SECTION I: INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Subsection I: Overview of Public School Models in the U.S.

Throughout the United States, there are several models of public schools, among which the most prominent are traditional public schools, charter schools, and magnet schools.[1] Traditional public schools have by far the most enrollment, followed by charter schools, and lastly magnet schools.[2] There has been a macro trend of increasing enrollment in public schools since the 1990s, particularly within charter and magnet schools.[3] Given these shifting dynamics, it is important to understand the distinctions between these three school systems.

A) Traditional Public Schools

Traditional public schools are the most popular and widely-used option for schooling in the United States. They are free and open to all students, with no admissions processes, and are funded by the government through taxpayers.[4] The local school district or board of education determines the standards, curricula, and staffing.[5] They have limited autonomy in terms of their curriculum, as they receive academic guidelines from policies such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).[6] Adopted by many states, the CCSS ensures that students meet established standards of English and mathematics for every grade level through standardized assessments and specifically designed curricula.[7] In recent years, traditional public schools have faced declining enrollment, losing approximately 1.8 million students from 2011 to 2021.[8]

B) Charter Schools

Following their first legalization in Minnesota in 1991, charter schools are now lawful in most states.[9] Much like traditional public schools, charter schools are funded by taxpayers, have no tuition, and are open to all students.[10] These schools do not use entrance exams or any admission criteria, and students are admitted by lottery if applicants exceed school capacity.[11] In the ten years from 2011 to 2022, the quantity of charter schools rose by nearly 38%.[12] Around the same time span, enrollment increased by around 105%.[13] Of the nearly 3.8 million students that attended charter schools in 2021-2022, around 47.5% were Prekindergarten and Elementary

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[1] Ke Wang et al., *School Choice in the United States: 2019*, (NCES 2019-106). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (September, 2019): 1. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019106.pdf.
[2] Ke, *School Choice*, 58.
[3] Ke, *School Choice*, 58.
[4] Katherine Schaeffer, "U.S. Public, Private and Charter Schools in 5 Charts," Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, June 6, 2024), https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/06/06/us-public-private-and-charter-schools-in-5-charts/.
[5] Schaeffer, "U.S. Public."
[6] Andrew Porter et al., "Common Core Standards: The New U.S. Intended Curriculum," *Educational Researcher* 40, no. 3 (2011): 103, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lvh315llCsDLndW2oxHLxetagQujMc4x/view?usp=sharing.
[7] Porter, "Common Core Standards," 103-104.
[8] Schaeffer, "U.S. Public."
[9] National Charter School Resource Center, "NCSRC | National Charter School Resource Center," Ed.gov, 2013, https://charterschoolcenter.ed.gov/what-charter-school.
[10] Schaeffer, "U.S. Public."
[11] National Charter School Resource Center, "NCSRC."
[12] National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics, 2022 - Table 216.20" nces.ed.gov, 2023, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_216.20.asp.
[13] National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics, 2022 - Table 216.30"

students, 10.4% were middle school students, and 27.3% were secondary and high school students.[14]

Although charter schools receive public funding, they contrast with traditional public schools in that they do not have to adopt the district mandated curricula or standards.[15] These schools are established through a contract between a private board and charter authorizer, releasing the school from many governmental regulations.[16] As such charter schools have more autonomy with how they structure their education, often leading them to implement enrichment programs, block scheduling, and other specialized programs.[17] What sets charter schools apart from traditional public schools is their flexibility in managing funds, staffing, and educational programs without intervention from the government or school district.

C) Magnet Schools

Magnet schools are public schools funded by taxpayers and managed by the local school district, but they are specially designed to attract diverse students from all across a district.[18] These schools offer specialized curricula in areas such as STEM, performing arts, culinary arts, International Baccalaureate, and various other concentrated educational programs.[19] Magnet schools grew popular in the 1970s as the government recognized it as a desegregation tool through Morgan v. Kerrigan.[20] Congress also began the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) as a federal grant to encourage the establishment of magnets for desegregation, funding up to 117 school districts between 1985 and 1993.[21] MSAP-funded schools tend to function in two different contexts. Some "traditional" magnets begin as low-performing schools serving primarily low-income and minority students in the area with a focus on recruiting high-performing students that would diversify race and socioeconomic status in the student body.[22] Other magnets are high-performing, generally serving high-income and nonminority students with a focus on recruiting minority, low-income students.[23]

Magnet schools often use different methods of enrollment than traditional public schools and charter schools. Some operate under a "no attendance zone" policy that allows anyone from within the school district to apply to the school, while others use an "attendance zone" structure

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[14] National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics, 2022 - Table 216.30"
[15] Andrew P. Kelly and Tom Loveless, "Comparing New School Effects in Charter and Traditional Public Schools," *American Journal of Education* 118, no. 4 (August 2012): 427, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IGWTNk_j0IoTrB1M7tjXlxyVRTDTSXfN/view?usp=sharing.
[16] Melissa A Clark et al., "Do Charter Schools Improve Student Achievement?," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 37, no. 4 (2015): 420, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oLE9WelA214XsDz5Iz_xihfcCBrG47bY/view?usp=sharing.
[17] Courtney Preston et al., "School Innovation in District Context: Comparing Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools," *Economics of Education Review* 31, no. 2 (April 2012): 318–19, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JrZ6te6qVxir7PY82_08-UybFL4CbCWJ/view?usp=sharing
[18] U.S. Department of Education, "Magnet Schools Programs," (September 2004): 1, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED608530.pdf.
[19] U.S. Department of Education, "Magnet Schools Programs," 3.
[20] Genevieve Siegel-Hawley; Erica Frankenberg, "Does Law Influence Charter School Diversity - An Analysis of Federal and State Legislation," *Michigan Journal of Race & Law* 16, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 335. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fKvH9THVwmMXJPQfMCzU9O4kbPTaVp2G/view?usp=sharing.
[21] Genevieve Siegel-Hawley; Erica Frankenberg, "Does Law Influence Charter School Diversity," 335-36.
[22] Institute of Education Sciences, "STUDY SNAPSHOT Drawing across School Boundaries: How Federally Funded Magnet Schools Recruit and Admit Students," (2021): 1, https://ies.ed.gov/sites/default/files/migrated/nces_pubs/ncee/pubs/2021003/pdf/2021003.pdf.
[23] Institute of Education Sciences, "STUDY SNAPSHOT," 1.

that only takes applicants from a designated area in a district.[24] Magnet schools generally use a common application—a single, centralized application form that can be used to apply to all or a portion of schools in a district— for admissions, with only 13% not using any form of common application.[25] They may also implement more selective admissions processes, such as auditions for performing arts magnets.[26] In the case that applications exceed student capacity and lotteries are used, magnet schools often weigh in preferences for students that meet particular qualifications, such as those who come from certain neighborhoods or "feeder schools."[27] However, these schools rarely factor in student achievement or race/ethnicity for admission: only 4% grant admission preference to high-achieving students while 2% grant preference to low-achieving students.[28] Instead they focus on socioeconomic status, with 37% of MSAP-funded schools giving preference according to this status.[29]

Magnet school enrollment has seen more ups and downs in recent years than charter schools. From the 2010-2011 school year to the 2019-2020 school year, magnet enrollment rose from around 2.1 million students to 2.7 million, but this number quickly dropped to 2.2 million by 2021.[30]

Subsection II: Origins & Early State Adoption

A) Intellectual Foundations

Ray Budde, a teacher, principal, and professor, published a paper in 1974 that first outlined the concept of charter schools.[31] His idea focused on giving teachers more agency in program and department design within existing schools.[32] His paper did not catch the attention of many, but he tried again in 1988 by publishing *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts*.[33] Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), was inspired by Budde's idea and expanded on it.[34] He believed it would be best to start new schools dedicated to the principle of "charter."[35] Shanker then spoke of the idea at the National Press Club, and he later promoted it in a *New York Times* column.[36] Policymakers and the wider public heard his ideas, and charter schools took off.[37] In 1991, the state of Minnesota adopted *Laws of Minnesota 1991, chapter 265, article 9, section 3*, the nation's first charter school legislation.[38]

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[24] U.S. Department of Education, "Magnet Schools Programs," 4.
[25] Institute of Education Sciences, "STUDY SNAPSHOT," 8.
[26] U.S. Department of Education, "Magnet Schools Programs," 4.
[27] Institute of Education Sciences, "STUDY SNAPSHOT," 10.
[28] Institute of Education Sciences, "STUDY SNAPSHOT," 10.
[29] Institute of Education Sciences, "STUDY SNAPSHOT," 10.
[30] National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics, 2022 - Table 216.20"
[31] Finn, Chester E., and Brandon L. Wright. 2016. "Where Did Charter Schools Come From?" Education Next. May 9, 2016. https://www.educationnext.org/where-did-charter-schools-come-from/.
[32] Finn, "Where Did Charter Schools Come From?"
[33] Finn, "Where Did Charter Schools Come From?"
[34] Finn, "Where Did Charter Schools Come From?"
[35] Finn, "Where Did Charter Schools Come From?"
[36] Rachel Cohen, "The Untold History of Charter Schools," Democracy Journal, April 27, 2017, https://democracyjournal.org/arguments/the-untold-history-of-charter-schools/.
[37] Cohen, "The Untold History of Charter Schools."
[38] "Charter Schools - Minnesota Issues Resources Guides," www.lrl.mn.gov, August 2025, https://www.lrl.mn.gov/guides/guides?issue=charter.

This law authorized the establishment of eight new charter schools.[39] City Academy, the first charter school in the U.S., opened in 1992.[40]

B) Early State Statutory Frameworks

Beginning in the mid-1990s, states such as Illinois, North Carolina, and Georgia, passed charter school laws aimed at improving school-level autonomy while maintaining public accountability. Illinois began this movement with its 1996 Charter School Law which allowed local school boards to authorize charters but required many schools that underperformed academically or financially to close.[41] Despite this accountability, weak oversight and limited monitoring led to fraud cases with millions in losses during the 2000s.[42] These problems motivated legislative reforms establishing the Illinois Charter School Commission, which created more detailed accountability standards, annual performance reviews, and improved school closure and appeal procedures to safeguard students and public resources.[43]

North Carolina's 1996 Charter Schools Act also prioritized operational independence, allowing schools full control over staffing, budgeting, and curriculum, while also requiring annual reporting of academic performance to the state.[44] The model encouraged rapid growth and experimentation but revealed wide disparities in school quality.[45] Legislative evaluations in the 2000s and 2010s, including joint legislative education oversight studies, identified a need for stronger state monitoring, fiscal transparency, and consistent standards.[46] Today, North Carolina maintains more frequent school evaluations, performance audits, and renewal reviews to balance school flexibility with fiscal and academic accountability.[47]

The Georgia Charter Schools Act of 1998 extended this national experimentation by granting charter schools significant autonomy from state and local regulations.[48] It explicitly solidified the accountability mechanism of using performance based contracts, stating it would "provide a means whereby local schools may choose to substitute a binding performance based contract ... for state and local rules, regulations, policies, and procedures."[49] This legislation

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[39] "Charter Schools - Minnesota Issues Resources Guides," www.lrl.mn.gov, August 2025, https://www.lrl.mn.gov/guides/guides?issue=charter.

[40] "Charter Schools - Minnesota Issues Resources Guides."

[41] Illinois Compiled Statutes, 105 ILCS 5/27A-5, "Charter School; Legal Entity; Requirements" (West 2023), accessed October 18, 2025, https://www.ilga.gov/Documents/legislation/ilcs/documents/010500050K27A-5.htm.

[42] Risking public money: Illinois Charter School Fraud, January 2015. https://populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Charter-Schools-Illinois-Report_rev3a.pdf.

[43] Joseph A. Giambrone, "Advancing the Charter School Movement in Illinois through Charter School Law: The Charter School Quality Law and Multiple Authorizers," DePaul University Law Review, 2012, https://via.library.depaul.edu/law-review/vol61/iss4/7/.

[44] North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, "NC General Statutes - Chapter 115C Article 14A Charter Schools," Accessed October 18, 2025, https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/fbs/resources/201809/purpose-charter-schools/download .

[45] Public Schools First NC, Charter Schools in North Carolina, May 9, 2025, accessed October 18, 2025, https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PSFNC_Charter-School-Report-FINAL-May-9-2025.pdf

[46] Public Schools First NC, Charter Schools in North Carolina

[47] Ashley Baquero, 2024 North Carolina Charter Schools Annual Report, 2024, https://www.ednc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2024-Annual-Report-CSRB-Presentation.pdf.

[48] Georgia General Assembly, "§ 20-2-255. Petitions for Charter School Status," Title 20 - Education, Chapter 2 - Elementary and Secondary Education, Article 6 - Quality Basic Education, Part 9 - Grants for Educational Programs, Accessed October 18, 2025, https://law.justia.com/codes/georgia/2021/title-20/chapter-2/article-6/part-9/section-20-2-255/

[49] Georgia State University Law Review, "Education HB 797," vol. 29, no. 1 (Fall 2012), accessed October 18, 2025, https://readingroom.law.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2675&context=gsulr

enabled charter schools to focus on student results instead of strict regulations, allowing more freedom for innovation. In 2011, the Georgia Charter Schools Commission lost its power to approve charter schools in a 2011 court case (Gwinnett County School District v. Cox), motivating Georgia lawmakers to pass House Bill 797.[50] HB 797 restored that power through requiring more explicit and rigorous performance contracts with measurable academic and operational expectations for all charter schools.[51] Additionally, it preserved local control over funding decisions by mandating that local districts financially support commission-authorized charters within their boundaries, balancing autonomy with state-level accountability.[52]

Subsection III: Federal Policies & Expansion

A) Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994

The *Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994*, signed by President Bill Clinton, marked the first time charter schools were formally recognized and supported in federal education law.[53] Through Title X, Part C, the Act established the *Public Charter Schools Program (CSP)*, which provided start-up grants to help new charter schools with planning and initial implementation. This federal support was significant because it tied funding to a reform model centered on autonomy, innovation, and accountability, encouraging schools to operate with greater flexibility in exchange for measurable performance outcomes. The IASA's provisions helped legitimize the charter school movement, accelerating its growth across the states; by the late 1990s, more than thirty-five states had enacted charter laws influenced by its incentives. [54] The IASA was only the beginning of nationwide policies promoting the establishment or support of charter schools.

