framework is a tool used by the OCS to maintain high standards for charter school operation, and provides an “at a glance” picture of the charter schools’ academic, financial, governance, and operational foundations. 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, governance and financial status.

Between 2023 and 2024, the OCS conducted a full review of the tool, which had not been revised since 2014. The OCS brought suggested changes to the Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB) for review and discussion. On June 11, 2024, the CSRB voted and approved a revised Performance Framework for the first time since its adoption by the State Board of Education on November 4, 2014. The revisions within the Performance Framework have been in response to both the growing number of charter Schools within the state, as well as recent legislative changes. OCS believed it was the appropriate time to refine the Performance Framework as a more meaningful tracker and guide to performance standards while eliminating redundancies and ineffective performance measures.

The updated Performance Framework template remove monitors four “key” areas which are now indicated by logical abbreviations and a more concise monitoring document (as documented in the table above):

- Operational (OP)
- Governance (GOV)
- Financial (FIN)
- Academic (ACAD)

Renewal Performance Measures will now be reviewed during the school's renewal cycle and reported through that process.

The performance measures will monitor the charter school's performance by providing:

- A clear and consistent measure of operational, governance, financial, and academic performance;
- Feedback for school leaders and boards;
- Transparency for schools, parents, students, and the public;
- Tracking information regarding school performance over time.

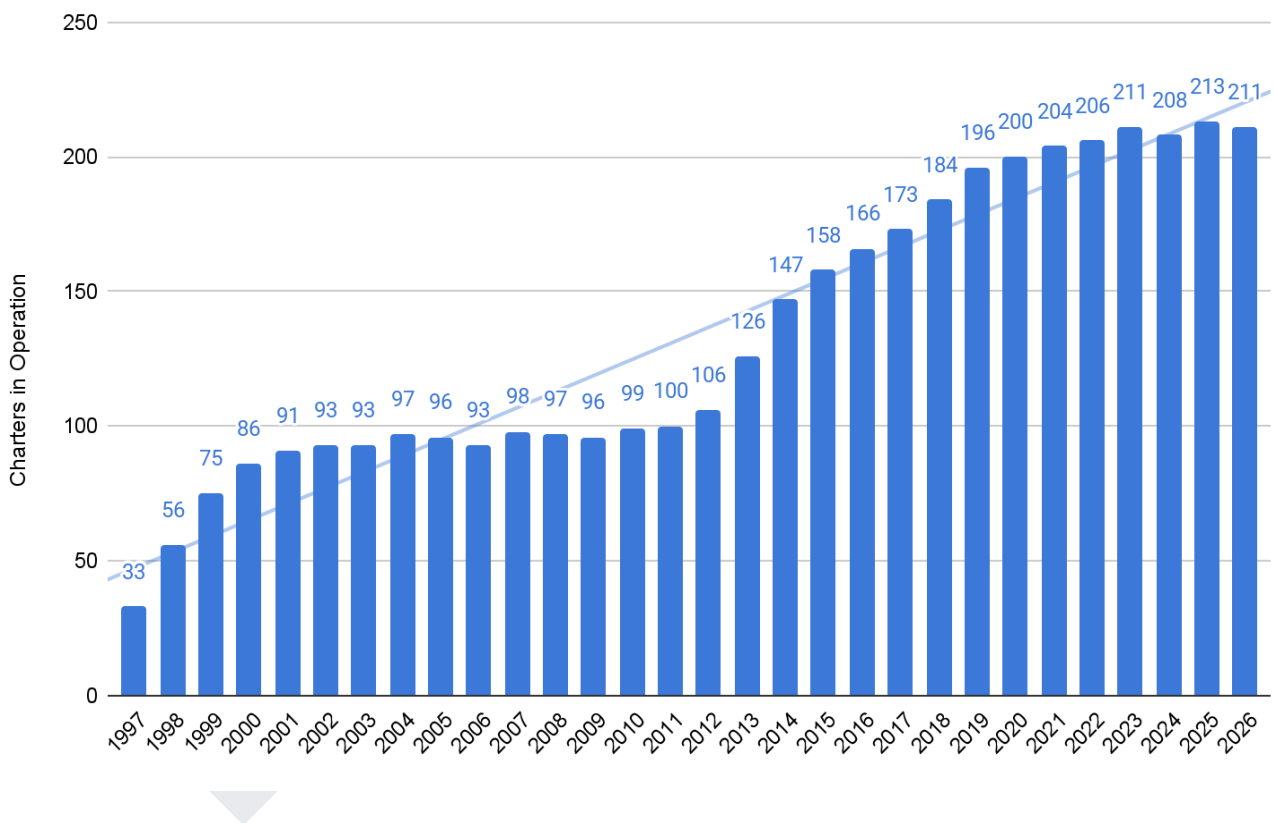
To support school leaders and board members, the OCS Performance Framework team created documents for each measure to reflect alignment to laws and policies, resources, references, and required versus best practice measures. In addition, training modules will be available for any questions that arise. The continued objective of the performance framework will be to provide a clear picture of a charter school's organizational performance and compliance with state and federal laws. The new performance framework took effect during the 2024-2025 school year.

2025 CHARTER SCHOOL SECTOR GROWTH

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 113% to the highest number of operating charter schools of 213 at the beginning of the 2025 school year. Since that time, the number of operating schools has decreased slightly to the 211 currently operating charter schools as of the time of this report⁶.

Charter School Growth by Year

Figure 2: North Carolina Charter Schools in Operation By Year, 1997-2025



⁶ 213 charter schools operated at the start of the 2025 school year. Two closed mid-year with 211 currently operating schools as of the time of this report.

Remote Charter Academies

Remote Charter Academies (RCAs) can now be approved by the Charter Schools Review Board pursuant to legislation (HB259) passed in 2023. The legislation allows charter schools, as part of an application or modification of a charter, to apply for approval to include a remote charter academy. This legislation created the ability for nonprofit boards of charter schools to operate remote academies in any of the following ways:

As an amendment to an existing charter

1. Via an amendment to allow brick-and-mortar charter schools to add a remote academy. In other words, these operate under an already established charter school/agreement as opposed to their own charter.

As a standalone remote charter school

2. Via the standard application process for new charter schools, which runs annually from late January through late April.
3. Or, if a school is operating under a charter that allows for a remote academy as part of the charter, and the school enrolls or intends to enroll 250 or more students in the remote academy, the school may request that the Review Board grant the remote academy portion of the school a separate charter. G.S. 115C-218.123(c).

Remote Charter Academies: Relevant Legislation

[115C-218.120](#)

[115C-218.121](#)

[115C-218.122](#)

[115C-218.123](#)

[115C-218.124](#)

[115C-218.125](#)

Practical Impact of Authorizing and Monitoring Remote Academies

RCAs operate under legislation that differs from that governing brick-and-mortar charter schools, requiring additional levels of review, support, and technical assistance. The authorization and oversight of RCAs is a separate and growing body of work for OCS. In accordance with statute, RCA requests are considered by CSRB either through the charter amendment process or as part of a new charter application.

In order to meet legislative requirements related to the authorization and monitoring of remote charter academies, OCS has established the following:

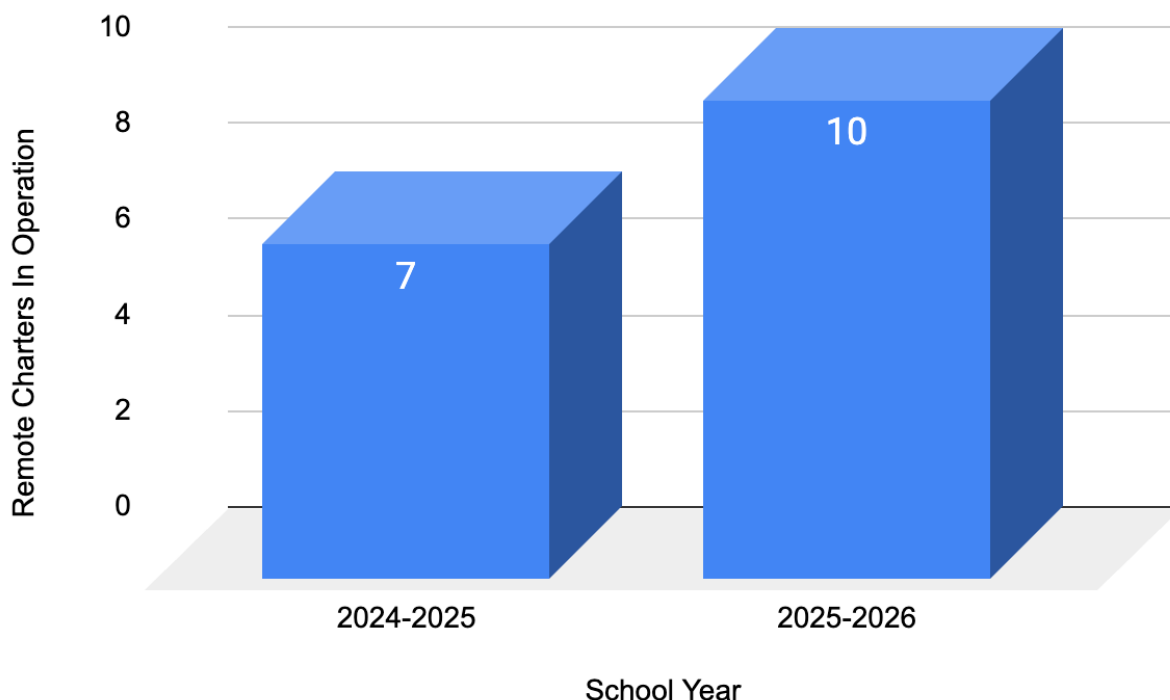
- Evaluates proposed RCA applications for compliance with legislative requirements, including enrollment, accountability, education plan, technology requirements, and student access.

- Prepares materials for CSRB, coordinates school presentations, and supports CSRB during the interview and voting process.
- Provides technical assistance related to RCA-specific requirements, including lottery and admissions guidance, amendments, and reporting.

RCAs require ongoing DPI cross-division collaboration and OCS staff capacity to ensure compliance, transparency, and accountability. OCS coordinates with multiple DPI divisions to address enrollment reporting, accountability, testing, data systems, and funding considerations unique to RCAs.

Approved RCAs are authorized for a five-year term, as established in statute, after which renewal may be requested. After operating an RCA for five years, the school may apply for renewal for an additional five-year term. The two virtual pilot schools were likewise eligible to apply for renewal as RCAs beginning in 2026. The renewal process largely mirrored that of brick-and-mortar charter schools, with the addition of a modified renewal self-study designed to address the statutory requirements specific to remote charter academies.

Figure 3: North Carolina Remote Charter Academies in Operation, 2024-2026



The figure above shows the number of RCAs in operation since the passage of the RCA legislation. The numbers include two full virtual schools previously referred to as the “pilot” virtual charter schools and which are now considered “Remote Charter Academies.” It is

anticipated, based on application approvals, that nineteen (19) RCAs, including four statewide virtual schools, will operate in the upcoming 2026-2027 school year.

Additional information on remote charter academies and district remote academies, including academic data is available [here](#).

Charter School Openings, 2025-2026

After successful completion of the Ready to Open process, seven new charter schools opened for the 2025-2026 school year.

Table 4: Charter Openings, 2025

School Name	County	1st Year Grade Levels	Approved Grade Levels
North Oak Academy	Durham	K-5	K-8
Anderson Charter School	Forsyth	K-4	K-8
Liberty Classical Academy	Guilford	K-8	K-12
Triad International Studies Academy*	Guilford	K-2	K-6
Honor Prep Academy	Charlotte-Mecklenburg	K-1	K-5
Carolina Achieve	Chatham	K-5	K-8
Sledge Institute	Vance	K-2, 6	K-10

*Triad International Studies Academy closed prior to completing the first school year.

2025 NORTH CAROLINA AUTHORIZING WORK

Charter School Authorizing Staff

Charter school authorizing is the formal process by which a government-designated entity evaluates, approves, and oversees charter schools to ensure they meet academic, financial, and operational standards. Authorizing structures vary significantly across the country. In some states, multiple entities hold authorizing power, including local school districts, universities,

municipalities, and independent state bodies, creating a complex landscape where a single charter school may have several potential authorizers to approach. In other states, authorizing authority is more centralized. The quality, rigor, and consistency of the authorizing process can vary widely depending on the type and capacity of the authorizer. The authorizing process directly impacts school quality and accountability for students and families.

In North Carolina, this work is unified under a single authorizing structure: The Office of Charter Schools (OCS), which serves as staff to the current North Carolina authorizer, the Charter Schools Review Board. The OCS creates, implements, monitors, and supports the entire authorizing process from application creation to final ready to open status. When a charter applicant transitions into an operating school, the OCS then supports and monitors pursuant to the processes established for operating schools thus supporting both non-operating charter board applicants and the over 200 operating charter schools.

Ready to Open Status, 2026

The Ready to Open status is frequently changing as schools face the challenges of opening a new school and decide to delay or withdraw from the process. As of this report, there are six (6) charter schools scheduled to open in the fall of 2026, 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. As of June 1, 2026, there are eight (8) applicants prepared to enter Ready to Open in September 2026, with slated school openings of fall 2027.

Table 5: Ready to Open Status, 2026

<i>School Name</i>	<i>Year approved</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>1st Year Grade Levels</i>	<i>Approved Grade Levels</i>
Carolina Collegiate	2022	Durham	9-10	9-12
Warren Young Explorers School	2024	Warren	K-6	K-12
North Carolina Connections Academy	2024	Statewide Virtual	K-12	K-12
IDYL- Wake (Fast Track)	2025	Wake	K-6	K-8
BH2 Stream School (Accelerated)	2025	Edgecombe	K-6	K-8
Ryze Academy (Accelerated)	2025	Forsyth	K-4	K-8

2025 Charter Application Cycle

Seventeen non-profit boards submitted applications to open public charter schools by the April 25, 2025, application deadline. Of these, seven applicants sought approval for Acceleration to open in the 2026-2027 school year with another ten applying under the regular timeline to open in 2027. Five applicants 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, NCDPI 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.

2025 Accelerated Applications

One fast-track replication application and seven accelerated applications were received. CSRB approved the one fast-track replication applicant and three accelerated applicants for opening in 2026-27. Three applicants withdrew before the CSRB interviews took place. CSRB denied one accelerated applicant.