B) The Charter School Expansion Act of 1998

The Charter School Expansion Act of 1998 marked a turning point in the federal approach to education reform, transforming the charter school movement from a patchwork of state-level experiments into a coordinated national policy agenda. Amending Title V, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the law authorized the U.S. Department of Education to distribute competitive grants to state education agencies for the planning, start-up, and replication of charter schools.[55] For the first time, federal funds were explicitly tied to a reform model premised on autonomy, innovation, and accountability. [56]

In practice, the Act created the foundation for federalized charter oversight. States receiving CSP funds were required to establish systems for annual reporting, renewal review, and fiscal compliance, producing new accountability infrastructures..[57] Charter management organizations such as KIPP and Aspire adopted internal data dashboards to monitor student growth, attendance, and budget performance—tools that allowed them to meet emerging state

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[50] Georgia State University Law Review, "Education HB 797."
[51] Georgia State University Law Review, "Education HB 797."
[52] Georgia State University Law Review, "Education HB 797."
[53] Improving America's Schools Act of 1994. R https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED385341.pdf
[54] Improving America's Schools Act of 1994.
[55] "Charter School Expansion Act of 1998." n.d. Google Books. Google. Accessed October 18, 2025. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Charter_School_Expansion_Act_of_1998/ZPVSUfk1hT0C?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA2682&printsec=frontcover.
[56] Charter Schools: State Developments and Federal Policy Options. April 6, 1998 https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/97-519.html
[57] "Charter School Expansion Act of 1998."

and federal evaluation standards.[58] By 2005, nearly forty states had formalized multi-year performance contracts as the basis for charter renewal, embedding measurable accountability within the sector's legal framework.[59] The Act's legacy lies less in its short-term academic effects and more in its creation of a new governance model—one in which public schools could exercise operational independence while remaining subject to transparent, data-driven oversight. Although results varied by state, large-scale national studies found modest but positive learning gains for charter students, particularly in urban districts where network-operated schools were most common.[60]

C) No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed in 2001 reinforced federal backing for expansion of charter schools across the nation in both urban and rural areas.[61] Furthermore, NCLB implemented stronger accountability measures and academic standards for all public schools, including charters.[62] It introduced the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) metric, essentially requiring public schools to show that their students were meeting academic thresholds through the administration of standardized tests.[63] One of the accountability measures for traditional public schools not being able to meet AYP standards for multiple years was closing and reopening as a charter.[64] One study, published in Labour Economics by scholars at Tulane and Yale, found that NCLB did cause an increase in graduation rates.[65] Furthermore, they found that the increase in accountability was the principal cause of the increase in graduation rates.[66]

D) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015.

The AYP national metric was later replaced by new state-level measurements of academic performance mandated by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signed in 2015.[67] The ESSA shifts the role of accountability to states by giving them the responsibility of measuring academic achievement in their students through state assessments.[68] This meant that charter schools would also have to adhere to state-determined academic standards, although they would retain autonomy in respect to finer details of curriculum, staffing, and other aspects of school organization.[69] The ESSA also mandated that charter schools report disaggregated student data based on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability status, and English language learner

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[58] "Charter School Expansion Act of 1998."
[59] "National Alliance for Public Charter Schools: Releases Thirteenth Edition of Charter School Law Rankings Report." 2022. WisPolitics. July 19, 2022. https://www.wispolitics.com/2022/national-alliance-for-public-charter-schools-releases-thirteenth-edition-of-charter-school-law-rankings-report.
[60] N.d. National Charter School Study 2013 | Stanford's Credo. Accessed October 18, 2025a. https://credo.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ncss_2013_final_draft.pdf.
[61] John A. Boehner, "Text - H.R.1 - 107th Congress (2001-2002): No Child Left behind Act of 2001," www.congress.gov, January 8, 2002, https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-bill/1/text.
[62] Boehner, "Text - H.R.1 - 107th Congress (2001-2002)."
[63] Boehner, "Text - H.R.1 - 107th Congress (2001-2002)."
[64] Boehner, "Text - H.R.1 - 107th Congress (2001-2002)."
[65] Harris, Douglas N., Lihan Liu, Nathan Barrett, and Ruoxi Li. 2023. "Is the Rise in High School Graduation Rates Real? High-Stakes School Accountability and Strategic Behavior." *Labour Economics* 82 (March): 102355. https://drive.google.com/file/d/10FNnaTsMeqaCb6xkZ5qiy8vuWiGbNMNl/view?usp=sharing.
[66] Harris, Liu, Barrett, and Li. 2023. "Is the Rise in High School Graduation Rates Real? High-Stakes School Accountability and Strategic Behavior."
[67] United States Congress, "S.1177 - 114th Congress (2015-2016): Every Student Succeeds Act," Congress.gov, 2015, https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177.
[68] United States Congress, "S.1177 - 114th Congress (2015-2016)."
[69] United States Congress, "S.1177 - 114th Congress (2015-2016)."

status.[70] This disaggregation was part of the state accountability system that would use this data to identify subgroups needing focused support and academic resources.[71] Although the ESSA advanced support for charter schools and their funding through the CSP, it also integrated them more into state supervision by enforcing stricter compliance, accountability, and expectations.[72]

The ESSA also provided the first federal definition of graduation rate: "the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class."[73] U.S. high school graduation rates did show an increase after the implementation of ESSA, as the national graduation rate in 2016 was 84.1%, the highest rate recorded.[74] However, there is little evidence of causation as this is only one year after ESSA's implementation. Furthermore, the ESSA mandates that schools seeking Title 1-A funds must submit plans that address how they plan to improve low graduation rates.[75]

E) The Success and Opportunity through Quality Charter Schools Act

By 2014, the federal government had shifted its focus from expansion to refinement. The Success and Opportunity through Quality Charter Schools Act—introduced as H.R. 10 and later incorporated into the Every Student Succeeds Act—restructured federal charter policy around quality, replication, and equity.[76] Consolidating several earlier grant programs into a single Charter Schools Program, the Act required states to demonstrate that authorizers maintained rigorous academic, financial, and organizational accountability systems.[77]

States such as Massachusetts implemented five-year charter performance contracts combining test-based metrics with governance and fiscal reviews, while Colorado adopted a tiered authorizer framework that assessed compliance, operations, and student success.[78] Independent authorizers—like the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board—were required to publish performance frameworks with annual transparency reports, establishing a model later adopted in other jurisdictions.[79] Federal oversight also expanded through strengthened audit requirements and the introduction of performance indicators linking future grant eligibility to measurable results.[80]

Equity provisions were equally significant. The law prioritized funding for operators with proven success serving low-income and historically underserved students, ensuring that expansion of high-performing charters did not exacerbate demographic disparities. It also

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[70] United States Congress, "S.1177 - 114th Congress (2015-2016)."
[71] United States Congress, "S.1177 - 114th Congress (2015-2016)."
[72] United States Congress, "S.1177 - 114th Congress (2015-2016)."
[73] "The Every Student Succeeds Act: Accountability for Schools with Low Graduation Rates." 2025. Congress.gov. 2025. https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R44700.
[74] "The Every Student Succeeds Act: Accountability for Schools with Low Graduation Rates." Congress.gov.
[75] "The Every Student Succeeds Act: Accountability for Schools with Low Graduation Rates." Congress.gov.
[76] N.d. H.R.2010 - 113th Congress (2013-2014): Live by the Laws You Write Act | Congress.Gov | Library of Congress. Accessed October 18, 2025a. https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/2010.
[77] Federal Register :: Request Access. Accessed October 18, 2025. https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/29/2016-27985/elementary-and-secondary-education-act-of-1965-as-amended-by-the-every-student-succeeds.
[78] The Nation's Charter Report Card: A New Ranking of States by Charter Student Performance https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2023.2273607#d1e137
[79] N.d. Performance Frameworks. Accessed October 18, 2025a. https://qualitycharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Guide-to-Performance-Frameworks.pdf.
[80] U.S. Department of Education, *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act—Accountability and State Plans*, Federal Register 81, no. 229 (November 29, 2016): 86076–86240, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/29/2016-27985

formalized "replication by evidence"—a funding condition limiting new awards to networks with documented achievement gains verified through state data.[81] The U.S. Department of Education's emphasis on transparency and data quality effectively recast federal charter support as a quality assurance system rather than a growth incentive.[82]

Subsection IV: Authorizing Models

Charter school authorizers, the entities responsible for approving new charter schools, monitoring current ones, and closing failing ones, often determine the quality of the schools they oversee.[83] The legislation governing charter school authorization varies greatly by state.[84] The NACSA has identified six different types of authorizers: Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Independent Chartering Boards (ICBs), School Districts or Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Mayor/Municipalities (MUNs), Not-For-Profit Organizations (NFPs), and State Education Agencies (SEAs).[85] While the vast majority of authorizers are School Districts or Local Education Agencies (LEAs),[86] 33 states have established statewide authorizing bodies as they have broader reach and can provide consistent authorization across the state.[87]

When done well, authorizers are catalysts for quality and growth, ensuring that schools have the freedom to innovate while making certain that they are succeeding and open to all students.[88] A good authorizer sets clear goals and expectations and closes schools that aren't serving students and the community.[89] Poor authorizing can involve overregulation, which reintroduces the bureaucracy chartering was designed specifically to avoid, or conversely, turning a blind eye and allowing mediocre schools to remain open, thereby failing children.[90]

Subsection V. Prevalence & Growth

By 2005, ~2% of U.S. students attended charter schools.[91] By 2016, charter schools supported ~5% of U.S. students.[92] Between fall 2010 and fall 2021, charter school enrollment

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[81] Brookings Institution. (2015). *Brown Center report on American education: Charter school quality and accountability*. Brookings Institution.https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2015-Brown-Center-Report_FINAL-3.pdf
[82] Federal Register
[83] "National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)." 2020. Qualitycharters.org. February 25, 2020. https://qualitycharters.org/authorizingmatters/.
[84] "National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)."
[85] "The State of Charter School Authorizing 2011." n.d. Qualitycharters.org. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fsSOcQiRY7uSxPpA7vKCFJh3baJvlX-v/view?usp=sharing.
[86] "National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)." 2023. Qualitycharters.org. November 9, 2023. https://qualitycharters.org/authorizing-who-authorizes/.
[87] Christie, Kathy, Maria Millard, Jennifer Thomsen, and Micah Wixom. 2014. "Trends in State Charter School Laws: Authorizers, Caps, Performance-Based Closures and Virtual Schools." *Education Commission of the States*. https://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/13/13/11313.pdf.
[88] "National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)." 2020. Qualitycharters.org. February 25, 2020. https://qualitycharters.org/authorizingmatters/.
[89] "National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)."
[90] "National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)."
[91] National Charter School Resource Center, "NCSRC | National Charter School Resource Center," Ed.gov, 2013, https://charterschoolcenter.ed.gov/what-charter-school.
[92] National Charter School Resource Center, "NCSRC | National Charter School Resource Center."

more than doubled from 1.8 million to 3.7 million.[93] During the same period, the number of charter schools in the U.S. increased from ~5,300 to ~7,800, while the number of traditional public schools decreased from ~93,500 to ~91,400.[94]

As of fall 2021, forty-five states have passed public charter school legislation; the exceptions are Vermont, Nebraska, Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota. In the District of Columbia, ~45% of public school students are enrolled in charter schools. In Colorado, Nevada, Florida, Louisiana, Delaware, California, Utah, and Micihigan, ~10% to ~15% of public school students are enrolled in charter schools. In contrast, less than 1% of public school students are enrolled in charter schools in Wyoming, Mississippi, Kansas, Alabama, Washington, Virginia, and Iowa. Kentucky and West Virginia had no charter schools in 2021. As of 2021, the national average of public school students attending charter schools is 7%.[95]

Subsection VI: Admissions Policy History & Structure

Admissions policies and regulations differ by state.[96] In a 2000 study, around 59% of charter schools had primary control over their admissions while 41% of charter schools' admissions were primarily controlled by the state or some external governing body.[97] Despite the autonomy that charter schools have, they are still shaped by policies that supersede independent practices.

A) Race-Based Admissions Policies

The history of race-based admissions in charter and gifted schools reflects a shift from federal laws that actively promoted integration to more limited state-level diversity policies shaped by Supreme Court decisions on using race in admissions. This movement began with *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional.[98] The peak of racial integration in U.S. public schools occurred in 1988, after two decades of court-ordered desegregation programs, such as mandatory busing.[99] Prior to the widespread adoption of charter schools, magnet schools emerged in the 1980s as a primary form of school choice.[100] Magnet schools were designed to promote desegregation by offering specialized programs that encouraged both white and minority students to transfer voluntarily.[101]

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[93] National Center for Education Statistics, "The NCES Fast Facts Tool Provides Quick Answers to Many Education Questions (National Center for Education Statistics)," Ed.gov (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023), https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=30.

[94] National Center for Education Statistics, "The NCES Fast Facts Tool Provides Quick Answers to Many Education Questions (National Center for Education Statistics)."

[95] National Center for Education Statistics, "The NCES Fast Facts Tool Provides Quick Answers to Many Education Questions (National Center for Education Statistics)."

[96] Anne West et al., "'Skimming the Cream': Admissions to Charter Schools in the United States and to Autonomous Schools in England," *Educational Policy* 20, no. 4 (2006): 618, https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904805284054.