2025 Standard Timeline Applications

Nine standard timeline charter applications were reviewed by external evaluators, NCDPI staff, and the CSRB between May and August 2025. Two applicants withdrew before CSRB interviews, and five were denied. Ultimately, the CSRB recommended two for approval.

During the same period, one accelerated applicant was invited to a second-round interview and was ultimately approved.

Dispositions of the seventeen applications received by the application deadline:

- Five applicants withdrew
- Six applicants recommended for approval to enter Ready to Open
- Six applicants not recommended
- One applicant was not recommended, appealed, and approved on remand

At the conclusion of the 2025 Charter School Application Cycle, six schools were approved by the CSRB to enter the Ready to Open program. One denied applicant, Cape View Leadership Academy, appealed to the State Board of Education, which remanded the case to the CSRB for reconsideration. The CSRB subsequently approved the application, bringing the total to seven schools, as listed below.

Table 6: Charter Application Approvals, 2025 Cycle

School Name	County	Approved Grade Levels	Opening Year
IDYL Wake (fast-track)	Wake	K-8	2026
BH2 Stream (accelerated)	Edgecombe	K-8	2026
RYZE Academy (accelerated)	Forsyth	K-8	2026
Focus Charter Academy (accelerated)	Wake	K-8	2026
Celeste Beauty Academy	Mecklenburg	9-12	2027
Somerset Preparatory Academy NC	Union	K-5	2027
Cape View Leadership Academy	Pender	6-12	2027

Charter School Renewals

Each approved charter school operates under a time-limited charter that is not guaranteed renewal. Charter renewals and reviews are governed by NC General Statute §115C-218.6.

The renewal process spans two years, beginning in July, two years before a charter expires. For schools with charters ending June 30, 2026, the process began in July 2024 (Year 1: July 2024–June 2025; Year 2: July 2025–June 2026).

During each renewal cycle, the Office of Charter Schools works with two cohorts simultaneously: one cohort begins the process as another enters its second year, which culminates in a CSRB vote on the renewal term.

The renewal process is outlined in State Board Policy CHTR-007, updated in April 2024 after several months of collaboration among the Charter Schools Review Board, the Office of Charter Schools, and the State Board of Education. The revisions were intended to: (1) better align with statutes governing charter renewal and termination, (2) reflect current practices of the Office of Charter Schools, DPI staff, and the CSRB, (3) clarify distinctions among renewal terms, and (4) provide clearer guidance on the role of subgroup performance in renewal decisions.

Section A of the newly revised policy had several language updates including updating the policy to reflect the “Charter Schools Review Board” which was previously the “Charter School Advisory Board.” Additionally Section A named the “DPI Portfolio,” a collection of data and materials submitted by the Office of Charter Schools to the Charter Schools Review Board, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the State Board of Education. The DPI Portfolio is created as a collaboration between the Office of Charter Schools and various departments within DPI that have materials pertinent to the evaluation of the charter school.

Section B of the newly updated policy provides necessary definitions and specifies the criteria for determining how a school provides services to certain targeted subgroups, thereby providing clarity to the legislative requirements for a renewal. This section also contains the revised Renewal Guidelines that provide the Charter Schools Review Board the criteria for awarding a 10-year, 7-year, 5-year, or 3-year renewal, along with the criteria for not renewing a charter school.

2026 Renewals

Forty charter schools requested renewal of their charters that will expire June 30, 2026. Receipt of a ten-year renewal is based on statutory requirements. The Charter Schools Review Board granted a ten-year charter renewal to schools meeting requirements of NC General Statute § [115C-218.6](#). 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.

Schools that did not meet the ten-year requirements were interviewed over several CSRB meetings beginning in November 2025 with voting on renewal terms taking place at the January, February, and March 2026 CSRB meetings.

Table 7: Renewal Terms, 2026

A ten (10) year renewal was granted to:

Code	School Name
01C	Clover Garden
09A	Paul R Brown Leadership Academy
12A	The New Dimensions School
13D	Concord Lake STEAM Academy
29A	Davidson Charter Academy

32P	The Institute for the Development of Young Leaders
35C	Wake Preparatory Academy
45B	FernLeaf Community Charter School
60S	Bradford Preparatory School
60U	Commonwealth High School
60Y	Pioneer Springs Community School
61L	Stewart Creek High School
61S	Unity Classical Charter School
62L	Telra Institute
63C	Moore Montessori Community School
65G	Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington
66A	KIPP Pride College Preparatory
73B	Roxboro Community School
78C	Old Main STREAM Academy
80C	Faith Academy Charter School
93Q	Carolina Charter Academy

A seven (7) year renewal was granted to:

Code	School Name
24B	Thomas Academy
41L	Gate City Charter Academy
49D	Success Institute Charter School

A five (5) year renewal was granted to:

Code	School Name
00A	NC Cyber Academy
00B	North Carolina Virtual Academy
35A	Crosscreek Charter School
41M	Next Generation Academy
41R	Summit Creek Academy
65C	Classical Charter Schools of Wilmington
65F	American Leadership Academy-Coastal
90B	Union Day School
93R	Raleigh Oak Charter School

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

Code	School Name
11F	Asheville PEAK Academy
41N	The Experiential School of Greensboro
49G	Iredell Charter Academy of Arts & Sciences
60N	American Leadership Academy Charlotte
64A	Rocky Mount Preparatory
67B	Z.E.C.A. School of Arts & Technology

Final decisions and discussions can be found in CSRB [minutes](#) and [livestream recordings](#).

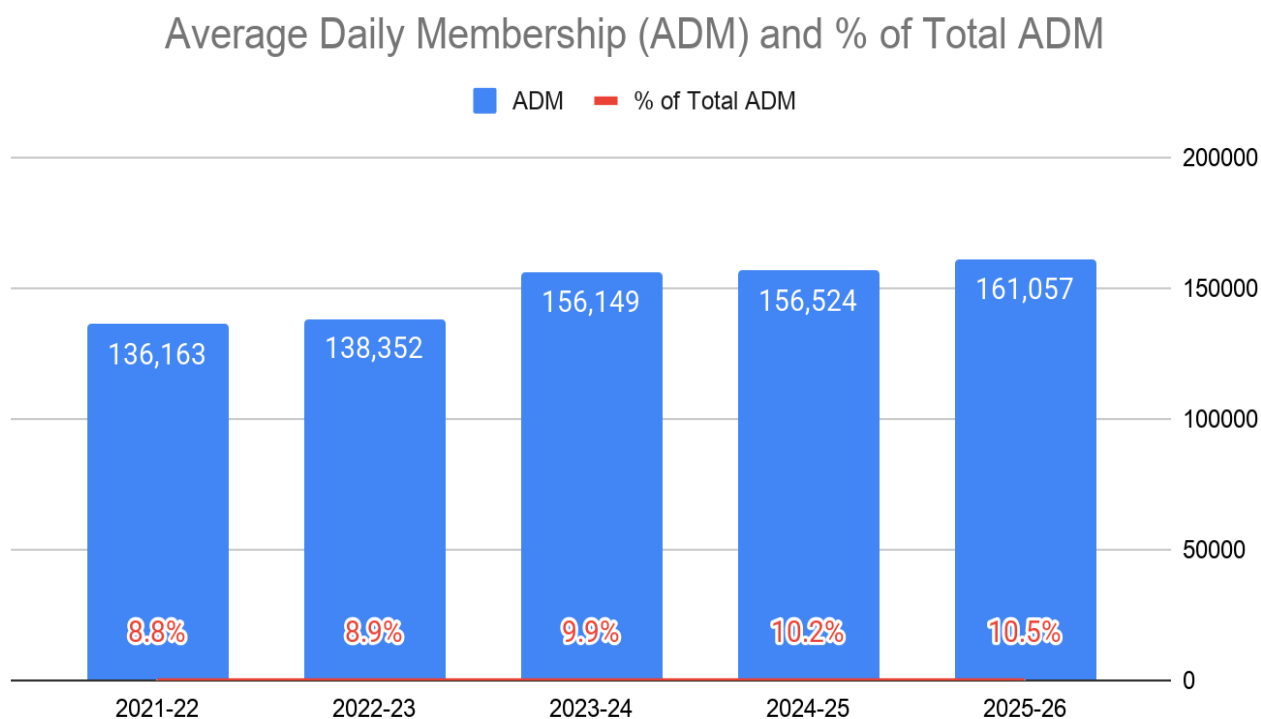
CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Student Membership

North Carolina's charter school sector originated in 1996, when the General Assembly passed the Charter School Act and capped growth at 100 schools. Following the removal of that cap in 2011, the sector expanded by 113%, reaching a peak of 213 operating schools at the start of the 2025 school year. As of this report, 211 charter schools are currently operating statewide⁷. Average Daily Membership (ADM)⁸ shows a steady upward trend over the five-year period, increasing from 136,163 in 2021–22 to 161,057 in 2025–26. Growth is modest between 2021–22 and 2022–23, followed by a more notable jump in 2023–24, and then continues to rise at a slower but consistent pace.

Similarly, the percentage of total ADM gradually increases each year, moving from 8.8% to 10.5%, indicating that this segment is not only growing in absolute numbers but also making up a larger share of the overall membership.

Figure 4: North Carolina Charter School Average Daily Membership and % of Total Statewide Public Student Average Daily Membership by Fiscal Year



⁷ 213 charter schools operated at the start of the 2025 school year. Two closed mid-year with 211 currently operating schools as of the time of this report.

⁸ Student Accounting data and definitions can be accessed [here](#).

National Charter School Enrollment Trends

A recent study⁹ of 27 states with detailed demographic data shows that over the past six years, national charter enrollment has climbed by 15 percent nationally, representing an addition of half a million students, even as the overall K-12 population in the United States has decreased. This momentum is reflected across diverse demographics, with significant enrollment increases among Hispanic and Black student enrollment, signaling a broad and growing demand for alternative public education models across nearly every state with a charter sector.

Looking at enrollment change over a six-year period, North Carolina was the fourth fastest-growing state for charter enrollment in the nation, trailing only Texas, Florida, and California. Between the 2019-20 and 2024-25 academic years, North Carolina's charter student population grew by more than 26 percent, adding over 31,000 students. Today, more than 161,000 students attend charter schools across the state, accounting for more than ten percent of North Carolina's total public school enrollment. This rapid scaling underscores a significant shift in the state's educational landscape.

Rapid and sustained growth also underscores the need to evaluate impacts and raises questions for policy-makers to consider.

- **Funding and Resource Allocation:** How do states ensure per-pupil funding follows the student equitably while managing financial stability in regions with a large variety of educational options? Will greater educational options within the state, whether public or private, lead to greater student movement between schools, districts, or even regions?
- **Equitable Access:** Scaling demands an intentional look at whether growth is inclusive. Barriers such as a lack of regional transportation or localized school meal programs might prevent economically disadvantaged and rural students from participating in educational choice.
- **State Authorizing and Oversight:** What frameworks and staff capacity must be in place to provide rigorous oversight, ensuring that rapid expansion does not dilute academic or operational standards?

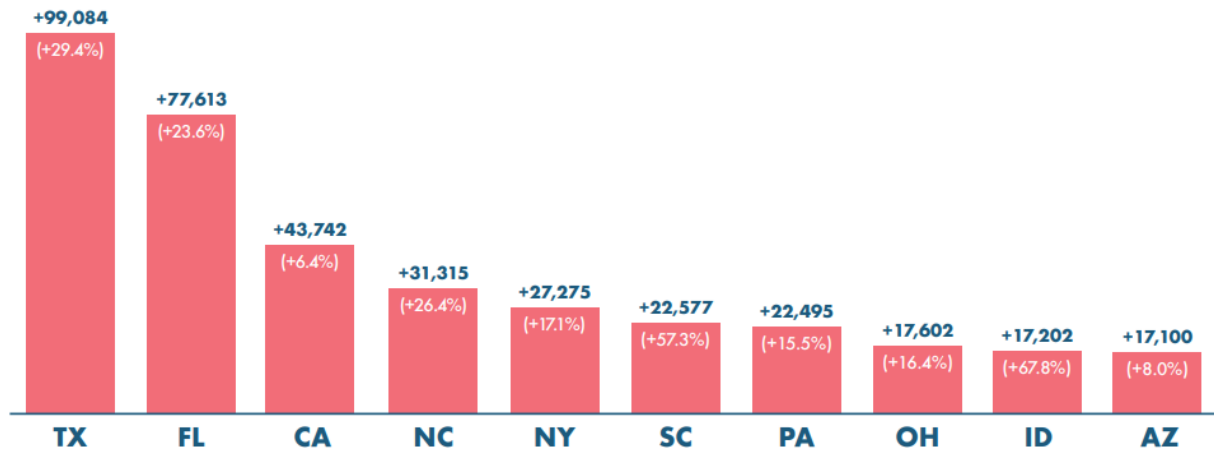
By evaluating these factors, North Carolina can ensure that the growth of the charter community is not only fast but also sustainable, high-performing, and accessible to the students who need these options most.

⁹ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2025) *Enrollment brief: Charter schools 2025*. Available at: https://publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/NAPCS-2025_Enrollment-Brief-111425v1.pdf (Accessed: April 22, 2026).

Figure 5: National Enrollment Trends 2019-2020 vs. 2024-2025¹⁰

States with the Largest Gains in Student Enrollment

ENROLLMENT CHANGE MEASURED OVER A SIX-YEAR PERIOD 2019-20 VS. 2024-25



County Distribution

During the 2025-2026 school year, across North Carolina, 213 charter schools operated in 64 of the state's 100 counties, leaving roughly one-third of counties without any charter presence. This distribution is heavily concentrated in urban areas. Four counties alone account for 92 schools - Mecklenburg, Wake, Durham, and Guilford.

Beyond these leading counties, the number of schools drops off sharply. Only a small group of counties—such as Buncombe and New Hanover with seven schools each, and Forsyth with six—have a moderate charter presence, while most others fall well below that range. In fact, 31 counties have just a single charter school.

The gap in rural access is especially pronounced. Thirty-six counties have no charter schools at all, meaning many families, particularly in rural, western, and northeastern parts of the state, lack a local option and would face significant travel distances to attend one. Overall, while North Carolina's charter sector has grown considerably, it remains concentrated in urban and suburban centers, with much thinner and less consistent availability across rural regions.