[97] West, "Skimming the Cream," 618-19.

[98] Winona Weindling, "School Choice as a Method of Reducing the Achievement Gap: Comparing the Effectiveness of Desegregation Programs and Charter Schools," Carleton College, n.d. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1igwlK6sy-S4dtoiOB3-uIbgE9B-mpUAt/view?usp=sharing

[99] Doug Archbald, Andrew Hurwitz, and Felicia Hurwitz, "Charter Schools, Parent Choice, and Segregation: A Longitudinal Study of the Growth of Charters and Changing Enrollment Patterns in Five School Districts over 26 Years," Education Policy Analysis Archives 26 (February 19, 2018): 22, https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.26.2921.

[100] Doug Archbald, Andrew Hurwitz, and Felicia Hurwitz, "Charter Schools," 6.

[101] Erica Frankenberg and Chungmei Lee, "Charter Schools and Race: A Lost Opportunity for Integrated Education," Education Policy Analysis Archives 11 (September 5, 2003): 32, https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v11n32.2003.

Since charter schools were not specifically designed as part of the historical movement for desegregation, they had no explicit mandate to achieve racial balance.[102] Charter school laws vary widely by state but generally include desegregation policies or a non-discrimination provision.[103] A notable outlier is Arizona whose policies are considered the most expansive form of school choice because their statutes do not require charter schools to have a specific racial balance.[104] In contrast, most other states enact specific racial or ethnic balance requirements or include racial balance language in their charter approval or oversight policies in order to promote integration.[105] For instance, New Jersey's 1995 Charter School Program Act required that the admissions policies of charter schools "must, to the maximum extent practicable, seek enrollment of a cross section of the community's school age population, including racial and academic factors."[106] New Jersey is one of fourteen states that enacted racial balancing provisions.[107] Similarly, legislation in North Carolina required that "within one year after a charter school begins operation, the population of the school shall reasonably reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the general population within the district or of the special population the school seeks to serve."[108] However, state-level diversity policies that explicitly considered race in admissions have been judged as a violation of the Equal Protection Clause and an example of "de jure" segregation because students were denied admission solely on their race, as seen in the 2007 court case, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*.[109]

Amidst legislative opposition against race-based admissions, charter schools have tried focusing on socioeconomic diversity to indirectly strive for racial diversity.[110] However, in states such as California, such efforts have failed to racially diversify student populations by instead drawing in more poor, white students because there was no way to differentiate poor minorities and poor whites.[111] Additionally, neighborhood-preferential lotteries often lead to wealthy White families gentrifying the area in order to raise their chances for admission.[112] Obstacles to diversity find themselves scattered throughout charter school admissions.

B) Gender-Based Admissions Policies

The creation of single-sex public schools, including charter schools, continued despite the major 1996 Supreme Court ruling *United States v. Virginia* that struck down male-only

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[102] Doug Archbald, Andrew Hurwitz, and Felicia Hurwitz, "Charter Schools," 7.
[103] Doug Archbald, Andrew Hurwitz, and Felicia Hurwitz, "Charter Schools," 31.
[104] David R. Garcia, "Academic and Racial Segregation in Charter Schools," Education and Urban Society 40, no. 5 (April 17, 2008): 590–612, https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124508316044.
[105] Doug Archbald, Andrew Hurwitz, and Felicia Hurwitz, "Charter Schools," 7.
[106] Charisse Gulosino and Chad DEntremont, "Circles of Influence: An Analysis of Charter School Location and Racial Patterns at Varying Geographic Scales," Education Policy Analysis Archives 19 (March 20, 2011): 8, https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v19n8.2011.
[107] Charisse Gulosino and Chad DEntremont, "Circles of Influence," 8.
[108] Robert Bifulco and Helen F. Ladd, "School Choice, Racial Segregation, and Test‐score Gaps: Evidence from North Carolina's Charter School Program," Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 26, no. 1 (November 29, 2006): 31–56, https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.20226.
[109] Doug Archbald, Andrew Hurwitz, and Felicia Hurwitz, "Charter Schools," 7.
[110] Sophia Seifert et al., "Pursuing Diversity: The Context, Practices, and Diversity Outcomes of Intentionally Diverse Charter Schools," *Teachers College Record* 124, no. 12 (2022): 95–134, https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221150546.
[111] Sophia Seifert, "Pursuing Diversity."
[112] Sophia Siefert, "Pursuing Diversity."

admissions at a state college.[113] This ruling prompted Justice Scalia to claim that single-gender public education was "functionally dead."[114] In August 2000, the Young Women's Leadership Charter School opened in Chicago, marking one of the first attempts to create a public, girls-only school after that ruling.[115] To navigate potential legal challenges, the school's organizers avoided explicitly excluding boys. Instead, their admissions criteria focused only on age, academic standing, and city residency. They also defended the school's legality by arguing that "comparable opportunities do exist for boys elsewhere in the Chicago Public School system." [116] Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Organization for Women (NOW), filed complaints against similar public schools, arguing that they were violations of the Equal Protections Clause.[117] The most secure way for a girls' charter school to survive a legal challenge during this time was to either create a comparable all-boys charter school or demonstrate that a public all-boys school of similar quality already existed. .[118]

In fiscal year 2001, Congress passed an amendment to the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, authorizing federal funding for same-gender educational initiatives. [119] However, the most major regulatory change occurred in 2006, when the Department of Education, under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), issued new Title IX regulations.[120] These rules allowed single-sex public and charter schools if they had a strong link to accomplishing a key educational purpose, such as improving student achievement through diverse opportunities or addressing particular educational needs.[121] The 2006 regulation also clarified that single-sex schools could continue to operate even without such an objective, as long as students of the excluded sex had access to a similarly balanced coeducational option.[122] Nationally, enrollment data reveal a gradual gender imbalance in charter schools favoring girls. From 2010-2011, 50.7% of charter school students were girls compared to 48.8% in traditional public schools.[123] This gap of 1.9 percentage points has consistently grown from 1999 to 2011 and has more than doubled since 1999-2000. [124] The overall trend of female-skewed charter schools could be due to higher attrition rates among boys or preexisting enrollment gaps at the time of initial admissions.[125]

C) Student Identification Methodology and Policy

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[113] Sarah Kinsman, "The Crack in Justice Scalia's Crystal Ball: Single-Sex Charter Schools May Prove His Prediction in VMI Was Wrong," 8 Wm. & Mary J. Women & L. 133 (2001), https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmjowl/vol8/iss1/7.
[114] Sarah Kinsman, "The Crack in Justice Scalia's Crystal Ball," 133.
[115] Sarah Kinsman, "The Crack in Justice Scalia's Crystal Ball," 133.
[116] Sarah Kinsman, "The Crack in Justice Scalia's Crystal Ball," 135.
[117] Sarah Kinsman, "The Crack in Justice Scalia's Crystal Ball," 133.
[118] Sarah Kinsman, "The Crack in Justice Scalia's Crystal Ball," 135.
[119] Sarah Kinsman, "The Crack in Justice Scalia's Crystal Ball," 140.
[120] John Hurst and Ingrid Johansen, "The Changing Landscape of Single-Sex Education," (April 1, 2006), https://drive.google.com/file/d/16U3vaAswiIvCeUdoYAxgMMOBOzZxyWga/view?usp=sharing
[121] John Hurst and Ingrid Johansen, "The Changing Landscape," 3.
[122] John Hurst and Ingrid Johansen, The Changing Landscape," 3.
[123] Sean P. Corcoran and Jennifer Jennings, "The Gender Gap in Charter School Enrollment," Educational Policy 32, no. 5 (November 7, 2016): 635–63, https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904816673737.
[124] Sean P. Corcoran and Jennifer Jennings, "The Gender Gap," 657.
[125] Sean P. Corcoran and Jennifer Jennings, "The Gender Gap," 635

Gifted and charter schools often present an intentional identity in order to attract students and parents.[126] Through this strategy, potential students are identified according to their geography and intellectual preferences. When promoting intellectual preferences, charter schools turn to educational ideologies, such as inquiry-based learning (IBL) [127] The IBL model favors the arts, science, technology, engineering, or math.[128] However, when demand exceeds capacity, charter enrollment often shifts to a lottery-based system.[129] In some cases, this shift is influenced by federal programs. For instance, in order to receive federal funding through the Public Charter Schools Program or Title I grants under the No Child Left Behind Act, charter schools must comply with civil rights laws like Title VI and use a lottery system when applications exceed available spots.[130]

Studies show that although authorities legislate open enrollment and fairness, these principles are often not enforced.[131] Some charters have priority pools that favor students who are related to teachers, graduates, and current students of the school.[132] Additionally, charter schools fail to be inclusive toward students with disabilities.[133] A 1999 study reported that 75% of Michigan charter schools did not offer special education programs.[134] These schools would often discriminate against students who had higher costs to teach due to language (ESL) and special education needs.

In terms of gifted schools, their programs rely on intellectual identification processes that use a wide range of criteria, which can differ with each district, state, or even individual school policy. Eligibility for gifted programs is not determined by a single, standardized measure, but rather by diverse and sometimes inconsistent methods.[135]

D) Lotteries vs. Qualifications-Based Admissions

Lottery-based and qualifications-based admissions are two policies used by non-traditional public schools to determine enrollment.[136] Lottery-based admissions are used in charter schools, which are not allowed to utilize qualifications-based admissions processes.[137] In contrast, qualifications-based admissions are used by magnet schools, which can be highly selective in some cases.[138] Charter schools utilize lottery-based admissions to ensure equitable access, particularly when the school is oversubscribed and cannot admit all those that have

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[126] Jaren R. Haber, "Sorting Schools: A Computational Analysis of Charter School Identities and Stratification," Sociology of Education 94, no. 1 (September 1, 2020): 43–64, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040720953218.
[127] Jaren R. Haber, "Sorting Schools: A Computational Analysis," 44.
[128] Jaren R. Haber, "Sorting Schools: A Computational Analysis," 44.
[129] Julia Chabrier, Sarah Cohodes, and Philip Oreopoulos, "What Can We Learn from Charter School Lotteries?," Journal of Economic Perspectives 30, no. 3 (August 1, 2016): 57–84, https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.30.3.57.
[130] Erica Frankenberg and Chungmei Lee, "Charter Schools and Race," 12.
[131] West, "Skimming the Cream," 619.
[132] West, "Skimming the Cream," 620.
[133] West, "Skimming the Cream," 620.
[134] West, "Skimming the Cream," 620.
[135] Scott J. Peters and James S. Carter, "Predictors of Access to Gifted Education: What Makes for a Successful School?," Exceptional Children 88, no. 4 (March 7, 2022): 341–58, https://doi.org/10.1177/00144029221081092.
[136] Philip Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts, Executive Summary," National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, June 2010, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/2025/01/20104030-pdf.
[137] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[138] Atila Abdulkadiroglu, Joshua Angrist, and Parag A. Pathak, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2012, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2157932.

applied.[139] Magnet schools and exam schools, schools that require an exam for admission, utilize qualifications-based admissions to curate a student body made of students who are high-achieving and academically capable of handling the demanding curriculum.[140]

Subsection VII: Funding Structures & Fiscal Impacts

A) Charter School Funding & Disparities

With charter schools being a relatively recent development in the history of education in the United States in 1992, the popularity and prevalence of charter schools have grown rapidly to 42 states in just 30 years.[141] Like public schools, charter schools receive funding from federal, state, and local sources based on enrollment, location, and student demographics. Public charter schools face criticism that their existence diverts funding from public schools.[142] However, it's been shown that charter schools receive less district funding than similar public schools. The American Federation of Teachers identified that the funding disparity between these two types of schools range between $549 to $1,814 per pupil.[143] In a similar study analyzing 84% of the nation's charter school students between 2002-2003, it was found that the funding gap was $3,453 at its highest (39.5% disparity).[144] The greatest gaps were identified in urban settings where the average gap was $2,256 per pupil.[145] In a larger federal context, this funding disparity between public and charter schools have only increased in recent years, expanding more than 54% in only eight years.[146]

This gap can be attributed to early advocates of charter schools claiming that charter schools could do more with less money. When education establishments then feared a loss of funding for original public schools, this resulted in comparably lower rates of funding for charter schools.[147] They were applauded for their economic efficiency over student achievement and were used as evidence that private establishments were more efficient than governments.

B) Direct Funding Impact on Traditional Public Schools

In a study in North Carolina, researchers found a negative fiscal impact of $500 per traditional school child due to an average cost of $3,500 for each charter school student.[148] This means that for the existence of charter schools, the state of North Carolina dedicates $500 less to every public school student.[149] For a county such as Durham, the total financial impact results in

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[139] Sarah Cohodes and Susha Roy, *Thirty Years of Charter Schools: What Does Lottery-Based Research Tell Us?*, Discussion Paper No. 2023.18 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Department of Economics, November 2023), https://blueprintcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/MIT-Blueprint-Discussion-Paper_Charter-School-Research.pdf

[140] Atila Abdulkadiroglu, Joshua Angrist, and Parag A. Pathak, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"

[141] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org." Accessed October 11, 2025. https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/frdurb46&id=92&men_tab=srchresults.

[142] Ladd, Helen F., and John D. Singleton. 2017. "The Fiscal Externalities of Charter Schools: Evidence from North Carolina." *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/15HGUrzyXMB17KrvdRIbxzxHnz5XeNXpI/view?usp=sharing

[143] *Law Journal Library*, HeinOnline, Urban Law Journal.

[144] *Law Journal Library*, HeinOnline, Urban Law Journal.

[145] *Law Journal Library*, HeinOnline, Urban Law Journal.

[146] Batdorf, Meagan, Larry D Maloney, Jay F May, Sheree T Speakman, Patrick J Wolf, and Albert Cheng. *Charter School Funding: Inequity Expands*. n.d.

[147] *Law Journal Library*, HeinOnline, Urban Law Journal.

[148] Ladd, Helen F., and John D. Singleton. 2017. "The Fiscal Externalities"

[149] Ladd, Helen F., and John D. Singleton. 2017. "The Fiscal Externalities"

$16 million dollars per year.[150] The costs were calculated based on variable costs (ones that are affected by changes in enrollment, such as teachers' employed) and fixed costs (ones not affected based on employment, such as maintenance).[151]

The primary negative financial effect charter schools have on traditional public schools comes from fixed expenses or "stranded costs."[152] When students transfer to charter schools, the district's expenses do not decrease enough to match the loss in funding, since many costs stay the same.[153] Stranded costs are the expenses that schools continue to pay despite students leaving, such as building maintenance, utilities, and administrative costs. This budget gap results in a higher cost per pupil in traditional public schools and is a pattern mirrored across the nation.[154] In 2015, the School District of Philadelphia experienced stranded costs of $6,898 per student migrating to charter schools.[155] Additionally, a study in Nashville found that the district was able to recover only 27% of the costs lost to charter schools.[156]

C) State Responses to Charter School Funding Impact

Researchers conclude by noting policy recommendations should be put forth to mitigate the transition and potential loss of funding through the form of transitional aid, and, in the long-run, increasing systems and collaboration between the interest districts and charter school boards to unite resource allocation discussion.[157]

However, the overall fiscal impact of charter schools can be slightly reduced because many states offer transitional assistance to districts when new charter schools open.[158] For example, Illinois offers Transition Impact Aid, which compensates for a portion of the funds redirected to charters, covering approximately 90% of the amount in the first year, 65% in the second, and 35% in the third.[159] Washington, D.C. manages the transition by basing district funding on the previous year's enrollment, allowing districts to keep a full year's worth of funding after students transfer to charters.[160] New York takes a phased approach, offering transition aid that begins at 80% of the per-pupil funding for students who move to charter schools, then gradually decreases over the following three years.[161]

Recognizing that districts often fund charter schools less than public schools, many states have taken action to rectify this. For example, Arizona offered charter schools $1,600 per pupil more than they did for similar public schools, on the state funding level.[162] In other states like North Carolina, policymakers have produced legislation requiring that districts provide equal amounts of funding for both the public and charter schools in their jurisdictions.[163] Despite these

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[150] Ladd, Helen F., and John D. Singleton. 2017. "The Fiscal Externalities"
[151] Ladd, Helen F., and John D. Singleton. 2017. "The Fiscal Externalities"
[152] In the Public Interest, Charter Schools and Fiscal Impact, May 2023, accessed October 11, 2025, 2, https://inthepublicinterest.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/0523-Fiscal-Impact.4.pdf.
[153] In the Public Interest, Charter Schools and Fiscal Impact, 2.
[154] In the Public Interest, Charter Schools and Fiscal Impact, 2.
[155] In the Public Interest, Charter Schools and Fiscal Impact, 3.
[156] In the Public Interest, Charter Schools and Fiscal Impact, 3.
[157] Ladd, Helen F., and John D. Singleton. 2017. "The Fiscal Externalities"
[158] Matthew Arkin and Bryan C Hassel, "Issue Brief the Bottom Line: Six Myths about the Financial Impact of Public," National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, July 2007, 2, https://publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Financial_Impact_of_Public_Charter_Schools_Brief_20110402T222342.pdf
[159] Arkin and Hassel, "Bottom Line," 2.
[160] Arkin and Hassel, "Bottom Line," 3.
[161] Arkin and Hassel, "Bottom Line," 3.
[162] Osberg, Eric. *Charter School Funding*. n.d.
[163] Osberg, Eric. *Charter School Funding*. n.d.

efforts to provide balanced funding between these types of educational institutions, many federal and state funding programs are designed to route through a Local Education Agency, or school districts.[164] From there, individual districts can easily control and even exclude charter schools from receiving funding.

D) Supplemental Funding Sources

Private donations is one pathway that certain charter schools use to make up for the insufficient public funding. In California between 2001-2002, the average per-pupil value of donations were $0.00 for public schools and $293 for start-up charter schools, discounting three outlier charter schools that received donations of over $10,000 per pupil[165]. The higher level of private donations can be attributed in part to these schools requiring additional support in securing faculty, supplies, and other resources, particularly in the beginning of their establishments.[166] Despite this opportunity, private donations generally don't make up for the public funding disparity between public and charter schools.

Subsection VIII: Geographic Distribution & Comparative Contexts

A) Global Context

While "charter schools" are a term that is specific to the United States, similar models of publicly funded but independently run schools exist in several other countries.

a) United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, academies are publicly funded and run through a trust contract with the Department for Education.[167] This contract grants academies certain freedoms as long as they abide by the terms of the agreement.[168] By 2012, academies represented 50 percent of all secondary schools in England, marking a large share of schools with increased autonomy over personnel and budget decisions.[169]

b) Sweden

In a similar fashion, the Swedish school system includes an option of tuition-free but privately run schools known as *friskolas*.[170] Although private schools have been in existence since the beginning of compulsory education, a 1992 law extended public funding to these institutions, increasing the attractiveness of this option to families.[171] Due to Sweden's uniform national curriculum, independent schools must follow the same core standards as municipal schools, but have the flexibility to use additional hours to specialize in one or more subjects.[172]

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[164] Osberg, Eric. *Charter School Funding*. n.d.
[165] Krop, Cathy, and Ron Zimmer. "Charter School Type Matters When Examining Funding and Facilities: Evidence from California." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 13 (December 2005): 50. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v13n50.2005.
[166] Krop and Zimmer, "Charter School Type Matters."
[167] West, Anne, and Basma B. Yaghi. "Academies in England and Charter Schools in the US: Who Is Accountable, to Whom, for What, and with What Consequences?" *Journal of School Choice* 19, no. 1 (2025): 187–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2024.2375695.
[168] West and Yaghi, "Academies in England and Charter Schools in the US."
[169] Eyles, Andrew, Claudia Hupkau, and Stephen Machin. "Academies, Charter and Free Schools: Do New School Types Deliver Better Outcomes?" *Economic Policy* 31, no. 87 (2016): 453–501. https://doi.org/10.1093/epolic/eiw006.
[170] "The Swedish School System | Sweden.Se." Accessed October 3, 2025. https://sweden.se/life/society/the-swedish-school-system?
[171] "The Swedish School System," Sweden.se.
[172] *The Independent School Sector 2023*. n.d.

Once approved for operation by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, they receive funding on a per-capita basis from their home municipality.[173]

c) Chile

In Chile, subsidized education is provided in the form of government-funded vouchers. A 1980 reform transferred public school management from the national government to local municipalities.[174] Each month, the Ministry of Education pays each municipality an amount equal to a fixed voucher multiplied by the number of enrolled students..[175] If private schools didn't charge tuition, they would instead receive the same amount of money directly from the government, meaning they'd be funded by public funds rather than by students.[176]

d) Alberta, Canada

In Canada, Alberta is the only province that has adopted affirming legislation of charter schools. Established in 1994 to improve education delivery, Alberta's public charter schools were designed with the flexibility to offer innovative and vocational programs beyond local systems.[177] The curriculum must be defined by Alberta Education policies and meet province requirements for literacy and numeracy.[178] Despite growing interest and overfilling waitlists, only about 1.4 percent of Alberta students were enrolled in public charter schools in 2012/2013.[179]

B) Domestic Geographical Landscape

Even within the United States, the distribution of charter schools vary by state and population densities. Historically, Arizona and Minnesota have been leaders in the charter school movement, with over eight percent of students in Arizona studying in charter schools in 2003-2004, only about a decade after their initial introduction in 1992.[180] Of the 46 states/jurisdictions with legislation regarding public charter schools as of fall 2021, the District of Columbia had the highest percentage of enrollment at 46 percent, followed by Arizona at 20 percent.[181] On the other end of the data, seven states had enrollment statistics less than 1 percent, where there were no charter schools in 2021: Wyoming, Mississippi, Kansas, Alabama, Washington, Virginia, Iowa, Kentucky and West Virginia.[182] Of the states with enrollment statistics below 1 percent, all but Washington and Virginia historically lean on the right side of the political spectrum.

With charter schools originally constructed under the intention of providing alternative options for students and families dissatisfied with traditional public schools, they've evolved to market themselves around certain themes, student demographics, and academic philosophies.[183]

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[173] West and Yaghi, "Academies in England and Charter Schools in the US."
[174] "The Effectiveness and Efficiency of Private Schools in Chile's Voucher System." Accessed October 3, 2025. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epdf/10.3102/01623737022003213.
[175] "Effectiveness and Efficiency of Private Schools in Chile's Voucher System," SAGE Journals.
[176] "Effectiveness and Efficiency of Private Schools in Chile's Voucher System," SAGE Journals.
[177] *Public Charter Schools Handbook*. n.d.
[178] *Public Charter Schools Handbook*. n.d.
[179] Bosetti, Lynn, Brianna Brown, Sazid Hasan, and Deani Neven Van Pelt. *A Primer on Charter Schools*. n.d.
[180] Stoddard, Christiana, and Sean P. Corcoran. "The Political Economy of School Choice: Support for Charter Schools across States and School Districts." *Journal of Urban Economics* 62, no. 1 (2007): 27–54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2006.08.006.
[181] *Public Charter School Enrollment*. n.d.
[182] *Public Charter School Enrollment*. n.d.
[183] "Partisan Schools: The Political Alignment of Charter School Leadership." Accessed October 3, 2025. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/1532673X251367386.

In recent years, charter schools have begun to garner attention for their political agendas.[184] Organizations, such as the Heritage Foundation, argue that charter schools today tend to adopt liberal ideologies to please state and federal priorities rather than the local community values.[185] When compared side by side to the density of charter schools and their students, the majority of populated charter schools reside in liberal-leaning states and urban areas.

C) Market Logic

In the United States, students historically attend public schools based on their residential locations and the corresponding public school. With residential areas often segregated by ethnicities, socioeconomic contexts, and other social factors, public school students are often clumped with other students of the same backgrounds.[186] In contrast, charter schools provide families with the option of choosing their preferred educational contexts and the social backgrounds that come with them.[187] This provides a way to overlook the strong ties between social classes and educational opportunities and provide families with apparently equal access. To take advantage of this market landscape, charter schools have been seen to open in school districts with a higher proportion of college-educated parents and fewer members of underrepresented demographics, effectively marketing themselves to those with higher socioeconomic status and requiring lower costs.[188]

D) Regional and Urban Concentration

Most charter schools in the United States are concentrated in the western region, making up 37 percent of the nation's total, largely driven by California and Arizona. Additionally, most charter schools are located in urban areas where a large number of students are from low income families or are people of color.[189] The prevalence of lottery-based admissions systems is most strongly correlated with these urban centers, as applications often far exceed the number of available seats. [190] Urban charter schools also see the greatest increase in learning outcomes, particularly those serving a large population of low-income students.[191] In the United States landscape, charter schools tend to perform in higher concentrations and qualities in urban areas with left-leaning political climates.

E) Geographical Concentrations and Effectiveness

The geography of charter schools magnifies structural inequality in U.S. education. In the 2021–22 school year, 56% of charter schools were located in cities, compared with 25% of traditional public schools, while only 12% of charters were rural, compared with 29% of district schools.[192] The result is a severe urban concentration: just 3.4% of rural students and a mere

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[184] "Partisan Schools: The Political Alignment of Charter School Leadership." Accessed October 3, 2025. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/1532673X251367386.
[185] "Partisan Schools," SAGE Journals.
[186] "A Spatial Analysis on Charter School Access in the New York Metropolitan Area." Accessed October 11, 2025. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epdf/10.1177/016146812112300205.
[187] "A Spatial Analysis on Charter School Access," SAGE Journals.
[188] "A Spatial Analysis on Charter School Access," SAGE Journals.
[189] Center for Research on Education Outcomes. Urban Charter School Study: Report on 41 Regions. Stanford, CA: Center for Research on Education Outcomes, 2015.
[190] Egalite, Anna J. The National Charter School Landscape: A Background Paper for the Hoover Education Success Initiative. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 2018.
[191] Egalite, *The National Charter School Landscape*.
[192] Characteristics of elementary and secondary schools. (n.d.-c). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/2024/cla_508c.pdf

1.6% of students in remote rural areas attend charter schools at all.[193] The disparity extends to magnet and career-based institutions, which are similarly clustered in metropolitan districts; fewer than 15% of U.S. counties host a magnet campus, and almost none are found in sparsely populated regions.[194] Geography therefore determines access itself—urban students often have multiple specialized options, while their rural peers may have none.

Rural charter schools tend to differ structurally from their urban counterparts. They are far more likely to operate as standalone campuses rather than as part of large management organizations, to serve nontraditional grade spans (e.g., K-12, 6-12), and to rely heavily on local fundraising and community partnerships rather than network funding or philanthropic grants.[195] While some serve as hubs for place-based innovation, their small scale limits offerings such as advanced STEM labs, foreign languages, and technical career programs. Rural operators consistently report barriers including transportation costs, facility acquisition, and teacher recruitment, particularly in specialty fields.[196] As a result, rural charters account for only approximately 11% of all charter campuses and enroll roughly 320,000 students nationwide— a small fraction of the total sector.[197]

SECTION II: CHARTER SCHOOL OUTCOMES & EFFECTS

Subsection I: Academic Outcomes

A) Overall National Academic Effects

The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) reports, in aggregate data of 27 states, that charter schools students gained an average English reading test score approximately 0.01 standard deviations higher than traditional public school (TPS) students, while math test scores were not statistically different from TPS students.[198] These findings suggest that on a nationwide level, charter school students perform comparably to TPS students.[199]

Several studies have shown that academic performance varies regionally and by the type and structure of charter schools, without a consistent significant difference in academic achievement between charter and public schools.[200] Comparison is also highly dependent on the

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[193] Coe - enrollment and school choice in rural areas. (n.d.). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/lcb/school-choice-rural

[194] Magnet Schools of America. (n.d.). *A snapshot of magnet schools in America*.