¹⁰ Screenshot. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2025) *Enrollment brief: Charter schools 2025*. Available at: https://publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/NAPCS-2025_Enrollment-Brief-111425v1.pdf (Accessed: April 22, 2026).

Figure 6: Charter Schools, by County as of August 1, 2025

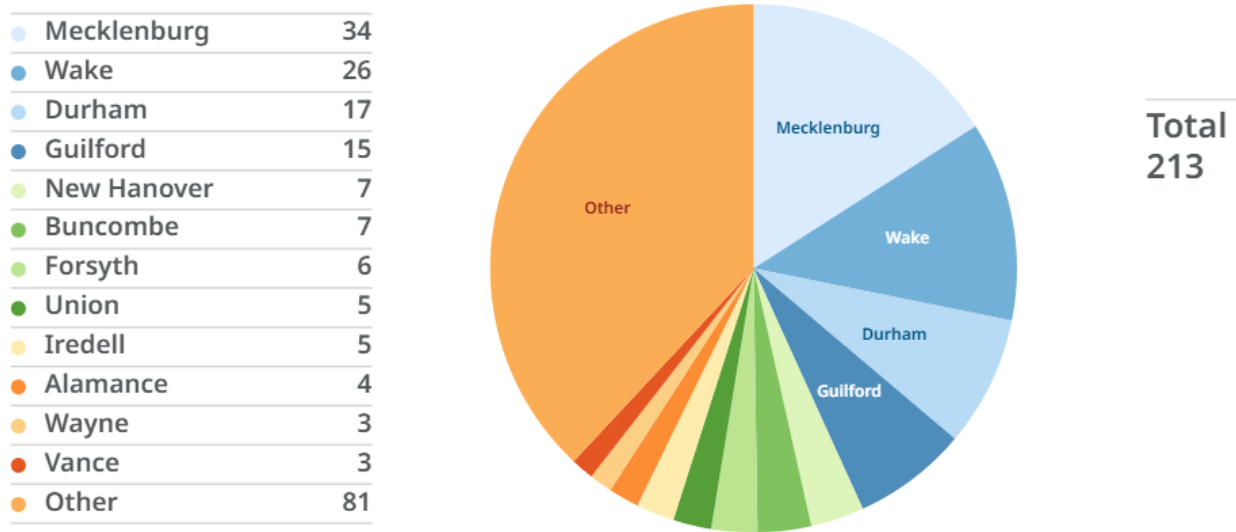


Table 8: Charter School Membership Data by LEA

Using the Office of School Business Service's Data Analysis and Reporting Tool, data is available showing the [charter school membership in each county](#).

LEA Name	Percentage of Charter Students in Total Membership at LEA
Halifax County Schools	33.46%
Weldon City Schools	31.75%
Vance County Schools	31.16%
Northampton County Schools	28.93%
Franklin County Schools	28.60%
Granville County Schools	26.72%
Person County Schools	22.74%
Martin County Schools	22.13%
Washington County Schools	22.12%

Warren County Schools	21.10%
Durham Public Schools	21.05%
Edgecombe County Public Schools	18.87%
Bladen County Schools	18.58%
Tyrrell County Schools	18.05%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	15.63%
Wilson County Schools	15.17%
Pamlico County Schools	14.85%
Guilford County Schools	14.80%
Orange County Schools	14.09%
Lincoln County Schools	14.00%
Caswell County Schools	13.97%
Iredell-Statesville Schools	13.86%
Asheville City Schools	12.67%
Lexington City Schools	12.63%
Chatham County Schools	12.55%
Mooresville Graded School District	12.13%
Gaston County Schools	12.07%
Buncombe County Schools	11.61%
Jackson County Public Schools	11.46%
Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	11.29%
Alamance-Burlington Schools	10.96%
Brunswick County Schools	10.94%
Wake County Schools	10.37%
Cleveland County Schools	10.34%

Randolph County School System	10.28%
Harnett County Schools	10.17%
Rutherford County Schools	10.13%
Johnston County Public Schools	9.90%
Asheboro City Schools	9.85%
Moore County Schools	9.76%
Montgomery County Schools	9.63%
Transylvania County Schools	9.14%
Union County Public Schools	9.03%
Haywood County Schools	8.84%
Roanoke Rapids City Schools	8.61%
Rockingham County Schools	8.42%
Rowan-Salisbury Schools	8.19%
Wayne County Public Schools	8.08%
Winston Salem / Forsyth County Schools	7.99%
Beaufort County Schools	7.97%
Columbus County Schools	7.90%
Hoke County Schools	7.75%
Lee County Schools	7.63%
Henderson County Schools	7.49%
Cabarrus County Schools	7.47%
Kannapolis City Schools	7.10%
Polk County Schools	7.10%
Public Schools of Robeson County	7.01%
Craven County Board of Education	6.56%

New Hanover County Schools	6.05%
Nash County Public Schools	5.80%
Whiteville City Schools	5.65%
Mount Airy City Schools	5.58%
Edenton-Chowan Schools	5.21%
Burke County Schools	5.12%
Swain County Schools	4.90%
Thomasville City Schools	4.79%
Surry County Schools	4.66%
Stanly County Schools	4.62%
Davidson County Schools	4.38%
Pender County Schools	4.14%
Pitt County Schools	3.99%
Cumberland County Schools	3.60%
Camden County Schools	3.43%
Perquimans County Schools	3.32%
Jones County Schools	3.32%
Avery County Schools	3.26%
Caldwell County Schools	3.25%
Watauga County Schools	2.95%
Carteret County Public Schools	2.92%
Anson County Schools	2.85%
Stokes County Schools	2.85%
Madison County Schools	2.50%
Currituck County Schools	2.47%
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools	1.90%

Catawba County Schools	1.87%
Ashe County Schools	1.76%
Macon County Schools	1.72%
Onslow County Schools	1.59%
Richmond County Schools	1.38%
Hertford County Schools	1.37%
Gates County Schools	1.36%
Bertie County Schools	1.10%
Greene County Schools	1.10%
Hickory City Schools	1.09%
Alexander County Schools	1.01%
Newton Conover City Schools	0.92%
Cherokee County Schools	0.91%
Scotland County Schools	0.91%
Sampson County Schools	0.84%
Mitchell County Schools	0.81%
Lenoir County Public Schools	0.80%
Graham County Schools	0.74%
Duplin County Schools	0.63%
Clay County Schools	0.63%
McDowell County Schools	0.61%
Yadkin County Schools	0.60%
Yancey County Schools	0.58%
Alleghany County Schools	0.54%
Elkin City Schools	0.48%
Davie County Schools	0.43%

Dare County Schools	0.40%
Wilkes County Schools	0.31%
Clinton City Schools	0.31%
Hyde County Schools	0.22%

Table 9: Individual Charter Schools by County, as of August 1, 2025

County	School
Alamance	River Mill Academy
Alamance	Clover Garden
Alamance	The Hawbridge School
Alamance	Alamance Community School
Avery	Marjorie Williams Academy
Beaufort	Washington Montessori
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
Buncombe	Mountain City Public Montessori
Burke	New Dimensions
Cabarrus	Carolina International School
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
Craven	Riverside Leadership Academy
Cumberland	Alpha Academy
Cumberland	The Capitol Encore Academy
Currituck	Water's Edge Village School
Davidson	Davidson Charter Academy
Durham	North Carolina Cyber Academy
Durham	NC Virtual Academy
Durham	Maureen Joy Charter School
Durham	Durham Charter School
Durham	Community School of Digital & Visual Art
Durham	Kestrel Heights School
Durham	Research Triangle Charter
Durham	Central Park School For Children
Durham	Voyager Academy
Durham	Global Scholars Academy
Durham	Research Triangle High School
Durham	The Institute Development Young Leaders
Durham	Reaching All Minds Academy
Durham	Excelsior Classical Academy
Durham	KIPP Durham College Preparatory
Durham	Discovery Charter
Durham	North Oak Academy
Edgecombe	North East Carolina Prep
Forsyth	Quality Education Academy
Forsyth	Carter G. Woodson School

Forsyth	Forsyth Academy
Forsyth	The Arts Based School
Forsyth	NC Leadership Charter Academy
Forsyth	Anderson Academy
Franklin	Crosscreek Charter School
Franklin	Youngsville Academy
Franklin	Wake Preparatory Academy
Gaston	Piedmont Community Charter School
Gaston	Mountain Island Charter School
Gaston	Community Charter School
Granville	Falls Lake Academy
Granville	Oxford Preparatory
Guilford	Greensboro Academy
Guilford	Guilford Preparatory Academy
Guilford	Phoenix Academy - Primary, Elem, Upper
Guilford	Triad Math and Science Academy
Guilford	Cornerstone Charter Academy-CFA
Guilford	College Prep and Leadership Academy
Guilford	Summerfield Charter Academy
Guilford	Piedmont Classical High School
Guilford	Gate City Charter
Guilford	Next Generation Academy
Guilford	The Experiential School of Greensboro
Guilford	Liberty Charter Academy
Guilford	Revolution Academy
Guilford	Summit Creek Academy
Guilford	Triad International Studies
Halifax	Hobgood Charter School
Harnett	Anderson Creek Academy
Harnett	Achievement Charter Academy

Haywood	Shining Rock Classical Academy
Henderson	The Mountain Community Sch
Henderson	FernLeaf
Iredell	American Renaissance School
Iredell	Success Institute Charter
Iredell	Pine Lake Preparatory
Iredell	Langtree Charter Academy
Iredell	Iredell Charter Academy of Arts & Science
Jackson	Summit Charter
Johnston	Neuse Charter School
Johnston	Johnston Charter Academy
Johnston	American Leadership Academy - Johnston
Lee	Ascend Leadership Academy: Lee County
Lee	Rising Leaders Academy
Lee	Central Carolina 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 Reg Scholars Academy
Mecklenburg	Queen's Grant Community School
Mecklenburg	Community School of Davidson
Mecklenburg	Socrates Academy
Mecklenburg	Charlotte Secondary
Mecklenburg	KIPP Charlotte
Mecklenburg	Corvian Community School
Mecklenburg	American Leadership Academy Charlotte
Mecklenburg	Bradford Preparatory School
Mecklenburg	Commonwealth High

Mecklenburg	Pioneer Springs Community School
Mecklenburg	Lakeside Charter Academy
Mecklenburg	United Community School
Mecklenburg	Stewart Creek High
Mecklenburg	Charlotte Lab School
Mecklenburg	TMSA Charlotte
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
Mecklenburg	Movement School Southwest
Mecklenburg	Movement School Northwest
Mecklenburg	Honor Prep
Montgomery	Tillery Charter Academy
Moore	The Academy of Moore County
Moore	STARS Charter
Moore	Moore Montessori Community School
Nash	Rocky Mount Preparatory
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 Pride College Preparatory
Onslow	Z.E.C.A. School of Arts and Technology
Orange	Eno River Academy
Orange	The Expedition School
Orange	Carolina Achieve
Pamlico	Arapahoe Charter School
Pasquotank	Northeast Academy of Aerospace & AdvTech
Person	Bethel Hill Charter
Person	Roxboro Community School
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 Charter School
Rutherford	Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy
Rutherford	Lake Lure Classical Academy
Stanly	Gray Stone Day
Surry	Millennium Charter Academy
Swain	Mountain Discovery
Transylvania	Brevard Academy
Union	Union Academy
Union	Union Day School
Union	Union Prep Academy at Indian Trail

Union	Monroe Charter Academy
Union	ALA Monroe
Vance	Vance Charter School
Vance	Henderson Collegiate
Vance	Sledge Institute
Wake	The Exploris School
Wake	Magellan Charter
Wake	Sterling Montessori Academy
Wake	Franklin Academy
Wake	East Wake Academy
Wake	Raleigh Charter High School
Wake	PreEminent Charter
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
Wake	Raleigh Oak Charter
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
Wayne	Wayne Preparatory Academy
Wayne	Wayne STEM Academy
Wilson	Sallie B Howard School
Wilson	Wilson Preparatory Academy

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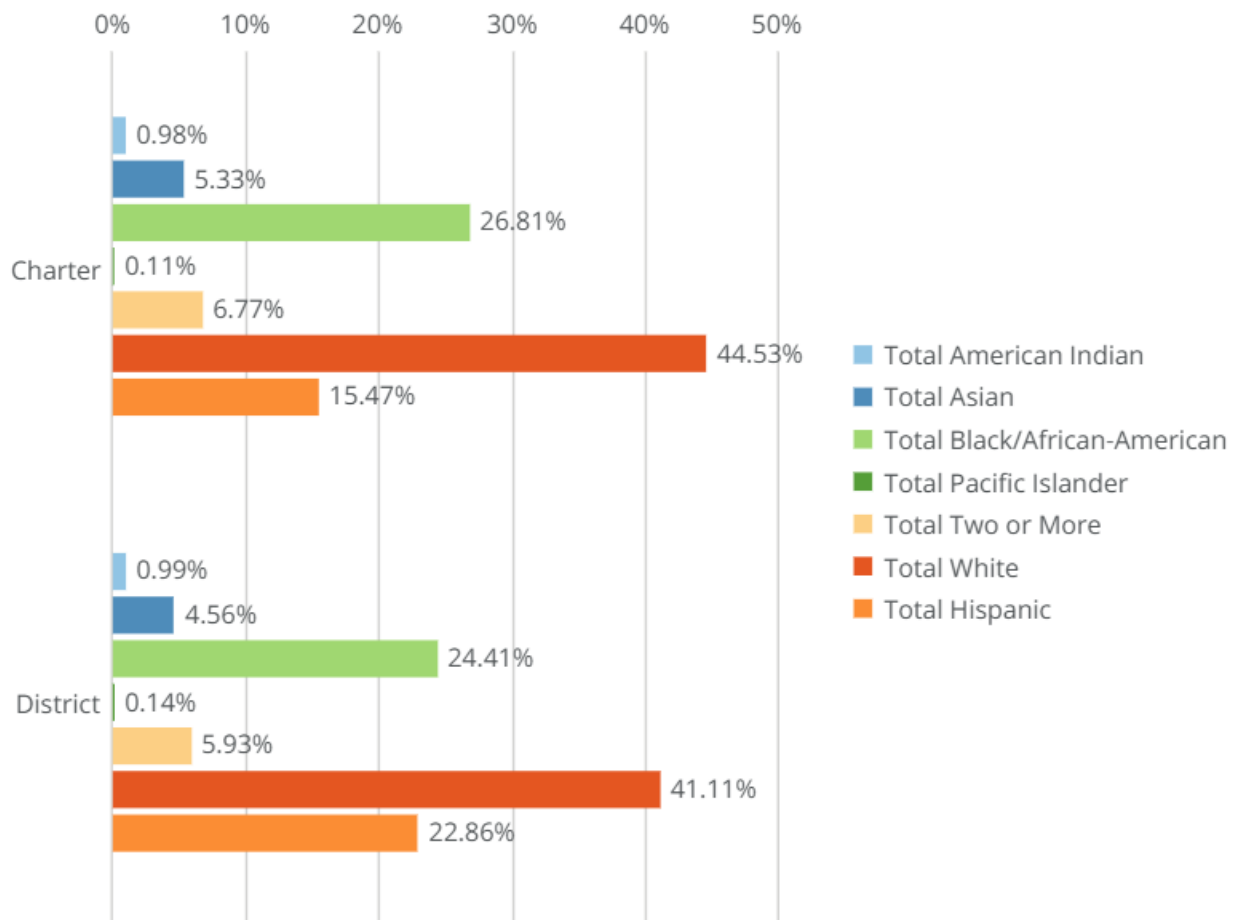
ETHNICITY AND RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

The figures below show racial and ethnic composition within all charters and all district schools for the current 2025-2026 school year¹¹. In 2025–2026, charter schools enrolled students across all racial and ethnic groups, as did local districts, although there were some notable differences.