[195] About the author Abigail Burrola More about this author >. (2019, September 19). *Charter schools can fill the void in rural areas*. Show. https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/school-choice/charter-schools-can-fill-the-void-in-rural-areas/

[196] In rural areas. (n.d.-h). https://publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2023-Paper_Charter-Schools-in-Rural-Areas.pdf

[197] *Rural Education Overview*. Local Roots Take the Lead. (n.d.). https://www.ruralcharterschools.org/rural-education-overview

[198] CREDO, "National Charter School Study 2013," Stanford.edu, 2013, https://credo.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ncss_2013_final_draft.pdf.

[199] Sarah Cohodes and Katharine Parham, "Charter Schools' Effectiveness, Mechanisms, and Competitive Influence," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3790215.

[200] Sahin, Alpaslan, Victor Wilson, and Robert M. Capraro. 2018. "Comparisons of Students' Mathematics and Reading Achievement in Texas: Public versus Charter Schools." Journal of Research in Science, Mathematics and

metrics of measurement in terms of defining academic performance, split largely between Math-based skills and Writing-based skills.

Overall, accounting for differences in student populations served, charter schools are not, on average, producing student achievement gains better than traditional public schools.[201] A substantial number of charters significantly outperform the average traditional public school, while others underperform, leading to wide variation.[202]

B) Geographic Variation in Outcomes

a) State-Level

At the state-level, results are mostly consistent with the national level findings, but show some variation.[203] Charters in California, Arizona, and Utah have had minimal or negligible effects on student achievement and test scores compared to TPS.[204] In Texas, charters typically exhibit no substantial impact on test scores, though "No Excuses" charter schools demonstrate improvements.[205] Conversely, charter schools in North Carolina have had positive effects on ACT scores.[206]

b) City-Level

However, charter schools in Boston, Los Angeles, Denver, New York City, and several other major cities show notable improvements in test scores and student achievement.[207] In Boston, for instance, 13% of charter students taking the AP Calculus exam earned a college credit qualifying score, compared to the 2% of TPS students who qualified for credit.[208] Charter students are 30% more likely to take at least one AP exam and 12% more likely to receive a 3 (likelihood of scoring 4 or 5 is roughly the same).[209] Boston charter school students also earned higher SAT scores on average with a SAT score composite gain of 104 points; 54 points gained in math, 26 points gained in verbal, and 26 points gained in writing.[210]

a. Urban, Suburban, and Rural Differences

However, when disaggregated by locale, the gaps widen dramatically; (1) In urban areas, charters produced +29 extra days in reading and +28 in math per year relative to local peers. (2) In suburban schools, the advantage fell to +14 days in reading and +3 in math. (3) In rural schools, average results were negative: –10 days in math and marginal differences in reading.[211] [212]

Technology Education 1, no. 1 (January): 1-27.https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aDhgyzFVsMVke3qFa_11pMP24rKDEpbg/view?usp=sharing

[201] Epple, D., R. Romano, and R. Zimmer. 2016. "Charter Schools: A Survey of Research on Their Characteristics and Effectiveness." Handbook of the Economics of Education 5:139-208. https://drive.google.com/file/d/19Cusk0Ccz3Kmijrz-av4tgkd_HVsUz3i/view?usp=sharing

[202] Epple, D., R. Romano, and R. Zimmer."Characteristics and Effectiveness."

[203] Cohodes and Parham, "Charter Schools's Effectiveness," 10-11.

[204] Cohodes and Parham, "Charter Schools's Effectiveness," 10-11.

[205] Cohodes and Parham, "Charter Schools's Effectiveness," 10.

[206] Cohodes and Parham, "Charter Schools's Effectiveness," 11.

[207] Cohodes and Parham, "Charter Schools's Effectiveness," 8.

[208] Joshua Angrist et al., "Stand and Deliver: Effects of Boston's Charter High Schools on College Preparation, Entry, and Choice," *Journal of Labor Economics* vol. 34, no. 2 (2016), https://economics.mit.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Stand%20and%20Deliver.pdf.

[209] Angrist, "Stand and Deliver," 20.

[210] Cohodes and Parham, "Charter Schools's Effectiveness," 8.

[211] The National Charter School Study.

[212] Barshay, J. (2023, June 12). *Proof points: Charter schools have improved in the past 15 years, but many still fail students, researchers say*. The Hechinger Report.

C) Models, Practices, and Institutional Approaches

On a more granular scale, test score outcomes vary substantially by school model and instructional practices.[213] One study found that charter schools with a "No Excuses" model tend to demonstrate stronger gains, with math achievement improving by 0.25 standard deviations and reading achievement improving by 0.15 standard deviations, compared to TPS students.[214]

Interestingly, the same study found that schools not using the "No Excuses" model showed smaller improvements—0.15 standard deviations in math and 0.07 standard deviations in reading—but still outperformed TPS counterparts.[215] These results are supported by research in Massachusetts, where middle school charters in urban areas were found to have positive effects on test scores (0.32 standard deviation in math and 0.15 standard deviations in ELA) after attending one year while nonurban charters showed negative effects on test scores.[216]

This discrepancy is attributed to the prevalence of "No Excuses" models in urban charters—which emphasizes discipline, academic rigor, longer instruction time, and selective hiring of teachers—whereas nonurban charters do not use this model.[217] It should be noted, however, that the urban charters often serve students with lower initial achievement baselines—meaning local TPS students have lower test scores than state average—while nonurban charters often have negative effects on a higher baseline of achievement.[218]

Will Dobbie and Roland Fryer, through their research on New York City schools, found that the implementation of five characteristics in charter schools are correlated with higher math and ELA achievement scores: more teacher feedback, data driven instruction, high quality tutoring, more instructional time, and higher expectations.[219] Each of these characteristics positively associated with improvements in both math and ELA scores, with stronger effects in math.[220] In contrast, characteristics like class size, expenditures per student, teacher certification status, and teachers' educational degree, were found to have extremely low or negative correlation with student math and ELA score outcomes.[221]

Standard deviations, which are based on standardized test scores in this case, measure the degree of variation from the mean, which is an effective method of quantifying students' academic improvement compared to the average score of all students being studied.[222]

D) District-Level and System-Wide Effects

Charter schools' impacts on test scores go beyond individual schools, influencing district or regional level outcomes.[223] Longitudinal data of nearly all public schools since 1991 show that

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https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-charter-schools-have-improved-in-the-past-15-years-but-many-still-fail-students-researchers-say/

[213] Cohodes and Parham, "Charter Schools's Effectiveness," 15.

[214] Albert Cheng et al., "No Excuses Charter Schools: A Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence on Student Achievement," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2015), 32-33 https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2652401.

[215] Cheng et al., "No Excuses Charter Schools," 32-33.

[216] Joshua D. Angrist et al., "Explaining Charter School Effectiveness," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 5, no. 4 (2013): 9, JSTOR.

[217] Angrist et al., "Explaining Charter School Effectiveness," 20.

[218] Angrist et al., "Explaining Charter School Effectiveness," 6.

[219] Will Dobbie and Roland G Fryer, "Getting beneath the Veil of Effective Schools: Evidence from New York City," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 5, no. 4 (October 2013): 47, https://doi.org/10.1257/app.5.4.28.

[220] Dobbie and Fryer, "Getting Beneath the Veil," 47-48.

[221] Dobbie and Fryer, "Getting Beneath the Veil," 46.

[222] Cheng et al., "No Excuses Charter Schools," 2.

[223] Feng Chen and Douglas N Harris, "The Market-Level Effects of Charter Schools on Student Outcomes: A National Analysis of School Districts," *Journal of Public Economics* 228 (December 1, 2023): 5-6, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2023.105015.

increasing charter school market share by 10% corresponds to a 0.01-0.02 standard deviation increase in elementary and middle school test scores nationwide.[224]

This increase could be attributed to participant effect (i.e. charter schools serve students better and improve their performance) as well as competitive effect, meaning local TPS improve their own systems in response to charter school competition.[225] Furthermore, the expansion of charter schools may also cause under-performing TPS to shut down as more students attend high-performing schools, leading to higher average district performance.[226]

However, it should be noted that most of these findings are correlational and not strictly causal.[227] Further research is needed to determine the mechanisms driving these gains and their long-term sustainability.[228]

E) District-Level Enrollment Shares

Researchers utilized data from the National Longitudinal School Database for census data for school districts across the United States and paired this with data from the Stanford Education Data Archive for test score data from 2000-2016.[229] Their analysis found student Math and English Language Art test scores are higher by 0.06-0.16 standard deviations in school districts where at least 10% of their students were enrolled in a charter format compared to their counterparts.[230]

Additionally, for the same school districts with 10% charter school enrollment, their high school graduation rate was 2-4% greater than their counterparts.[231] The researchers noted the importance of these results due to overall research regarding the connection between high school graduation and measurements of future life outcomes.[232]

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[224] Chen and Harris, "The Market-Level Effects," 14.
[225] Chen and Harris, "The Market-Level Effects," 2.
[226] Chen and Harris, "The Market-Level Effects," 2-3.
[227] Chen and Harris, "The Market-Level Effects," 14.
[228] Chen and Harris, "The Market-Level Effects," 14.
[229] Feng Chen, Douglas N. Harris. 2021. "The Combined Effects of Charter Schools on Student Outcomes: A National Analysis of School Districts." *REACH National Center for Research on Education Access and Choice*, December. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED622023.pdf.
[230] Feng Chen, Douglas N. Harris. 2021. "The Combined Effects"
[231] Feng Chen, Douglas N. Harris. 2021. "The Combined Effects"
[232] Feng Chen, Douglas N. Harris. 2021. "The Combined Effects"

Table 1. Percentage of Charter Schools Outperforming Local School District by Model.

Model	Percent Better than District - ELA	Percent Better than District - Math
Art	62%	45%
Classical	70%	62%
CTE	34%	21%
High Expectations	53%	53%
Home School	NA	NA
Language Immersion	48%	44%
Montessori	64%	47%
Progression	46%	41%
Project-Based Learning	51%	39%
STEM	65%	61%

Note: The homeschool model includes cyber charter schools which draw students from across the state. For that reason, we excluded them from Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2. Percentage of Charter Schools Outperforming The Stateby Model.

Model	Percent Better than State - ELA	Percent Better than State - Math
Art	54%	34%
Classical	70%	63%
CTE	26%	15%
High Expectations	33%	36%
Home School	24%	4%
Language Immersion	40%	38%
Montessori	65%	47%
Progression	37%	30%
Project-Based Learning	46%	34%
STEM	50%	50%

Data from Tables 1 and 2 were based on district and state averages in English Language Art and math for 3rd-9th grade and one year of high school, utilizing publicly available data for the 2018-2019 school year.[233] Researchers compared the percentage of a certain charter school model that performed better than their local or state averages for standardized testing.[234]

The charter model classifications are based on a system developed by Huang and White for 2,356 charter schools; it's acknowledged that some charter schools may also specialize in multiple areas.[235] Other limitations noted by the researchers when comparing academic outcomes based on charter school model included some schools reporting a proficiency for test scores, charter schools reporting their data together instead of separately, and the differences in each state's standardized test requirements.[236]

Between all charter school formats, at least 46% of charter schools performed better in ELA compared to their school district counterparts and 21% of charter schools performed better in mathematics compared to their school districts counterparts.[237] Classical charter schools, which utilize the Socratic method to focus on classical liberal arts and traditional texts, had the highest percentage of better performance compared to their local school district, with 70% and 62% of classical schools performing better in ELA and math, respectively.[238] [239]

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[233] Huang, Lifei, and Jamison White. 2023. "Exploring Charter School Innovation: A Comparison of Popular Charter School Models." *Journal of School Choice* 17 (3): 387–403. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-fyKHmrO1Xx_oITMSH-ysD-Nqs6F_f_l/view?usp=sharing

[234] Huang, Lifei, and Jamison White. 2023. "Exploring Charter School Innovation"

[235] White, Jamison, and Lifei Huang. 2022. "A Census of All Specialized Charter School Foci and Models." *Journal of School Choice* 16 (1): 11–42. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Rr7bGDAmwgdrubpqs0JC0sF3KONZKWGF/view?usp=sharing

[236] Huang, Lifei, and Jamison White. 2023. "Exploring Charter School Innovation"

[237] Huang, Lifei, and Jamison White. 2023. "Exploring Charter School Innovation"

[238] Huang, Lifei, and Jamison White. 2023. "Exploring Charter School Innovation"

[239] White, Jamison, and Lifei Huang. 2022. "A Census of All Specialized"

It's noted researchers simply define the differences in performance averages but only suggest that possible reasons include the families which self select certain programs or the alignment between curricula and standardized testing.[240] Researchers also suggest standardized testing only may inequitably evaluate schools, calling for further research for other metrics to evaluate specific mission of charter schools, but also the method of instruction.[241] [242]

F) Student Selection, Demographics, and "Creaming" Concerns

Charter schools have faced scrutiny due to the expectation that academically high-performing students will be drawn to enroll in charter schools instead of regular public schools and thus worsen the conditions of the latter, nominally associated as a "creaming" effect.[243] However, little evidence has surfaced to support this argument, instead showing higher minority enrollments in charter schools.[244]

A study in California showed that on average, students in charter schools have lower scores than students in conventional public schools; however, this comparison may be misleading because charter school students are not a random sample of public school students in the state.[245] Charter schools may enroll a disproportionate number of low-achieving students initially or be located in areas with high concentrations of at-risk students.[246]

To account for differences in student population that may affect achievement, a statistical model was estimated that adjusts for the backgrounds of students attending different types of schools and, after adjustment, the gap between the schools' achievement scores in both reading and math narrows.[247]

Demographic barriers were noted in some charter schools' registration systems, such as limited internet access or mandatory parent meetings, which could disadvantage low-income families.[248]

G) Subject-Specific and Grades-Level Performance

a) Math Skills

Grade 3, 4, and 5 students enrolled in traditional public schools across the country had statistically significantly higher reading, mathematics, writing, and science scores than did students enrolled in charter schools.[249]

Charter schools were found to have higher efficiency in Massachusetts in another study, outperforming traditional schools in reading and mathematics while spending fewer dollars per

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[240] Huang, Lifei, and Jamison White. 2023. "Exploring Charter School Innovation"
[241] White, Jamison, and Lifei Huang. 2022. "A Census of All Specialized"
[242] Huang, Lifei, and Jamison White. 2023. "Exploring Charter School Innovation"
[243] Bohte, J. (2004), Examining the Impact of Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools. Policy Studies Journal, 32: 501-520.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oTy8G2xlaItuMEBEwJSqYgocleUYjNIo/view?usp=sharing
[244] Bohte, "Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[245] Buddin, Richard, Ron Zimmer, Derrick Chau, Glenn Daley, Brian Gill, Cassandra Guarino, Laura Hamilton, et al. "ACADEMIC OUTCOMES." In Charter School Operations and Performance: Evidence from California, 1st ed., 37–62. RAND Corporation, 2003.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/18X1vMHhjraLk_2FT2msnyA_miu61TahE/view?usp=sharing
[246] Buddin, Zimmer, Chau, Daley, Gill, Guarino, Hamilton, et al. "ACADEMIC OUTCOMES."
[247] Buddin, Zimmer, Chau, Daley, Gill, Guarino, Hamilton, et al. "ACADEMIC OUTCOMES."
[248] Escalante, Slate. "Elementary Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools."
[249] Escalante, Martha L., and John R. Slate. 2017. "Differences in Academic Performance between Elementary Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools." Journal of Advances in Education Research 2, no. 3 (August): 163-170. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OFdfiOUobJmms3wTCdHQP2SIMceF4lmE/view?usp=sharing

student, but such gains were not replicated in Texas; in Texas, charter schools' performance remained consistently below traditional public schools in the analyzed years and grade levels.[250]

For secondary school students, it was only when broken down by charter type do significant differences appear: Nonclassroom-based, Montessori-style schools performed significantly lower than conventional public schools; classroom-based conversion and start-up schools performed slightly higher than conventional public schools in some subjects; start-up schools performed better in secondary reading and math; conversion or start-up schools with nonclassroom-based instruction had lower test scores across the board.[251]

Students in nonclassroom-based schools may differ in unique ways not captured by control variables, such as being pulled from conventional schools due to problems in traditional settings.[252] New charter schools also differed somewhat from established ones.[253]

a) Writing and English skills

Across Texas elementary grades, Grade 4 students in traditional public schools posted statistically significantly higher State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) writing scores than those in charter schools.[254] In that cohort, the mean writing score was about 70.07 in traditional schools versus 68.10 in charters.

By contrast, Grade 5 writing showed no statistically significant difference between charter and traditional schools.[255]

At the secondary level in one Wisconsin district, analyses reported a significant overall school-type effect and conducted Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests and post hoc tests for Language Arts alongside other subjects.[256]

Subsection II: Geography, Governance, and Inequality in Outcomes

A) Geographic Variation in Performance

a) National Effects

The performance of charter schools strongly correlates with geography. The most comprehensive study to date, due to its nature of being a national longitudinal study covering 1.8 million students—CREDO's *National Charter School Study III* (2023)—found that, nationally, charter students gained the equivalent of +16 additional days in reading and +6 in math compared with similar peers in traditional public schools.[257]

b) Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Evidence

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[250] Escalante, Slate. "Elementary Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools."
[251] Hamilton, Laura. . 2003. Charter School Operations and Performance: Evidence from California: ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENTS OF CHARTER AND CONVENTIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS: RAND Corporation. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XLq8TnhLm6XTY85wXEd0iRpTS21OBWlt/view?usp=sharing
[252] Hamilton, "Evidence from California".
[253] Hamilton, "Evidence from California".
[254] Escalante, Martha L., and John R. Slate. 2017. "Differences in Academic Performance between Elementary Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools." Journal of Advances in Education Research 2, no. 3 (August): 163-170. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OFdfiOUobJmms3wTCdHQP2SIMceF4lmE/view?usp=sharing
[255]Escalante, Slate. "Elementary Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools."
[256]Nusbaum, Jamie L. , 2014. "Charter School Sustainability: A Quantitative Descriptive Study of Charter School Academic Performance." Order No. 3617185, Capella University. https://drive.google.com/file/d/17x8K14Q24NkiqSy6KAbcj41XxzS7LskG/view?usp=drive_link
[257] The National Charter School Study III 2023 - stanford university. (n.d.-o). https://ncss3.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Credo-NCSS3-Report.pdf

The same pattern emerges across experimental evidence. In Boston, randomized lotteries show annual effects of 0.20-0.33σ gains in ELA and math, respectively, for charter students, with sustained improvements through replication campuses and four-year persistence translating into approximately 100+ days of additional learning annually.[258] [259] Comparable lottery-based findings from New York City reveal similar or even larger effects in both test scores and later college enrollment.[260]

By contrast, quasi-experimental studies outside urban cores find effects close to zero—especially for cyber or isolated rural charters, which often underperform relative to matched traditional schools.[261] [262]

B) Long-Term Outcomes by Geography

The urban advantage extends beyond short-term test scores. Students in city charters show higher on-time high school graduation, college entry, and four-year degree completion rates.[263] However, rural and small-town charters show subtler but still meaningful postsecondary effects.

A 2024 national independent analysis by FutureEd found that while test score gains were modest, nonurban charter graduates were 6.4 percent more likely to earn a bachelor's degree within six years, while urban charter graduates improved by 4 percent.[264]

C) Structural and Institutional Drivers Shaping Outcomes

a) Funding Structures and Location Incentives

Flat, per-pupil funding that doesn't vary with student need pushes charters toward lower-cost student populations and shapes where schools open and which survive.[265] Under flat funding, charters face incentives to "spatially cream skim"; more relaxed and non- "No-Excuses" schools, (including some for-profit managed) schools are more cost-oriented in location choices, while No-Excuses schools, schools exacting behavioral and academic standards, show revealed preferences for serving Black and Hispanic students.[266]

b) Charter Location & Governance Context

Charter presence is also higher where nearby public school performance is lower and in areas with larger Black and Hispanic populations.[267] This dispersion persists when grouping schools by governance model, as evaluations of charter management organizations show average

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[258] Effects of Boston's Charter High Schools on College http://users.nber.org/~dynarski/w19275.pdf

[259] Can successful schools replicate? scaling up Boston's Charter School Sector. Blueprint Labs. (2023, May 24). https://blueprintlabs.mit.edu/research/can-successful-schools-replicate-scaling-up-bostons-charter-school-sector/

[260] How New York City's Charter Schools Affect Achievement. (n.d.-h). https://users.nber.org/~schools/charterschoolseval/how_NYC_charter_schools_affect_achievement_sept2009.pdf

[261] Charter schools and student learning. (2017, May). https://www.povertyactionlab.org/policy-insight/charter-schools-and-student-learning

[262] N.d. Examining Variation within the Charter School Sector. Accessed October 9, 2025a. https://ncspe.tc.columbia.edu/working-papers/files/WP241.pdf.

[263] Griffith, D., & Petrilli, M. (2020, October 14). The case for urban charter schools. https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/case-urban-charter-schools

[264] Sun, J. (2024, September 4). *Research notes: Impact of charter schools on academic outcomes in urban and Non-Urban Areas*. FutureEd. https://www.future-ed.org/research-notes-impact-of-charter-schools-on-academic-outcomes-in-urban-and-non-urban-areas/

[265] Powers, Jeanne M, and Amanda U Potterton. 2019. "The Rich Get Richer: Inequalities in Public School Tax Credit Donations to Charter Schools in Arizona." Policy Futures in Education 17 (2): 246–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210318790602.

[266] Powers and Potterton, "Inequalities." 248.

[267] Powers and Potterton, "Inequalities." 248.

near-zero test-score impacts overall with wide tails of significantly positive and significantly negative operators.

D) Mechanisms Explaining Geographic Gaps

a) Transportation and Barriers to Access

Even when rural students technically "have" a charter option, distance and infrastructure often make attendance impractical. Long commutes correlate with lower attendance rates, sleep loss, and reduced homework time, and one-third of low-income families in urban choice districts report they would travel farther *if transportation were guaranteed*.[268] In most states, charters are not required to provide transportation or operate across district boundaries, leaving rural families functionally excluded from open enrollment systems.[269] [270]

b) Talent, Capacity, and Organizational Scale

Teacher and leadership shortages are particularly acute outside metropolitan areas. Recruiting qualified STEM and CTE instructors to low-density regions is difficult, driving both lower specialization and higher turnover. Rural charters frequently cite human capital shortages, limited facilities, and technology gaps as key barriers to scaling.[271] These constraints partly explain why urban charters operated by large CMOs—organizations that benefit from standardized curricula, professional development pipelines, and data systems—tend to outperform small, independent schools.[272] The 2023 CREDO report shows that students in CMO-operated middle schools gained approximately +40 days in reading and +40 days in math per year, with effects that grew stronger after four years of continuous enrollment.[273]

c) Institutional Fit and Local Adaptation

Successful rural charters rarely imitate urban "no-excuses" models; rather, they adapt to local identity and industry needs—offering agriculture, renewable energy, or trades-based programs tied to regional employers or community colleges.[274] Their strength lies in contextualization: smaller class sizes, community engagement, and flexible K–12 designs that reflect regional values. Yet such tailoring can also limit scalability and external support.

d) Funding Inequities

Because charter funding formulas often depend on state or district per-pupil revenues, rural schools—drawing from smaller, lower-income populations—receive less operating income

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[268] Urban Institute Student Transportation Working Group. (2018, March). The road to school. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/97151/the_road_to_school_6.pdf

[269] Emilee Rauschenberger, T. S., Idalia Rodriguez Morales, M. E. O. H., & Nancy Gikandi, N. K. (2022, March 9). *Who could benefit from school choice? mapping access to public and private schools*. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/who-could-benefit-from-school-choice-mapping-access-to-public-and-private-schools/

[270] Murray, Jeff. 2024. How Centralized Enrollment Systems Enhance School Choice. January 4, 2024. https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/how-centralized-enrollment-systems-enhance-school-choice.

[271] Meskin, Sarah. 2016. "Harvesting Success: Charter Schools in Rural America." BLUUM. February 11, 2016. https://www.charterschoolcenter.org/sites/default/files/files/field_publication_attachment/Rural%20Charter%20Schools%20White%20Paper_NCSRC_02.05.2016_0.pdf.

[272] Paul E. Peterson, M. Danish Shakeel. 2024. "The Nation's Charter Report Card." Education Next. November 19, 2024. https://www.educationnext.org/nations-charter-report-card-first-ever-state-ranking-charter-student-performance-naep/.

[273] The National Charter School Study.

[274] Admin, CRPE. 2025. "In a Changing Rural America, What Can Charter Schools Offer?" Center on Reinventing Public Education. March 25, 2025. https://crpe.org/in-a-changing-rural-america-what-can-charter-schools-offer/.

and face higher per-student facility costs.[275] Unlike urban charters, which benefit from philanthropic ecosystems and alumni networks, rural charters often rely solely on state allotments, leaving them vulnerable to closure when enrollment fluctuates.

E) Evaluating Charter Effectiveness Through a Geographic Lens

The evidence suggests that geography not only mediates access but also shapes *how* charter schools function. Urban charter concentration is primarily a mix of demand-driven and supply-driven factors. Which has led to excel where density supports competition, resources, and talent pipelines.

Suburban and rural charters operate under conditions that constrain those same levers—limited labor pools, sparse populations, and logistical hurdles that undercut school choice as a meaningful mechanism for equity. Nonetheless, innovative rural models—particularly those embedded in local economies—can deliver strong community outcomes even when standardized test effects appear small.

Overall, students in Boston, Dallas, or Los Angeles may choose among several specialized pathways; those in Appalachia, the Texas Panhandle, or Montana often have none. Urban concentration has yielded undeniable academic gains and innovation, but the exclusion of rural America from that experiment risks entrenching a two-tiered system of educational opportunity, leading to the mirroring broader educational inequalities.

F) Equity, Enrollment, and Demographic Sorting

a) Enrollment Patterns

While charter schools were originally designed to expand educational choice and encourage innovation within the public education system, evidence shows they can also reinforce or deepen inequities in access and outcomes.[276] The effect of charter schools on enrollment varies widely depending on the geographic location, governance structure, and school type.

Research in the early 2000s indicated that underperforming charter schools often served higher numbers of minority and economically disadvantaged students than traditional public schools (TPS).[277]

b) Financial Barriers

Although some charter schools intentionally serve disadvantaged populations, many attract more advantaged or higher-performing students, which can occur through self-selection, marketing, or geographic placement.[278] Researchers also identified four main categories of

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275 "FY 2022 School District Finance Survey Data, School Year 2021-22 (NCES 2024-311)." n.d. FY 2022 School District Finance Survey Data, School Year 2021-22 (NCES 2024-311) | IES. Accessed October 8, 2025. https://nces.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/data/data-file/fy-2022-school-district-finance-survey-data-school-year-2021-22-nces-2024-311.

276 Corcoran, Sean P., and Jennifer Jennings. 2018. "The Gender Gap in Charter School Enrollment." Educational Policy 32 (5): 635-663. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QAvzHqOq8JWmd-rwXJqONqH9DbrPXnTm/view?usp=sharing.