- Charter schools enrolled a higher share of White students than traditional districts (44.5% vs. 41.1%).
- Black/African American students were also more represented in charter schools (26.8% vs. 24.4%).
- Hispanic students were more prevalent in traditional districts (22.9% vs. 15.5%).
- American Indian and Pacific Islander enrollment was similarly low across both charter schools and traditional districts.

¹¹ Best 1 of 2 certified—11/24/2025. Students in membership on the last day of each PSU's individual PMR reporting period.

Figure 7: SY2025-2026, Ethnicity and Racial Data, Charter and District



FY2025 to FY2026 - One Year Demographic Changes

Year over year, the most significant shift was a 1.8 percentage point decline in White enrollment in charters, accompanied by modest gains in Black and Hispanic shares. While the roughly 7-point gap in Hispanic enrollment between charters and LEAs remains the most consistent demographic distinction between the two sectors, long term Hispanic enrollment growth is substantial.

Hispanic enrollment in North Carolina charter schools has grown remarkably over the past 15 years, nearly tripling from just 5.7% in 2010 to 15.5% in 2025–2026, indicating the charter sector's expanding reach and growing appeal among Hispanic families across the state. This sustained growth reflects meaningful progress in access and outreach, with charter schools increasingly serving one of North Carolina's fastest-growing student populations. The continued year-over-year increase from 14.8% to 15.5% in just the past year signals that this is an ongoing and accelerating trend, not a ceiling.

Please see last year’s report for an in-depth examination of the historical disparity in Hispanic student enrollment between charter schools and traditional districts, as well as long-term demographic trends spanning 2010 to 2024.

Table 10: FY2025 to FY2026 - One Year Demographic Changes, Charters

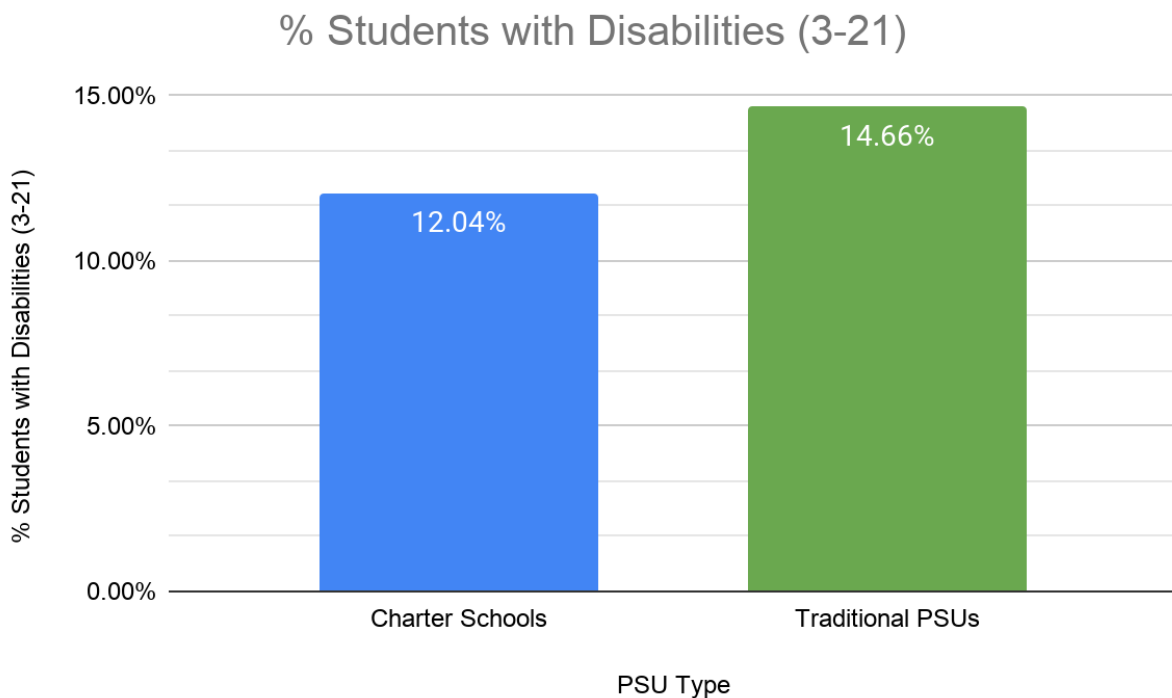
2024– 2025	White	Black / African American	Hispanic	Two or More	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander
Charter	46.3%	25.7%	14.8%	7.1%	5.1%	0.9%	0.1%
District	41.6%	24.2%	22.8%	5.8%	4.5%	1.0%	0.1%
2025– 2026	White	Black / African American	Hispanic	Two or More	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander
Charter	44.5%	26.8%	15.5%	6.8%	5.3%	1.0%	0.1%
District	41.1%	24.4%	22.9%	5.9%	4.6%	1.0%	0.1%
Charter Change (‘25→‘26)	White	Black / African American	Hispanic	Two or More	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander
Δ Change	-1.8	+1.1	+0.7	-0.3	+0.2	+0.1	—

SPECIAL POPULATION STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Students with Disabilities

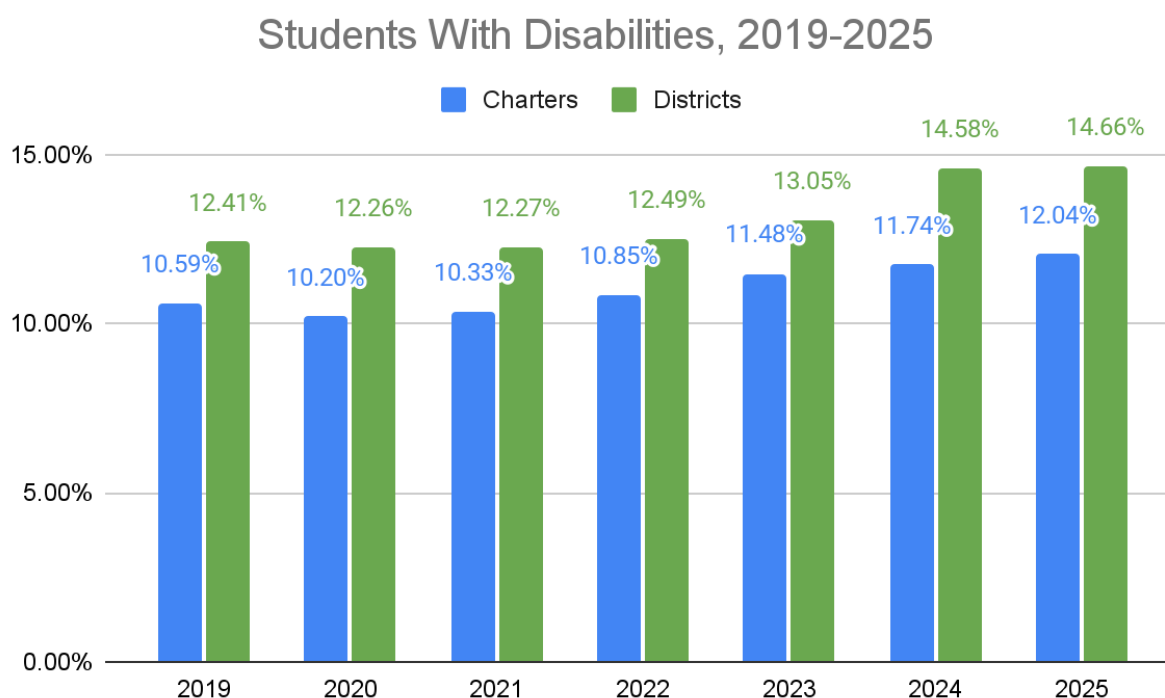
As of December 1, 2025¹² students with disabilities comprised 12.04% of North Carolina charter school enrollment, representing an increase from 11.74% the previous year.

Figure 8: Students with Disabilities, Charters and Districts, 2025 Headcount



¹² Child Count is the unduplicated count of children receiving special education and related services under IDEA, Part B on December 1st of each year in North Carolina.

Figure 9: Students with Disabilities Charters and Traditional LEAs, 2019-2024



For both districts and charter schools, 2025 demonstrated peak enrollment for students with disabilities when compared to the previous six years.

Implications and Considerations

Current enrollment patterns continue to highlight pressing concerns around educational equity and resource allocation across both charter schools and traditional districts. Since 2022, both sectors have experienced a notable and sustained rise in students with disabilities (SWD) populations. Ensuring that funding models keep pace with this growth is essential, and both charter schools and traditional districts must receive resources that genuinely reflect the complexity and range of services their enrolled students require. A one-size-fits-all approach to funding fails to capture the varied realities of SWD enrollment and risks leaving students without the support they need, regardless of the school setting they attend.

Continued monitoring of special education enrollment trends remains critical, as does the development of targeted strategies to ensure equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities for all students with disabilities, irrespective of institutional setting. Meaningful progress in this area will also require deeper investment in research focused on equitable funding structures, the true costs of service delivery, and ongoing workforce challenges within the special education and exceptional children sector.

English Learners

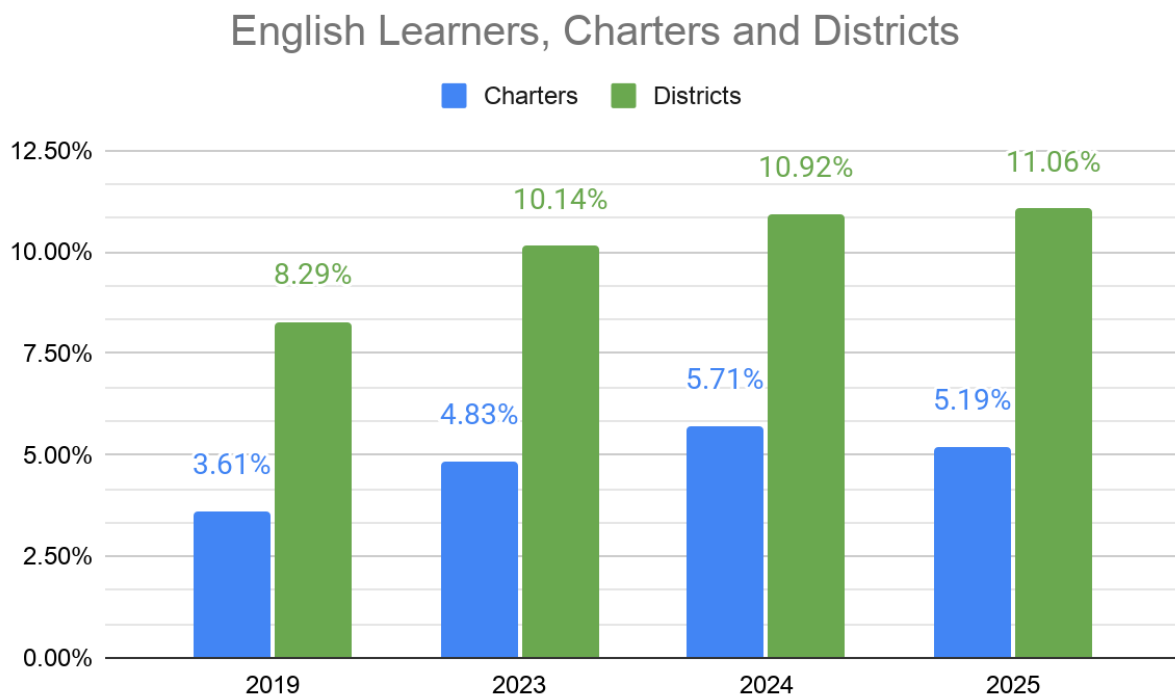
As of November 1, 2025, North Carolina's current enrollment of students identified and assessed as English Learners (ELs), in accordance with State Board of Education (SBE) policies, is 163,175. Statewide headcount numbers, by school and district, can be found [here](#).

The figure below illustrates the percentage of student enrollment identified as English Learners (EL) across charter and traditional district schools. The following trends are noted:

- **The Enrollment Gap:** Traditional districts consistently serve a higher density of EL students. In 2019, the gap stood at 4.68 percentage points (8.29% vs. 3.61%), widening slightly to 5.87 percentage points by 2025 (11.06% vs. 5.19%).
- **Growth Trends:** Both sectors experienced upward trajectories from 2019 through 2024. Charter school EL enrollment peaked in 2024 at 5.71% before experiencing a slight dip to 5.19% in 2025. Conversely, traditional districts saw uninterrupted growth, climbing steadily from 8.29% in 2019 to a high of 11.06% in 2025.

While there is little research related to the disparity between EL enrollment in districts and charters, the data underscores the need for continued monitoring of EL enrollment patterns and targeted strategies to ensure that all students have equal access to high-quality educational opportunities, regardless of the institutional model they choose, and that those schools are funded properly to serve the unique needs of English language learners and Multilingual students.