277 Escalante, Martha L., and John R. Slate. 2017. "Differences in Academic Performance between Elementary Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools." Journal of Advances in Education Research 2, no. 3 (August): 163-170. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OFdfiOUobJmms3wTCdHQP2SIMceF4lmE/view?usp=sharing

278 Corcoran, Sean P., and Jennifer Jennings. 2018. "The Gender Gap in Charter School Enrollment." Educational Policy 32 (5): 635-663. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QAvzHqOq8JWmd-rwXJqONqH9DbrPXnTm/view?usp=sharing.

implicit barriers: registration and enrollment requirements, lottery procedures, student fees, and family involvement commitments.[279]

Many charter schools rely on first-come, first-served or lottery systems for admissions; while lotteries are meant to promote equitable access, inconsistent implementation can undermine transparency and fairness.[280]

In one study, only 23 charter schools in Colorado were accepting applications, while others maintained waiting lists with unclear selection procedures.[281] Roughly 38% of schools used a lottery system, though only two used computer-generated randomization.[282] Some schools gave preferential treatment to siblings or district residents, undermining equal access.[283] Many schools also required school tours or parent meetings before registration, which can disadvantage working parents, single-parent households, and families with transportation barriers.[284]

Hidden costs , such as mandatory uniforms and materials fees, can add substantial financial burdens. Furthermore, nearly 40% of charter schools required parental volunteer commitments, ranging from 20 to 150 hours per year. While some reduced requirements for single parents, these expectations often conflicted with work and childcare obligations.[285] These commitments effectively privilege more affluent or stay-at-home parents, thereby exacerbating inequities for low-income and minority families who work multiple jobs or lack flexible schedules.[286]

G) Racial and Income Inequalities

a) Racial Composition and EMO Governance

Generally, charter schools serve larger shares of minority students than TPS, but the data is inconsistent.[287] The differences in racial composition between charter schools vary most widely between publicly funded, independently managed charter schools (which are designed to increase flexibility and innovation) and charter schools managed by for-profit Educational Management Organizations (EMOs), which typically prioritize efficiency and market expansion.[288] The rise of EMOs began around 2006, with 21 for-profit EMOs managing approximately 14% of US charter schools, growing to 95 for-profit EMOs managing 733 schools in 2009.[289] While all charter schools operate under performance contracts and enjoy more autonomy in staffing, curriculum, and enrollment, EMOs tend to operate on a business-centric model that emphasizes maximizing enrollment, minimizing cost, and seeking efficiency through scale.[290] Thus, EMO-managed charter schools often serve fewer students with disabilities, limited

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[279] Weiler, Spencer C., and Linda R. Vogel. 2015. "Charter School Barriers: Do Enrollment Requirements Limit Student Access to Charter Schools?" Equity & Excellence in Education 48 (1): 36-48. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ib7mb_FamU7JKZwSXLoBfeTa5OUhAFbd/view?usp=sharing.

[280] Weiler and Vogel, 2015, "Student Access."

[281] Weiler and Vogel, 2015, "Student Access."

[282] Weiler and Vogel, 2015, "Student Access."

[283] Weiler and Vogel, 2015, "Student Access."

[284] Weiler and Vogel, 2015, "Student Access."

[285] Weiler and Vogel, 2015, "Student Access."

[286] Weiler and Vogel, 2015, "Student Access."

[287] Bohte, J. (2004), Examining the Impact of Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools. Policy Studies Journal, 32: 501-520. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oTy8G2xlaItuMEBEwJSqYgocleUYjNIo/view?usp=sharing

[288] Ertas, Nevbahar, and Christine H. Roch. 2014. "Charter Schools, Equity, and Student Enrollments: The Role of For-profit Educational Management Organizations." Education and Urban Society 46 (5): 548-579. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UA2G8g3z2f5JzZUy14YJw6b42xEkwV-Q/view?usp=sharing.

[289] Ertas and Roch, 2014, "Equity and Enrollments."

[290] Ertas and Roch, 2014, "Equity and Enrollments."

English proficiency, or lower socioeconomic status, and provide fewer special services for disadvantaged populations.[291]

b) Cyber Schools and Marginalized Enrollment

Cyber charter schools, publicly funded schools that deliver instruction primarily or entirely through the internet, emerged in the early 2000s as an outgrowth of the broader school choice movement, enabled by advances in digital technology and increased policy flexibility in several U.S. states.[292] Their rise was fueled by the belief that online education could expand access, flexibility, and personalization, particularly for students whose needs were not met in traditional physical schools.[293]

Using a dataset of 110,984 students across 32 U.S. states, researchers examined parental motivations for enrolling Black students, students with disabilities (IEPs), and low-income students (FARM eligible) in a large cyber charter network.[294] Findings reveal that non-academic concerns, particularly those related to emotional and physical safety, are major drivers of cyber charter enrollment among marginalized student groups.[295]

Cyber charter schools are increasingly popular, especially among students with marginalized identities, despite evidence that physical schools typically produce better academic outcomes**.** Students with multiple marginalized identities (e.g., being both Black and low-income or having a disability) were significantly more likely to have parents cite multiple "push" factors for leaving traditional schools.[296] Parents of students with three overlapping marginalized identities (Black + IEP + FARM) were nearly 10% more likely to report bullying, 8% more likely to report safety issues, and 7% more likely to report mental health reasons for enrollment compared to parents of non-Black,non-marginalized identities.[297] Parents of non-Black students with both IEP and FARM status were also more likely to cite bullying and mental health concerns, though patterns differed depending on the identity combinations.[298] These results align with broader literature showing that Black students and students in high-poverty schools experience more disciplinary action, culturally mismatched teaching, and safety issues, driving parents to seek alternative schooling options like charters or homeschooling.[299]

However, despite these perceived social and emotional benefits, cyber charter schools generally show lower academic outcomes, suggesting that safety and emotional well-being may outweigh academic performance as a factor in parental decision-making for marginalized families.[300] Across all variables, income level (FARM status) demonstrated the strongest statistical association, followed by disability (IEP status), and then race, suggesting that income level is a dominant factor shaping safety and well-being concerns in schooling decisions.[301]

c) Demographic Sorting and Segregation Effects

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[291]Ertas and Roch, 2014, "Equity and Enrollments."
[292] Beck, Dennis, Martha Bradley-Dorsey, and Robert Maranto. 2025. "How marginalized identities are related to cyber charter school enrollment." Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies, (June), 1-15. https://drive.google.com/file/d/19Zq6GGyL1JqwyEPHauZ5Z5vI_jI4e-K_/view?usp=sharing.
[293] Beck, Bradley-Dorsey, and Maranto. 2025, "Cyber Enrollment"
[294] Beck, Bradley-Dorsey, and Maranto. 2025, "Cyber Enrollment"
[295] Beck, Bradley-Dorsey, and Maranto. 2025, "Cyber Enrollment"
[296] Beck, Bradley-Dorsey, and Maranto. 2025, "Cyber Enrollment"
[297] Beck, Bradley-Dorsey, and Maranto. 2025, "Cyber Enrollment"
[298] Beck, Bradley-Dorsey, and Maranto. 2025, "Cyber Enrollment"
[299] Beck, Bradley-Dorsey, and Maranto. 2025, "Cyber Enrollment"
[300] Beck, Bradley-Dorsey, and Maranto. 2025, "Cyber Enrollment"
[301] Beck, Bradley-Dorsey, and Maranto. 2025, "Cyber Enrollment"

The "reverse creaming" effect of charter schools on minority students has caused the demographic makeup of public schools to change, implicating the effect of academic performance on marginalized students.[302] National averages, however, mask local variation; many individual charters are more racially homogeneous, either whiter or more minority-concentrated, than nearby district schools.[303] In fact, charter schools were revealed to potentially facilitate "white flight without moving," increasing racial sorting within public systems.[304] In districts that are more integrated overall, the share of white students in charters tends to be higher.[305] At the same time, however, greater day-to-day interracial contact for white students in district schools is associated with lower white enrollment in charters.[306] These patterns persist even after adjusting for poverty, academic quality proxies, region, urbanicity (the degree of urbanization in an area, ranging from a high concentration of people and services in a city to a rural setting), charter age and type, and the number of charters in the area.[307] In fact, academic "quality" metrics are weak predictors of white charter enrollment compared with racial composition measures.[308] In urban sub-samples, however, charter attendance is associated with materially larger gains, translating into roughly 40 additional days of learning in math and about 28 in reading relative to matched traditional public school peers.[309]

Among charter schools operated by education management organizations (EMOs)—companies that oversee schools—students are highly segregated along racial lines.[310] On average, only 27.5% of EMO-operated schools are not segregative compared to their overall district.[311]

This does not necessarily mean that these schools always enroll fewer minority students; in about 40% of cases, EMO-operated schools are segregated in that they greatly *overenroll* students of color, thus separating them from their overall community.[312] In fact, there are multiple instances of EMO schools with over 97% black enrollment, translating into a high minority differential.[313] The underrepresentation of minority racial groups is observed in small, for-profit EMOs that enroll about 13% fewer minority students than their district counterparts.[314] They also

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[302] Bohte, J. (2004), Examining the Impact of Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools. Policy Studies Journal, 32: 501-520.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oTy8G2xlaItuMEBEwJSqYgocleUYjNIo/view?usp=sharing
[303] Renzulli, Linda A, and Lorraine Evans. 2005. "School Choice, Charter Schools, and White Flight." Social Problems (Berkeley, Calif.) 52 (3): 398–418.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OHP0AkOSOtoQ3D63pwTvpB19dO7QjUdn/view?usp=drive_link
[304] Renzulli and Evans, "White Flight."
[305] Renzulli and Evans, "White Flight."
[306] Renzulli and Evans, "White Flight."
[307] Renzulli and Evans, "White Flight."
[308] Renzulli and Evans, "White Flight."
[309] Rapa, L.J., Katsiyannis, A. & Ennis, R.P. Charter School Enrollment Effects: A Review of Results from Recent Large-Scale Studies. J Child Fam Stud 27, 3132–3140 (2018).
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YnW2lZME0yeufdCI5KrrLwcr0pDXfXDQ/view?usp=sharing
[310] Miron, Gary, Jessica Urschel, William J. Mathis, and Elana Tornquist. "Schools Without Diversity: Education Management Organizations, Charter Schools, and the Demographic Stratification of the American School System." February 5, 2010. https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/schools-without-diversity.
[311] Miron, "Schools Without Diversity." 13.
[312] Miron, "Schools Without Diversity." 13.
[313] Miron, "Schools Without Diversity." 13.
[314] Miron, "Schools Without Diversity." 22.

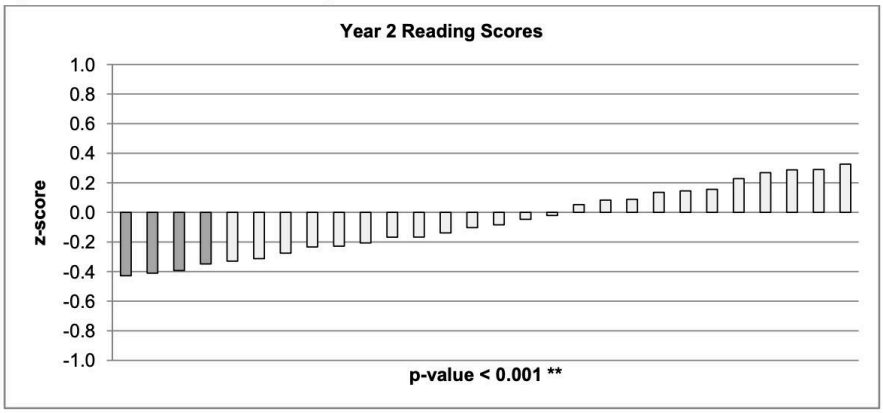
enrolled significantly fewer special education and English Language Learner students (around 11% in public schools compared to just 4%) than their district averages.[315]

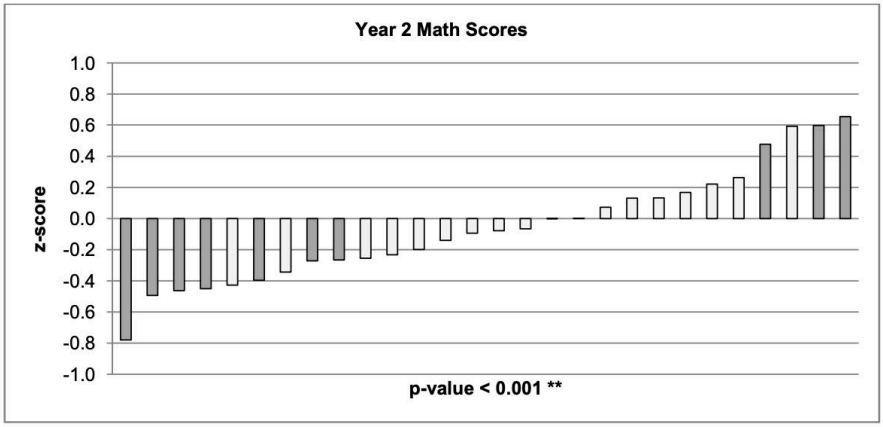
H) Lottery Based Admissions and School-Level Variation

Many charter schools rely on first-come, first-served or lottery systems for admissions.[316] Studies show that lottery-based charter schools have a wide variation in effectiveness, often demonstrating little to no average improvement in student achievement in comparison to traditional schools, though some significant positive impacts can occur when targeting disadvantaged students.[317] A 2010 evaluation across 36 charter middle schools in the U.S. found that, on average, lottery-based charter middle schools perform about the same as traditional public schools when it comes to enhancing student achievement, behavior, and overall academic progress.[318] In standardized testing, these charter schools had no statistically significant impacts on math or reading tests scores after one or two years of enrollment.[319] To estimate these impacts, the study compared the outcomes of lottery winners and losers in each participating school while controlling for students' differing background characteristics.[320] Although there was no significant impact on student achievement in lottery-based charter schools, individual school results varied substantially.[321] Across 28 sites that covered 32 schools, the effects on reading scores after two years were positive in 11 sites and negative in 17 sites, with only 4 being statistically significant.[322] Math score effects were positive in 10 sites and negative in 18 sites, with 10 being statistically significant.[323] These variations are demonstrated in the below figure:

[315] Miron, "Schools Without Diversity." 18.
[316] From other people's research (need source from them)
[317] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[318] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[319] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[320] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[321] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[322] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[323] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."