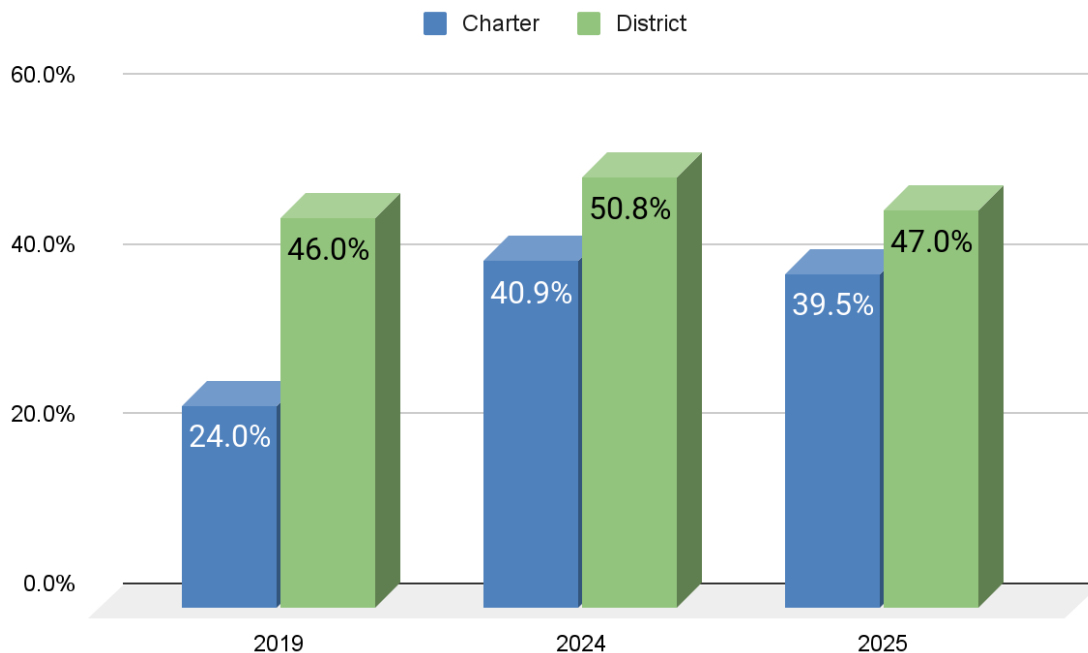
Figure 10: English Learners Percent Enrolled, Charters and Districts



Economically Disadvantaged Students

Charter schools have seen substantial increases in economically disadvantaged student enrollment since 2019. Charter schools enrolled 24.0% economically disadvantaged students in 2019, nearly doubling to 40.9% by 2024. Traditional districts, however, started from a significantly higher baseline of 46.0% in 2019 and continued climbing to a peak of 50.8% in 2024. Despite charter schools' dramatic growth in this population, traditional districts still serve a higher share of economically disadvantaged students. Notably, both sectors experienced a modest decline in 2025.

Figure 11: Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students, 2019, 2024, 2025



ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO ACCESS

The foundational promise of charter schools is rooted in educational innovation and the empowerment of family choice. However, the vitality of the charter sector is contingent upon a system that ensures high-quality options are accessible to all. To achieve true equity, several barriers must be systematically addressed:

Informational and Administrative Hurdles

Prospective families often encounter complex admission and application processes that can impede enrollment. Key obstacles include a lack of procedural transparency, linguistic barriers for non-English speaking households, and a persistent information gap regarding the tuition-free nature of charter schools. Without clear, accessible communication, these administrative hurdles can inadvertently exclude the very families who stand to benefit most from alternative educational models. The Office of Charter Schools works intentionally to reduce and eliminate barriers such as these by providing application and ready to open support to school founders and through consistent reviews of charter applications and lottery policies.

Geographic and Logistical Constraints

Access is frequently dictated by geography. The current landscape shows a significant concentration of charter schools in urban centers, leaving rural populations with fewer options. Furthermore, geographic barriers are compounded by fluctuating waitlist demands and the localized nature of transportation infrastructure, which can vary significantly between districts and individual schools.

Essential Support Services: Transportation and Nutrition

For many economically disadvantaged families, schools function as a primary safety net. The absence of robust transportation systems and comprehensive school nutrition programs may become a deciding factor in school selection. The Office of Charter Schools works intentionally to reduce and eliminate barriers such as these by requiring comprehensive school nutrition and transportation plans, by providing guidance and best practices for managing the costs and logistics of these programs, by connecting schools to resources, grants, and development opportunities in these areas.

Systemic Challenges to Sustainability

These individual barriers intersect with broader structural issues facing school operators. While rigorous authorization processes are necessary to ensure academic quality, new schools face a precarious first five-year window. During this critical period, leaders must navigate the simultaneous demands of building an educational program, earning community trust, and maintaining financial viability, often while operating with significantly less funding for essential auxiliary services like meals and transit.

Transportation

Under General Statute §115C-218.40, North Carolina charter schools maintain the autonomy to provide student transportation, provided they develop a formal plan ensuring that transit does not become a barrier for students residing within the local school administrative unit. While schools are exempt from providing services to students living within 1.5 miles of the campus, the diversity of adopted solutions reflects an effort to meet this legislative mandate. Charter schools

utilize a variety of transportation options including traditional busing, cluster stops, public transit, and carpooling systems. Notably, several schools are leveraging sustainability initiatives to modernize their fleets; many are transitioning from diesel to electric bus options, often supported by successful applications for electric bus grants.

The charter sector is not immune to the systemic pressures identified in the 2025 State of School Transportation report¹³. Nationally, transportation barriers are increasingly linked to academic and personal setbacks. While many schools and districts report increased transportation needs, funding has not remained at pace and challenges such as staffing shortages remain. This gap has tangible consequences, as many parents report that their children have missed essential services such as school meals, counseling, and academic tutoring due to transit issues. Furthermore, school leaders have identified a clear connection between transportation instability and chronic absenteeism, noting that a significant number of students are frequently late to school because of unreliable transit options.

NC charter schools not providing traditional busing programs report cost and staffing as main barriers. This is aligned to national data showing persistent driver shortages and budget shortfalls have forced many districts to cut or shorten bus routes, which effectively shifts the responsibility of transit onto families. This strain also impacts school personnel; many administrators find that teachers and staff must frequently divert time from their core instructional duties to manage transportation logistics. Ultimately, these findings suggest that transportation has evolved from a logistical utility into a central challenge for educational equity and staff productivity.

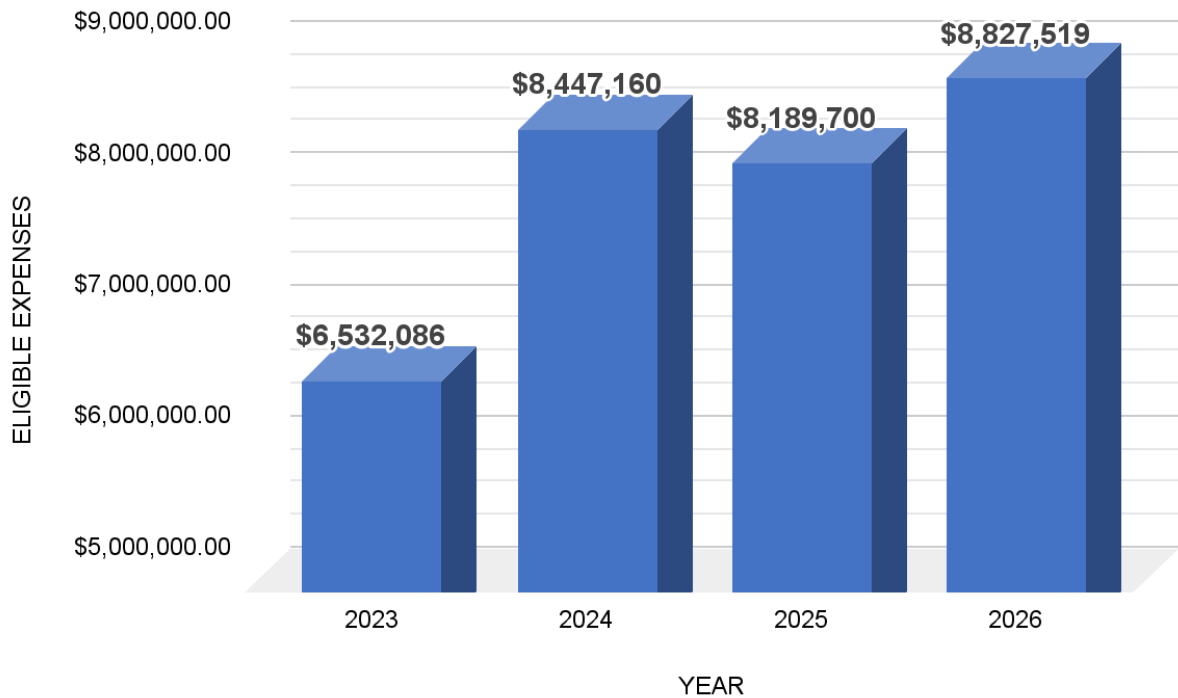
Charter School Transportation Grant

During the 2021 legislative session, the Charter School Transportation Grant was made permanent. This grant appropriates \$2.5 million in reimbursable transportation funding to charter schools who meet the eligibility requirement of serving 50% or more economically disadvantaged students. In the most recent grant cycle, fall 2025, a total of 74 eligible charter schools submitted applications with eligible expenses totaling over \$8.8 million dollars, far above the available funding. Feedback from grant recipients confirm that the transportation grant is allowing greater use and upkeep of traditional yellow bus fleets, 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.

Beyond transportation, the funding has indirectly strengthened child nutrition services, with the majority of participating schools engaged in the National School Lunch Program or Community Eligibility Provision, and many offering enhanced programming such as Second Chance Breakfast initiatives to serve student populations where 100% qualify for free and reduced lunch. The economic relief provided by dedicated transportation funding has created a ripple effect throughout school operations, allowing administrators to reallocate resources toward critical needs including textbook and supply upgrades, enhanced safety measures, expanded student activities such as field trips and leadership programs, and additional social services—ultimately creating a more comprehensive support system that addresses both the logistical and developmental needs of charter school students.

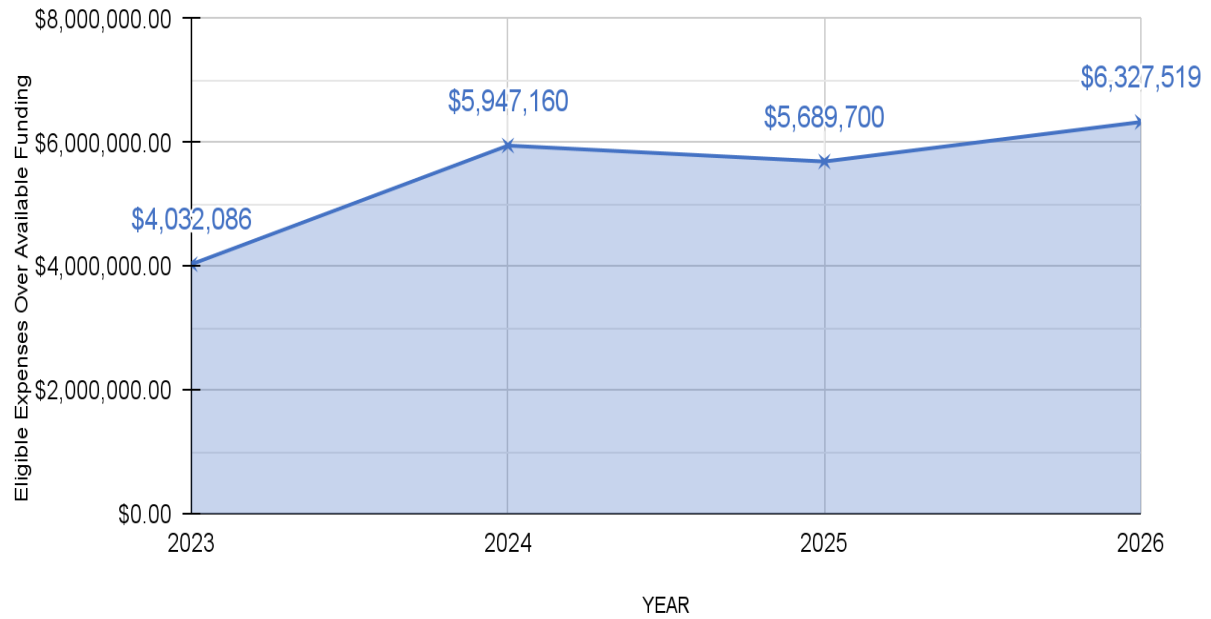
¹³ AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. (2025). *2025 state of school transportation report*. <https://apnorc.org/projects/2025-state-of-school-transportation/> (Accessed: April 22, 2026).

Figure 12: Charter School Transportation Grant Program, 2023 to 2026 - Eligible Expenses



The amount of state funding budgeted for the 2026 Charter School Transportation Grant was \$2.5 million. A total of \$2,498,371 was distributed to the eligible schools in the second week of February 2026. Individual school award amounts are determined based on the statutory provision allowing 65% of eligible expenses to be reimbursed. Given the number of eligible schools (74) and amount of eligible expenses (over 8 million dollars), that percentage of eligible expenses was significantly reduced to meet the total funds available. For the 2026 award, schools received approximately 31% of eligible expenses. Because the state funding was fully expended following fall semester applications, there was no spring semester application.

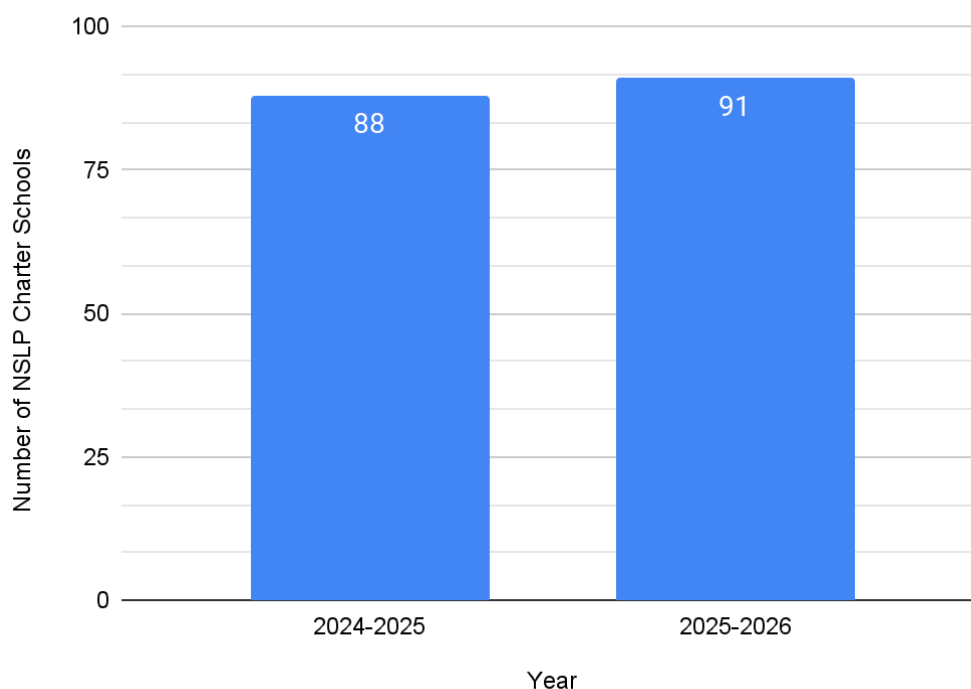
Figure 13: Charter School Transportation Grant Program, 2023 to 2026 - Eligible Expenses Over Available Funding



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 during the ready to open process.

Figure 14: Number of Charter Schools Participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)



North Carolina has seen a consistent upward trend in charter school participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This growth is driven by the NCDPI School Nutrition team, which provides the technical and compliance support necessary for these unique school models to navigate federal requirements.

North Carolina charter schools achieved the following:

- Total Participation: 91 charter schools implemented the NSLP, up from 88 the previous year.
- Meals Served: During the 2024-2025 school year, charter schools provided 4,920,132 school lunches and 2,651,203 breakfasts to students.

Recent reports^{14, 15} out of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) highlight challenges in implementation related to NSLP in charter schools. The reports discuss structural barriers often seen in NC charter schools including lack of kitchens, equipment, and difficulty accessing vendors for small-scale operations. Many NC charter schools operate in non-traditional facilities without commercial kitchens, making it hard to find vendors willing to deliver small meal counts. There are also administrative complexities including regulatory hurdles and a lack of specialized nutrition staff. Finally, there are access gaps between urban and rural schools. NC's rural charter schools may face greater challenges in procurement and logistics compared to urban hubs like Charlotte or Raleigh.

To address these gaps, the GAO recommends that the USDA improve data collection and provide targeted outreach specifically for charter school administrators. For North Carolina, this means that while state-level support is strong, federal improvements in streamlining regulatory requirements could help the state capture those remaining students who are eligible but underserved. By reducing the "administrative complexity" noted by the GAO, North Carolina can continue its trajectory of increasing both the number of participating schools and the total meals served.

¹⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office (2024) Many Charter School Students Are Eligible for Free Lunches, but Their Schools May Not Participate in the Program. Available at: <https://www.gao.gov/blog/many-charter-school-students-are-eligible-free-lunches-schools-may-not-participate-program> (Accessed: April 22, 2026).

¹⁵ U.S. Government Accountability Office (2024) *School Meal Programs: Better Data and Additional USDA Outreach Could Help Address Charter School Participation Barriers*. GAO-25-106846. Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office. Available at: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-106846.pdf> (Accessed: 22 April 2026).

CHARTER SCHOOL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

This section examines the academic performance of North Carolina charter schools for the 2024–25 school year. Authored by Dr. Shaun Kellogg of the Office of Research and Promising Practices at the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), the analysis leverages disaggregated state test results and School Performance Grade data from 2018–19 through 2024–25. Specifically, it evaluates four key dimensions of performance:

1. student proficiency and readiness by subgroup;
2. school-level performance grades;
3. academic growth;
4. and low-performing status.

School Performance Grades (SPG), expected academic growth, and low-performing school designations are limited to charter schools with at least 30 tested students and a valid SPG grade. Analyses of subgroup Grade Level Proficiency (GLP) and College & Career Readiness (CCR) include the full tested population across all charter schools. These values are produced using the same methodology applied to the prior reports and represent a complete census of tested students rather than a filtered subset.

Each year the NCDPI Accountability Division publishes an Annual Testing Report (available at NCDPI's website) with detailed academic analysis on the state's public schools, including charter schools.

Key Findings

Overall, findings for the 2024-25 school year suggest that charter schools are following a pattern broadly similar to statewide public school and district trends: modest post-pandemic recovery in grade-level proficiency, weaker recovery in college and career readiness, and persistent subgroup gaps that remain below pre-pandemic levels.

Key findings include the following:

- **School Performance Grades improved modestly from the prior school year.** In 2024-25, the share of charter schools earning an A or B increased from 26.6% to 30.1%, while the share earning a D or F declined from 31.5% to 29.1%. C remained the largest category, decreasing slightly from 41.9% to 40.8% of schools.
- **Academic growth also improved, providing important context for interpreting proficiency results.** In 2024-25, 72.3% of charter schools met or exceeded expected academic growth, up 2 percentage points from 70.3% in 2023-24, indicating that schools are moving students forward at expected or better rates.
- **Grade Level Proficiency improved slightly but remains below pre-pandemic levels.** Charter grade level proficiency was 61.2% in 2024-25, 6 percentage points below 2019.
- **College and Career Readiness declined and remains the clearest academic concern.** Charter school college and career readiness was 38.9% in 2024-25, down 2.1 percentage points from 2024 and 13.1 points below 2019.

- **Subgroup patterns remain uneven.** English Language Learners are 1.4 percentage points below their 2019 baseline, a smaller long-term decline than most subgroups, while Students with Disabilities have the largest long-run grade level proficiency decline and the lowest college and career readiness rate among the reported subgroups.

School Academic Performance

This section examines school-level accountability outcomes for charter schools with sufficient tested students and valid accountability results. It begins with School Performance Grades (SPG), which summarize school-level performance, then examines expected academic growth, which shows whether students are making expected progress based on their prior performance. These measures should be interpreted together: SPG provides a snapshot of overall accountability status, while growth provides important context about school trajectory.

Schools without sufficient tested students, valid accountability outcomes, or applicable SPG results are excluded from these analyses..

School Performance Grades

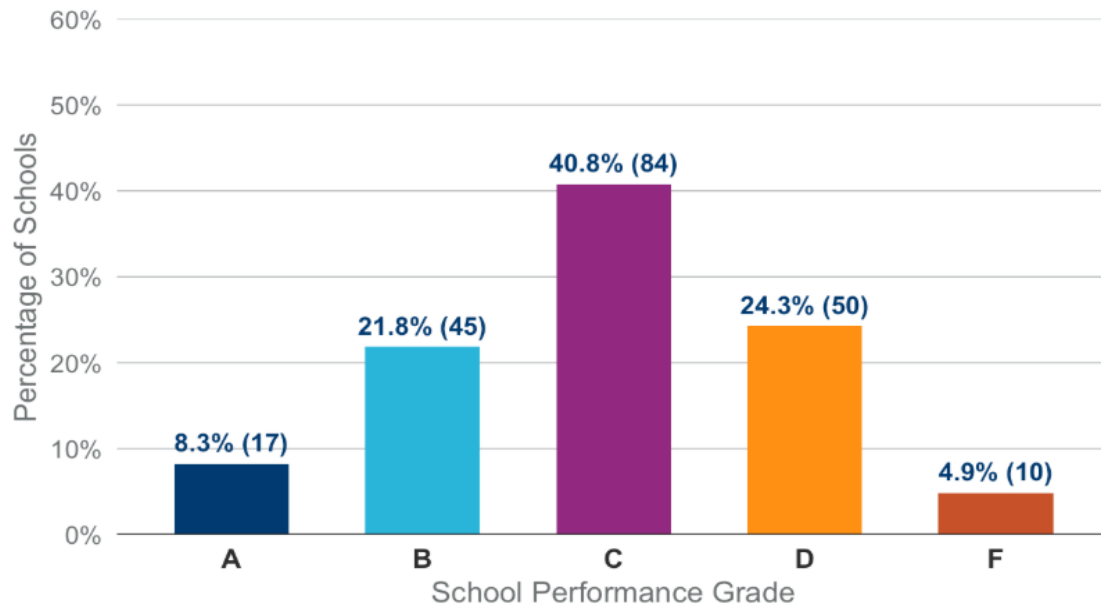
School Performance Grades provide a useful snapshot of school-level accountability outcomes, but a single grade can mask different academic trajectories. Some schools with lower absolute proficiency may be making strong progress with students, while other schools with similar or higher grades may show weaker growth.

Among the 206 charter schools with sufficient tested students and valid SPG grades in 2024-25, 84, 40.8% earned a C. A total of 30.1% earned an A or B, compared with 26.6% in 2023-24. The remaining 29.1% received a D or F, including 10 schools that earned an F.

Figure 15: Charter School School Performance Grades, 2024-2025

2024–2025 Charter School Performance Grades

A total of 30.1% earned an A or B, compared with 26.6% in 2023–24



Includes 206 of 213 charter schools. Excludes 4 schools on the Alternative Accountability Model and 3 with fewer than 30 tested students.

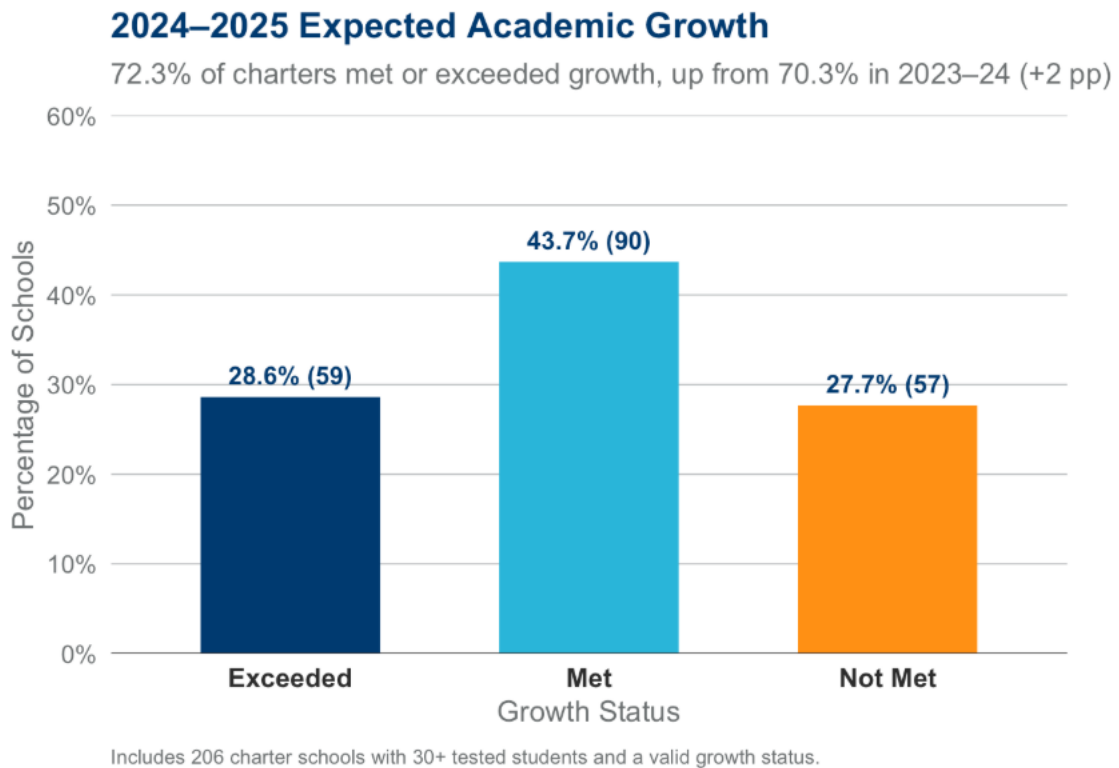
This pattern is neither uniformly positive nor uniformly negative. It suggests that many schools are clustered near the middle of the accountability distribution, where future movement could materially change the statewide charter school profile. Because a single SPG grade can mask different academic trajectories, school grades should be considered alongside expected academic growth to distinguish between lower-rated schools that are improving and lower-rated schools where low achievement is accompanied by weak growth.

Academic Growth

Academic growth shows whether students are making expected progress given their prior performance. It is especially important in a post-pandemic recovery context because proficiency levels can remain below pre-pandemic benchmarks even when students are learning at an expected or accelerated rate.

Among the 206 charter schools with a valid growth status in 2024-25, 72.3% met or exceeded expected academic growth, a gain of 2 percentage points over 2023-24, when 70.3% of charter schools met or exceeded expected growth. A total of 59 schools (28.6%) exceeded growth expectations, while 90 (43.7%) met expectations.

Figure 16: Charter School Expected Academic Growth, 2024-2025



The 57 schools (27.7%) that did not meet expected growth represent the most acute area of concern in the growth results. These schools are not making expected progress relative to students' prior performance and warrant closer review, particularly where low growth coincides with a D or F School Performance Grade.

Growth results are especially useful for interpreting lower School Performance Grades reported in the previous section. While a low SPG rating remains a serious concern, it does not always indicate the same improvement trajectory.

This distinction is visible across lower-rated schools. Among charter schools with D or F grades and valid growth results, 33 schools met or exceeded expected growth, indicating meaningful student progress despite low proficiency levels. Another 26 received a D or F and did not meet expected growth. This latter group represents the clearest priority for intensive monitoring, school improvement support, and renewal review because low achievement is paired with insufficient academic progress.

Taken together, the grade and growth results indicate cautious improvement rather than full recovery. A larger share of charter schools met or exceeded growth in 2024-25 than in 2023-24, but there is still a substantial group of charter schools with low accountability grades or weak

growth. These schools warrant close monitoring and support to ensure that they are able to improve outcomes for students in the coming years.

Subgroup Academic Performance

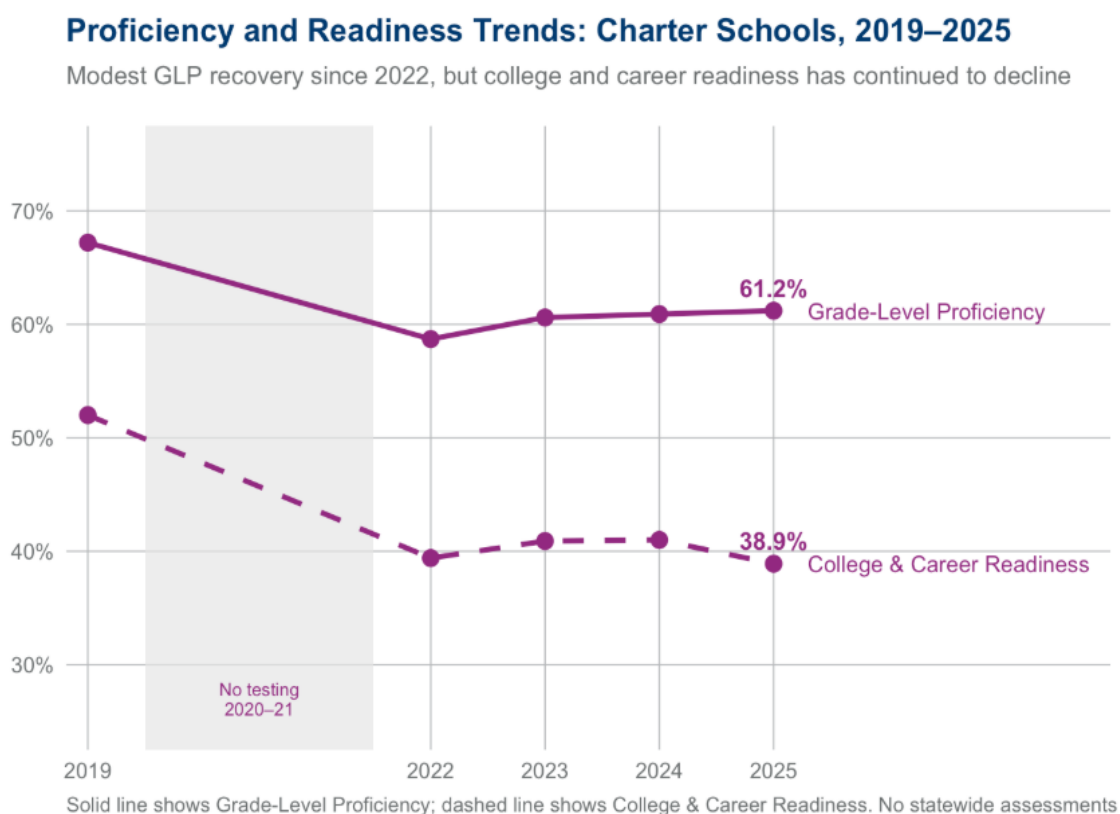
This section examines student academic performance by race, ethnicity, and special population status. It begins with overall Grade Level Proficiency (GLP) and College and Career Readiness (CCR) trends for charter schools, then examines subgroup results. The subgroup tables should be interpreted as descriptive indicators of performance among students served by charter schools, not as causal estimates of the effect of attending a charter school.

The subgroup results should also be interpreted alongside enrollment context from the 2024 Annual Charter Schools Report. Charter schools have become more diverse over time, including growth in Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial enrollment since 2010. At the same time, Hispanic students and English Learners remain underrepresented in charter enrollment relative to traditional public schools, while Economically Disadvantaged Students have become a much larger share of charter enrollment since 2019. Students with Disabilities also vary substantially across individual charter schools, which means statewide averages can hide very different service contexts across schools.

Proficiency and Readiness Trends

As illustrated in the figure below, viewing GLP and CCR together reveals a split recovery: grade-level proficiency has improved modestly since the 2022 low, while college and career readiness has continued to lag behind its 2019 baseline. These charter school trends broadly mirror the statewide pattern: post-pandemic declines on both measures, followed by gradual GLP recovery with college and career readiness still lagging.

Figure 17: Proficiency and Readiness Trends, Charter Schools, 2019-2025



The next two sections examine GLP and CCR separately, with attention to how each pattern varies across student subgroups.

Grade Level Proficiency

Grade Level Proficiency (GLP) represents the share of tested students meeting the state's grade-level standard. NC charter schools overall reached a GLP rate of 61.2% in 2024-25, a modest improvement of 0.3 percentage points over the prior year, though charter schools remain below their 2019 pre-pandemic level.

Table 11: Grade Level Proficiency (%) by subgroup and year for NC charter schools, 2019–2025

Subgroup	Grade Level Proficiency (%)					Change		
	2019	2022	2023	2024	2025	YoY	2022	2019
Race/Ethnicity								
American Indian	53.7%	46.2%	50.7%	50.4%	51.8%	+1.4	+5.6	-1.9
Asian	89.1%	85.5%	86.7%	87.9%	88.2%	+0.3	+2.7	-0.9
Black	49.2%	40.4%	44.0%	45.9%	46.8%	+0.9	+6.4	-2.4
Hispanic	59.5%	51.3%	52.3%	53.3%	54.3%	+1.0	+3.0	-5.2
Multiracial	65.3%	57.4%	59.6%	58.9%	59.9%	+1.0	+2.5	-5.4
White	75.5%	68.1%	69.2%	69.0%	68.6%	-0.4	+0.5	-6.9
Special Populations								
Econ. Disadvantaged	48.7%	40.7%	45.0%	46.7%	46.9%	+0.2	+6.2	-1.8
English Language Learners	38.4%	31.2%	32.7%	34.8%	37.0%	+2.2	+5.8	-1.4
Students with Disabilities	30.9%	24.5%	25.4%	25.1%	23.8%	-1.3	-0.7	-7.1
All Charter Schools	67.2%	58.7%	60.6%	60.9%	61.2%	+0.3	+2.5	-6.0

YoY = year-over-year change (2024–2025); change columns show absolute difference from the 2022 pandemic low and the 2019 pre-pandemic baseline.

Despite the year-over-year increase, the longer-term picture is still one of incomplete recovery. Charter GLP overall is 6 percentage points below 2019. The subgroup results show meaningful variation beneath that overall trend.

A few patterns stand out:

- **Asian students showed the smallest long-term GLP decline** (-0.9 pp since 2019), maintaining the highest GLP rate among all racial/ethnic subgroups at 88.2% in 2024–25. No subgroup shows a net gain over the 2019 pre-pandemic baseline.
- **English Language Learners and Economically Disadvantaged students showed relatively modest long-term declines** (-1.4 and -1.8 pp, respectively), and both groups improved year-over-year. The EDS stability is notable given that the EDS population in charter schools has increased substantially since 2019, meaning the sector is serving a larger economically disadvantaged population while maintaining relative stability in GLP for that subgroup.
- **Students with Disabilities showed the largest long-term GLP decline** of any subgroup (-7.1 pp since 2019), and their 2024–25 GLP rate of 23.8% remains well below

the charter-wide average. Unlike most subgroups, SWD GLP declined year-over-year as well. This is the most persistent subgroup concern in the GLP table, particularly because the 2024 Annual Charter Schools Report documented wide variation in SWD enrollment across individual charter schools.

These patterns suggest that recovery is occurring, but not uniformly. The GLP findings are encouraging where year-over-year gains and long-term stability overlap, such as with Economically Disadvantaged and American Indian students. However, the results call for closer attention, where low current performance, long-term decline, and service-intensity concerns converge, especially for Students with Disabilities.

College and Career Readiness

College and Career Readiness (CCR) is a higher performance threshold than GLP and therefore provides a sharper view of whether students are reaching the state's readiness standard. CCR trends indicate that readiness has recovered more slowly than grade-level proficiency. Charter CCR fell from 52% in 2019 to 38.9% in 2024-25, a decline of 13.1 percentage points. Unlike GLP, which showed a year-over-year gain, CCR declined 2.1 pp from 2024 to 2025.

Table 12: College & Career Readiness (%) by subgroup and year for NC charter schools, 2019–2025

Subgroup	College & Career Readiness (%)					Change		
	2019	2022	2023	2024	2025	YoY	2022	2019
Race/Ethnicity								
American Indian	37.7%	27.1%	29.4%	30.7%	30.5%	-0.2	+3.4	-7.2
Asian	79.9%	71.3%	73.3%	74.7%	72.9%	-1.8	+1.6	-7.0
Black	32.8%	22.1%	24.4%	25.7%	24.3%	-1.4	+2.2	-8.5
Hispanic	43.0%	31.3%	32.2%	32.6%	30.7%	-1.9	-0.6	-12.3
Multiracial	50.3%	38.5%	39.9%	39.8%	38.1%	-1.7	-0.4	-12.2
White	60.6%	48.0%	49.2%	48.8%	45.9%	-2.9	-2.1	-14.7
Special Populations								
Econ. Disadvantaged	32.7%	22.4%	25.4%	26.5%	24.4%	-2.1	+2.0	-8.3
English Language Learners	22.6%	14.3%	16.1%	17.2%	16.2%	-1.0	+1.9	-6.4
Students with Disabilities	19.6%	12.7%	13.0%	12.7%	10.3%	-2.4	-2.4	-9.3
All Charter Schools	52.0%	39.4%	40.9%	41.0%	38.9%	-2.1	-0.5	-13.1

YoY = year-over-year change (2024–2025); change columns show absolute difference from the 2022 pandemic low and the 2019 pre-pandemic baseline.

CCR declines were universal across subgroups in 2024-25, with the magnitude of long-term losses notable for the following groups:

- **White students experienced the largest absolute decline since 2019** (-14.7 pp), dropping from 60.6% to 45.9%. Their 2025 CCR rate remains above the charter average, but the scale of loss is large.
- **Students with Disabilities have the lowest college and career readiness rate of any reported subgroup.** Their CCR rate fell to 10.3% in 2024-25, fewer than one in ten, down from 19.6% in 2019 and declining again year-over-year.
- **Hispanic students have the second-largest long-term loss among racial/ethnic subgroups**, declining 12.3 pp since 2019. This finding should be read alongside the 2024 Annual Charter Schools Report's discussion of Hispanic underrepresentation in charter enrollment, since both enrollment access and academic outcomes are important for understanding how well charter schools are serving different student groups.

While charter school CCR follows a historical trend similar to district trends, charters have declined at a somewhat steeper rate. While the gap is meaningful, the breadth of the decline across all public schools suggests that CCR decline is not charter-specific but rather is part of a broader statewide readiness challenge. The GLP-CCR divergence likely reflects the fact that more students are reaching the minimum grade-level standard than are reaching the higher readiness threshold. In practical terms, this suggests that recovery at the lower proficiency threshold has not yet translated into comparable recovery at the college and career readiness threshold.

Low-Performing Charter Schools

North Carolina law requires annual identification of low-performing schools. Two designations apply specifically to charter schools:

- **Low-Performing School (LP):** A school that earned a School Performance Grade of D or F and a growth status of Met or Not Met.
- **Continually Low-Performing Charter School (CLP):** A charter school identified as low-performing in any two of the last three years.

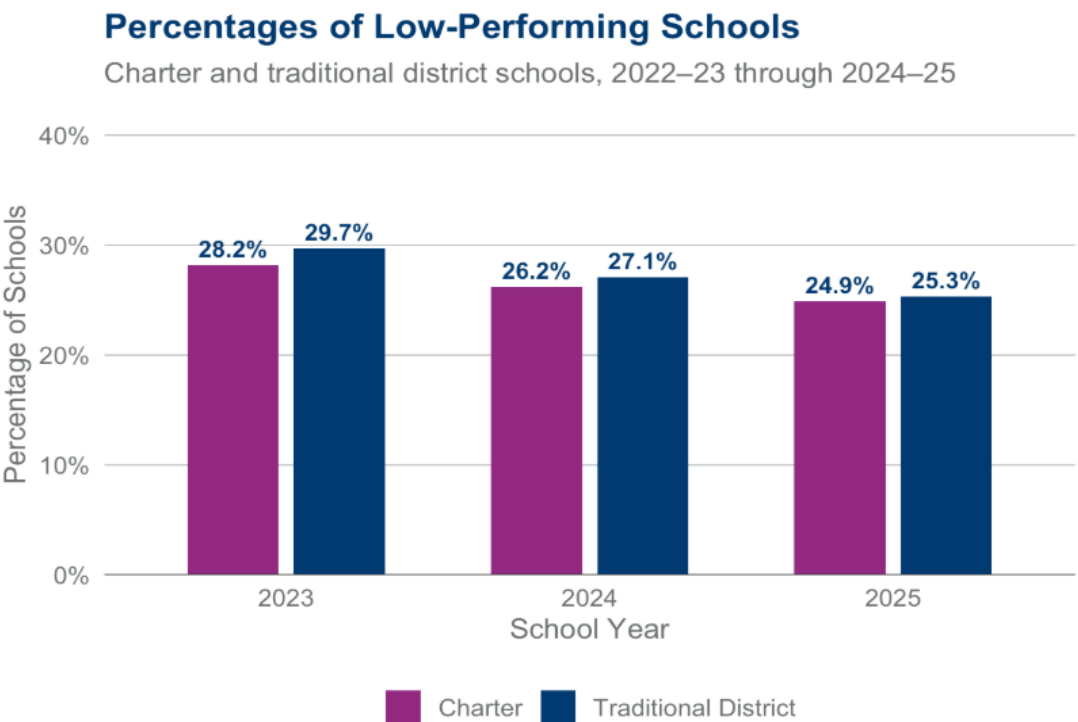
Low-performing school information is presented annually to the State Board of Education and submitted to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC), including data on charter schools. These designations signal schools where accountability outcomes are insufficient and where additional monitoring, school improvement planning, or renewal review may be warranted.

Low-Performing Charter Schools, 2022–2025

In 2024–25, 53 charter schools (24.9%) were identified as low-performing, a modest decline from 55 (26.2%) in 2023–24. The LP rate for charter schools has trended downward over the three-year period, from 28.2% in 2022–23.

For comparison, 25.3% of traditional public schools in districts with charter schools were identified as low-performing in 2024–25, also declining from recent years. Charter and district LP rates are now nearly equivalent, having tracked closely across all three years.

Figure 18: Low Performing Schools, Charter and District

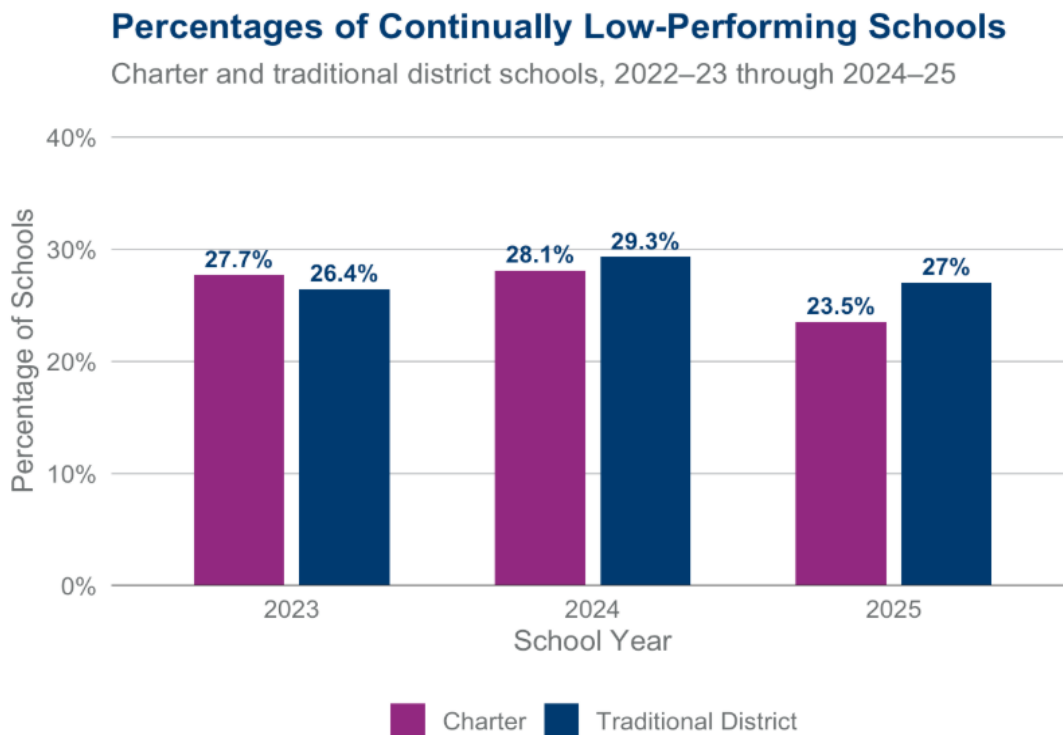


Continually Low-Performing Charter Schools, 2022–2025

In 2024–25, 50 charter schools (23.5%) were identified as continually low-performing, a meaningful decline from 59 (28.1%) in 2023–24. This reverses the upward trend seen between 2022–23 and 2023–24, when the CLP share rose from 27.7% to 28.1%.

By contrast, the CLP share for traditional public school districts held relatively stable, declining modestly from 29.3% in 2023–24 to 27% in 2024–25. Unlike charter schools, district CLP rates had risen sharply between 2022–23 and 2023–24.

Figure 19: Continually Low-Performing Schools, Charter and District



The CLP decline for charter schools is a positive indicator, particularly when read alongside the school performance grade and growth results earlier in this section. Schools that improve their growth status or SPG grade in consecutive years can exit CLP status, and the drop from 28.1% to 23.5% is consistent with the modest improvement in charter school performance grades and growth reported above.

CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING

Funding and Membership

For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the allotted ADM was 161,057, equating to 10.5% of total ADM and \$1,231,250,961 in state allotted funding¹⁶ out of the \$12.75 billion total State 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](#).

Facility and Economic Development

Facility acquisition remains one of the most significant barriers charter schools face, and the creative solutions they pursue often yield broader community benefits in the process. Adaptive reuse (converting former retail spaces, office buildings, or warehouses into learning environments) has become a defining feature of charter school development¹⁷. The adaptive reuse trend reflects a wider shift in how communities think about underutilized commercial space; vacant office buildings, retail spaces, and other structures find new purpose.

Many charter schools also deepen their community ties by sharing facilities with libraries, community centers, or faith-based organizations thereby maximizing the utility of existing assets and reducing the burden on any single organization to carry overhead alone.

The economic footprint of charter schools extends well beyond the classroom. They are significant local employers, generating direct jobs for teachers, administrators, and support staff, while also driving purchasing from local vendors for supplies, maintenance, and services. Capital investment is another meaningful channel: charter school construction and renovation is primarily financed through bonds, private financing, grants, and philanthropic contributions rather than state education budgets, channeling private capital into local economic development.

¹⁶[Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget](#)

¹⁷ 22Beacon (2025) *Adaptive reuse architecture for schools*. Available at: <https://www.22beacon.org/post/adaptive-reuse-architecture-for-schools> (Accessed: 30 April 2026).

See the 2024 Annual Charter Schools report for specific examples of adaptive reuse, renovations, and community impact within the North Carolina charter school sector.

DRAFT

CHALLENGES FACING NC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools were asked to report on their top challenges and concerns. One hundred and twenty-eight (128) charter schools completed the survey question: “What are your current top three challenges or concerns?” The information below summarizes those responses.

Responses highlight the following top concerns:

1. **Facility maintenance/acquisition costs** (55 mentions) — The most frequently cited challenge, often paired with concerns about limited funding to address aging infrastructure.
2. **Lack of state budget & federal uncertainty** (54 mentions) — Extremely close to #1. Many leaders noted that the absence of a state budget directly compounds nearly every other challenge, especially salaries and staffing.
3. **Teacher recruitment/retention** (53 mentions) — Also nearly tied for the top, with leaders frequently noting that low NC teacher salaries make it hard to compete with other states and the private sector.
4. **Exceptional Children staffing/funding** (46 mentions) — EC concerns appeared consistently across school sizes and regions, with many leaders pointing to both insufficient funding and difficulty finding qualified staff.
5. **General budget concerns** (44 mentions) — A broad category that is often tied into the other four — tight budgets limit competitive salaries, facility upkeep, EC services, and technology.

These top five concerns are deeply interconnected. Budget uncertainty drives staffing problems, which drive retention issues, which affect student outcomes. Many respondents explicitly noted this cascade in their open-ended comments. It is also worth noting the concerns surrounding Exceptional Children programming - particularly the funding and staffing for those services - and how those may relate to the low academic performance noted in the subgroup analysis earlier in this report.

BEST PRACTICES AND INNOVATION

Charter schools represent a transformative approach to public education, offering families meaningful alternatives within the existing system. Through a rigorous charter development process, founders create schools with distinctive educational philosophies, innovative curricula, and specialized programming designed to serve diverse student needs and interests. The appeal of charter schools stems from their ability to provide targeted educational experiences aligned with specific missions, such as emphasizing arts integration, STEM focus, classical education, or unique pedagogical approaches. North Carolina's charter school success fundamentally rests upon empowering families with choice, allowing parents to select learning environments and educational approaches that best nurture the individual talents, interests, and learning styles of their children.

The spotlights below reflect some of the current diverse opportunities available through the North Carolina charter community including recognitions and innovations. Together, they demonstrate charter schools' capacity to innovate, serve diverse populations, achieve national recognition, and strengthen local communities.

School Turnaround and Academic Achievement

Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy — Bladen County

School Profile:

Military-themed charter school serving grades 6–12; 281 students from 8 counties; 65%+ economically disadvantaged.

Achievement:

In 2022, the N.C. Charter Schools Review Board nearly closed the Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy after the school received a failing state grade and posted a math proficiency rate of only 15%. Under the leadership of Superintendent Jason Wray, who took the helm that year, the school undertook a comprehensive turnaround. Wray prioritized teacher retention, student nutrition (adding a cafeteria and enrolling in the National School Lunch Program), one-to-one technology access, transportation, and restorative discipline practices.

By 2024–25, the school's math proficiency had climbed to 35%, its state grade improved to a C, and its enrollment more than doubled from 115 to 281 students. The N.C. Charter Schools Review Board responded by granting the school its maximum possible charter renewal (10 years) in 2025.

Central Wake High School — Wake County

School Profile:

Alternative charter high school serving credit-deficient and at-risk students, grades 9–12; 363 students enrolled; ~85% from low-income families.

Achievement:

Central Wake High School, which serves students who have dropped out or are at risk of doing so, has consistently earned 'highly effective' ratings under North Carolina's alternative accountability framework. The school maintains a 96% student satisfaction rate (sustained over three years) and expanded its programming in 2024–25 to include a third daily session,

dual-enrollment pathways with Wake Technical Community College, and career technical education (CTE) courses in fields including culinary arts, health science, carpentry, and welding. In 2024–25, students earned 95 CTE credits and 24 industry-based certifications — up from 74 CTE credits and no certifications the prior year. Upon graduation, 81% of seniors indicated plans to pursue college or technical training, with follow-up surveys confirming 68% had enrolled in a postsecondary program.

Community Resilience and Crisis Response

FernLeaf Community Charter School — Western North Carolina

School Profile:

K–12 school with two campuses (Creek and Wilderness); approximately 750 students; celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2024–25.

Achievement:

Hurricane Helene caused catastrophic flooding that destroyed FernLeaf's Creek Campus in fall 2024, rendering three buildings a total loss while approximately 450 students were enrolled. School leadership made the swift decision to accelerate completion of the Wilderness Campus expansion and consolidate all 750 students on a single campus, a facility that was never designed for that capacity.

Within three weeks of the storm, all students were back in school under one roof. Staff members, many of whom had suffered damage to their own homes or were without power and water, showed up to prepare classrooms and build furniture. The Creek Campus has since been rebuilt, housing students from kindergarten through fourth grade.

FernLeaf will also graduate its first class of seniors in May 2026, marking a milestone for the school as it begins a new chapter following the storm.

National Recognition and Awards

Northeast Academy for Aerospace and Advanced Technologies (NEAAAT) Elizabeth City

Award:

Building Hope IMPACT Award — Student Empowerment Category (1st Place Nationally); \$20,000 grant.

Achievement:

NEAAAT ranked first nationally among charter schools in the Student Empowerment category of Building Hope's IMPACT Awards, which recognizes excellence in equipping students with tools to shape their own futures. Principal Leah Lane credited student-driven initiatives such as Mastery Road Maps, which allow learners to pursue additional learning at their own pace.

Notably, all four national IMPACT Award winners were North Carolina charter schools — the first time in the four-year history of the program that a single state has swept all four categories. Other winning North Carolina schools included the Sallie B. Howard School of Arts and Science (Wilson), Island Montessori Charter School (Wilmington), and Reaching All Minds STEM Academy (Durham).

TMSA Apex — Math and Science Academy of Apex

Award:

Leader in Me Lighthouse School Certification — Franklin Covey Education.

Achievement:

TMSA Apex received the Leader in Me Lighthouse School designation, one of the highest recognitions awarded to schools participating in the Leader in Me framework (adopted by more than 8,000 schools globally). The certification reflects measurable gains in student confidence, attendance, family engagement, and a significant reduction in discipline referrals. TMSA Apex will hold this designation for two years.

Purple Star Award Recipients — 2025–26

Award:

Purple Star Award from the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, recognizing military-friendly schools.

Achievement:

Fifteen North Carolina charter schools earned the Purple Star Award for 2025–26:

- Alpha Academy
- Anderson Creek Academy
- The Academy of Moore County
- Ascend Leadership Academy
- The Math & Science Academy of Apex
- Neuse Charter School
- North Carolina Cyber Academy
- Northeast Academy for Aerospace & Advanced Technologies (NEAAAT)
- The NC Leadership Charter Academy
- Pine Springs Preparatory Academy
- Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy: A Challenge Foundation
- TMSA Charlotte Elementary
- Triangle Math and Science Academy
- Wayne Preparatory Academy
- Wayne Stem Academy

Alpha Academy and Anderson Creek Academy received legacy plaques for earning the award all seven years of the program's existence. NEAAAT earned a legacy plaque for six consecutive years of Purple Star recognition.

Brevard Academy — Amazing Shake Competition

Achievement:

Brevard Academy hosted its inaugural Amazing Shake Competition, modeled after the program created by the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta. More than 150 middle school students competed across multiple rounds, interacting with community business professionals to demonstrate professional etiquette, interview skills, composure under pressure, and public speaking ability. The event reflects the school's commitment to preparing students for careers and civic life beyond academics.

Student Achievement and Leadership

Moram Hamed — TMSA Triad (Guilford County)

Achievement:

Moram Hamed, a senior at TMSA Triad, was selected as one of only 20 statewide nominees in the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program — one of the most prestigious honors for graduating high school seniors in the nation. She is the only student from Guilford County to receive this honor.

Moram is ranked in the Top 10 of her senior class and founded the TMSA Triad chapter of HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America), inspiring peers to pursue healthcare certifications and community service. Her leadership also contributed to TMSA Triad earning the 2025 National Gold Council of Excellence Award at the NASC Conference. Beyond academics, she volunteers at Novant Health Hospital, serves as a Sudan Young Leader, and founded her own entrepreneurial venture, Mendhi by Moram.

Roshan Naik — Pine Lake Preparatory

Achievement:

Roshan Naik, a student at Pine Lake Preparatory, won the 2025 Congressional App Challenge for North Carolina's 10th Congressional District. He developed Nation Vitals, an interactive visual analytics web application that allows users to explore county-level data trends across the United States. The Congressional App Challenge is a national competition that encourages students to develop civic and practical applications of computer science skills.

Global Engagement and Service

Pine Springs Preparatory Academy (PSPA) Holly Springs

Achievement:

A team of 12 teachers and staff members from Pine Springs Preparatory Academy traveled to Arusha, Tanzania in July 2025 on a 13-day mission to support four pre- and primary schools: St. Charles Mlimani Pre and Primary School, St. Gemma, Ernest Meyner, and St. Clare.

The initiative, organized by former PSPA math teacher Kristen Favia, raised \$21,000 through a variety of creative fundraisers — including a community dance event, a Give Butter campaign, and a student-designed t-shirt project that incorporated project-based learning across the school. The team delivered 12 suitcases of school supplies, conducted instructional coaching in math and English Language Arts, provided first aid training, and delivered supplies including Chromebooks, sports equipment, and classroom manipulatives.

PSPA plans to organize a follow-up trip in June 2026 and has established ongoing digital communication with Tanzanian educators. The experience has deepened teachers' perspectives on education and global citizenship, with staff committed to sharing these lessons with students in their own classrooms.

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.

2025 Principal of the Year for charter schools:

- Dr. Jake Wilson- Mountain Island Charter School, Mount Holly, NC

2026 Principal of the Year for charter schools:

- Deborah Brown, The Exploris School, Raleigh, 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.

2025 Charter Teacher of the Year:

- Lindsay Phillips, Mountain Island Charter School, Mount Holly, NC

2026 Charter Teacher of the Year:

- Stephanie Lane, Lake Norman Charter School, Huntersville, NC