Figure ES.6. Distribution of Site-Level Impact Estimates





Note: p-values are from tests of homogeneity of impacts.

*Variation in impacts is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test.
**Variation in impacts is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, two-tailed test.
Shaded bars are statistically significant impacts at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test.

The individual charter school variations of student achievement impact is further supported by another study from 2016 that analyzed113 lottery-based charter schools.[324] The study found that, on average, each additional year of enrollment increases math scores by 0.08 standard deviation and English/Language Arts (ELA) scores by 0.04 standard deviations.[325]

However, certain school characteristics were linked to stronger or weaker outcomes.. The 2010 study revealed that lottery-based charter schools enrolling higher proportions of low-income or lower-achieving students demonstrated statistically significant improvements in math test scores. In contrast, those serving more advantaged populations demonstrated negative effects.[326] Therefore, lottery-based charter school impact on students' achievement is inversely related to students' income levels, and in some cases, students' baseline achievement levels.[327] Furthermore, the most substantial effects of lottery-based charter schools are concentrated in

[324] Julia Chabrier, Sarah Cohodes, and Philip Oreopoulos, "What Can We Learn from Charter School Lotteries?," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30, no. 3 (August 2016): 57–84, https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.30.3.57.
[325] Chabrier, Cohodes, and Oreopoulos, "What Can We Learn from Charter School Lotteries?"
[326] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[327] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."

urban areas.[328] For example, urban charter schools saw an increase of 0.16 standard deviations for students' Year 2 math scores while schools outside large urban areas experienced a negative effect of -0.14 standard deviations.[329]Although this difference was significant initially, it became non-significant after controlling other student and school characteristics.[330]

Beyond academic achievement, the 2010 study found no significant impacts on other outcomes such as absences, suspensions, student well-being, student behavior and attitudes, and parental involvement.[331] The three exceptions to this finding included reports from parents of lottery winners stating their children were better adjusted than lottery losers.[332] These parents were also more likely to attend school events or volunteer but were less likely to be members of a schools' parent-teacher association.[333] However, there was also evidence demonstrating that lottery-based charter schools resulted in positive effects for parent and student satisfaction with and perceptions of the school.[334] Lottery winners at these schools were 13 percentage points more likely to report they "like school a lot" compared to lottery losers.[335] Additionally, parents of lottery winners were 33 percentage points more likely to rate their child's school as "excellent" compared to parents of lottery losers.[336]

Furthermore, it is also essential to keep in mind that while lotteries are meant to promote equitable access, inconsistent implementation can undermine transparency and fairness. In one study, only 23 charter schools in Colorado were accepting applications, while others maintained waiting lists with unclear selection procedures. Roughly 38% of schools used a lottery system, though only two used computer-generated randomization. Some schools gave preferential treatment to siblings or district residents, undermining equal access. Many schools also required school tours or parent meetings before registration, which can disadvantage working parents, single-parent households, and families with transportation barriers. Hidden costs , such as mandatory uniforms and materials fees, can add substantial financial burdens. Furthermore, nearly 40% of charter schools required parental volunteer commitments, ranging from 20 to 150 hours per year. While some reduced requirements for single parents, these expectations often conflicted with work and childcare obligations.

Subsection III: Specialized & Career-Focused Charter Schools

A) Specialized Charter Schools

A specialized charter school is a charter school focused on a specific subject or educational philosophy.[337] These specialized schools can be categorized based on pedagogy or content, and they offer a targeted curriculum and teaching style for students with certain interests

[328] Chabrier, Cohodes, and Oreopoulos, "What Can We Learn from Charter School Lotteries?"
[329] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[330] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[331] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[332] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[333] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[334] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[335] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[336] Gleason et al., "The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts."
[337] Imagine Schools. 2023. "What Is an Example of a Charter School? | Imagine Schools." Imagine Schools at West Melbourne. June 26, 2023. https://imaginewm.org/what-is-an-example-of-a-charter-school/.

or needs.[338] The vast majority of specialized high schools are found in Florida, Ohio, and Texas.[339]

Jamison White and Lifei Huang of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools developed a classification system dividing specialized charter schools into three foci: curricular (specialized subject areas), pedagogical (distinct teaching philosophies), and student body (serving nontraditional populations).[340] There are 2,356 curricular focus schools, 3,009 pedagogical focus schools, and 683 student body focus schools.[341] STEM-focused schools made up 9% of these total charter schools, Art-focused, language immersion, classical, and career and technical education schools each accounted for about 5%. About 69% of charter schools had no specific focus.[342]

a) Student Composition

The Center for Learning Equity found that specialized schools often have a special education focus or have at least 50% of its population identifying as students with disabilities.[343] Specialized charter schools represent only 3% of all charters nationwide, but are a contentious subject due to their exclusive nature.[344] The Center for Learning Equity released a statement noting that specialized charter schools can "create tension with long-standing goals to provide students with disabilities access to inclusive learning environments alongside non-disabled peers."[345]

Specialized charter schools also enrolled a larger proportion of White students compared to charter schools overall — 40.6% versus 29.5% in the 2021-22 school year.[346] They also enrolled a slightly smaller proportion of students identified as Black— 24.4% versus 26.3%.[347] Looking to White and Huang's study, classical-focused schools had the highest percentage of white students at 56.2%, while high-expectations charter schools had the highest percentage of black students (41.6%) and hispanic students (45.5%).

b) Choosing Specialized Charter Schools

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338 Imagine Schools. 2023. "What Is an Example of a Charter School? | Imagine Schools." Imagine Schools at West Melbourne. June 26, 2023. https://imaginewm.org/what-is-an-example-of-a-charter-school/.

339 Gibson, Patrick, and Ashley Robles. 2021. "Specialized Charter Schools. A Secondary Analysis of the Civil Rights Data Collection to Inform Policy and Practice: Key Findings and Guiding Questions That Examine the Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Charter and Traditional Public Schools. Technical Brief 5." Center for Learner Equity.

340 White, Jamison, and Lifei Huang. 2021. "A Census of All Specialized Charter School Foci and Models." Journal of School Choice 16 (1): 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2021.1995692.

341 White and Huang, "A Census of All Specialized Charter School Foci and Models."

342 White and Huang, "A Census of All Specialized Charter School Foci and Models."

343 Arundel, Kara. 2025. "Specialized Charter Schools Need to Ensure Inclusive Practices, Report Says." K-12 Dive. May 20, 2025. https://www.k12dive.com/news/specialized-charter-schools-special-education-students-with-disabilities/748517/.

344 Arundel, Kara. 2025. "Specialized Charter Schools Need to Ensure Inclusive Practices, Report Says." K-12 Dive. May 20, 2025. https://www.k12dive.com/news/specialized-charter-schools-special-education-students-with-disabilities/748517/.

345 Arundel, Kara. 2025. "Specialized Charter Schools Need to Ensure Inclusive Practices, Report Says." K-12 Dive. May 20, 2025. https://www.k12dive.com/news/specialized-charter-schools-special-education-students-with-disabilities/748517/.

346 Arundel, Kara. 2025. "Specialized Charter Schools Need to Ensure Inclusive Practices, Report Says." K-12 Dive. May 20, 2025. https://www.k12dive.com/news/specialized-charter-schools-special-education-students-with-disabilities/748517/.

347 Arundel, Kara. 2025. "Specialized Charter Schools Need to Ensure Inclusive Practices, Report Says." K-12 Dive. May 20, 2025. https://www.k12dive.com/news/specialized-charter-schools-special-education-students-with-disabilities/748517/.

In one of the few studies to examine the outcomes of parental choice in charter schools, Gregory Weiher, a late Political Science Professor at the University of Houston, and Kent Tedin, also a Political Science Professor at the University of Houston, conducted a survey of 1,008 Texas charter school parents to identify their priorities when deciding on what school to send their child to.[348] They found that White parents most often identified test scores as their top consideration, whereas Black parents prioritized moral values, and Hispanic parents emphasized school discipline. [349] Parents across all racial and ethnic groups cited school racial and ethnic composition as the lowest priority among all available choices of charter schools.[350]

c) Charter School Separation Theory

David Garcia, an Associate Professor in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University, developed the "charter school specialization theory" to explain racial segregation among charter schools.[351] According to Garcia, parents from similar social, economic, and cultural backgrounds hold consistent school preferences and often choose to enroll their children into schools with students from similar backgrounds based on these shared preferences.[352] Therefore, these specialized charter schools often enroll a disproportionate percentage of students with similar demographic characteristics.[353] This theory can help explain the segregation of charter schools based on parent choice. This can be seen in Weiher and Tedin's survey, as parents of different ethnic groups tended to prefer similar school characteristics to one another, rather than a random distribution of preferences based on income or personal values.

d) Outcomes of Attendance

i) General Specialized Charter Schools

There is very little research surrounding the impacts of specialized charter schools on students' future earnings or job prospects, as these specialized charter schools are usually grouped into larger general charter school categories for the sake of research. One of the few major studies of general specialized charter school outcomes found positive postsecondary effects on students.[354] Students at these schools completed roughly seven more transferable college courses by 12th grade than students at non-specialized high schools.[355] Students were also 15.6 percentage points more likely to attend college than students from non-specialized high schools.[356]

ii) Disability Charter Schools for Students with Disabilities

A Study by Lucy Barnard-Brak from the Department of Special Education at the University of Alabama Tuscaloosa and David M.Richman from the Department of Special Education at Texas Tech University could not identify any empirical research showing positive

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[348] Weiher, Gregory R., and Kent L. Tedin. 2002. "Does Choice Lead to Racially Distinctive Schools? Charter Schools and Household Preferences." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 21 (1): 79. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.1041.

[349] Weiher and Tedin, "Does Choice Lead to Racially Distinctive Schools?"

[350] Weiher and Tedin, "Does Choice Lead to Racially Distinctive Schools?"

[351] Garcia, D. R. (2008). Academic and Racial Segregation in Charter Schools: Do Parents Sort Students Into Specialized Charter Schools? Education and Urban Society, 40(5), 590-612. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124508316044 (Original work published 2008)

[352] Garcia, "Academic and Racial Segregation in Charter Schools."

[353] Garcia, "Academic and Racial Segregation in Charter Schools."

[354] Mulhern, Christine, Shelby McNeill, Fatih Unlu, Brian Phillips, Julie A. Edmunds, and Eric Grebing. 2024. "Spillover Effects of Specialized High Schools." Journal of Public Economics 238 (October): 105170. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2024.105170.

[355] Mulhern et al., "Spillover Effects of Specialized High Schools."

[356] Mulhern et al., "Spillover Effects of Specialized High Schools."

or negatives outcomes for students with disabilities attending specialized charter schools for students with disabilities.[357] The study also found that specialized charter schools for students with disabilities had similar rates of restraint and seclusion incidents compared with specialized public schools.[358]

B) STEM Focused Specialized Charter Schools

While students at STEM charter schools have been shown to have higher test scores in English Language Arts and mathematics, researchers propose this can also become the reason these schools attract higher-achieving students.[359]

One study specifically focused on nine charter STEM elementary schools in Arizona, where 70 students had transferred to these schools for at least 3 years with their prior experience in a non-STEM school.[360] There was a significant difference for transferred STEM students' scores in the fall of 2026; in fact, all students had higher test scores during their third year at a STEM charter school compared to their final year at their old school when comparing their relative achievement.[361] However, researchers also noted students who transferred to these schools were already high-performing in math and language arts prior to transferring, but there is not a significant difference.[362]

Another study, when comparing STEM and non-STEM charter schools, specifically concluded positive results for 1125 Hispanic students' mathematics achievements in STEM charter schools compared to their non-STEM school counterparts in Texas, specifically where 96% of Hispanic students throughout the study were economically disadvantaged, and 68.5% of the 1481 total participants were economically disadvantaged.[363] Results showed STEM charter school students had higher mathematical achievement, and were also effective for economically-advantaged students in sustaining their mathematical achievement and growth.[364]

C) Career-Based and Magnet Charter Schools

Career-based secondary schools, leadership academies, magnet school programs, international-studies programs, and language immersion schools equip students for civic leadership and global engagement. Nationwide there are roughly 12,490 magnet and career-based charter schools out of 99,200 public schools.[365] Charters often offer similar specialized curricula and serve about seven (7) percent of public-school students, up from four

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[357] Barnard-Brak, Lucy, and David M. Richman. 2025. "Behavioral Outcomes for Students with Disabilities Attending Specialized Charter Schools for Students Qualifying for Special Education Services."
[358] Barnard-Brak, Lucy, and David M. Richman. 2025. "Behavioral Outcomes for Students with Disabilities Attending Specialized Charter Schools for Students Qualifying for Special Education Services."
[359] Judson, Eugene. 2014. "Effects of Transferring to STEM-Focused Charter and Magnet Schools on Student Achievement." *The Journal of Educational Research* 107 (4): 255–66. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kpKRjTBxPwZ33Ese3eh1j__2qJo0hGil/view?usp=sharing
[360] Judson, Eugene. 2014. "Effects of Transferring"
[361] Judson, Eugene. 2014. "Effects of Transferring"
[362] Judson, Eugene. 2014. "Effects of Transferring"
[363] Oner, Ayse Tugba, Robert M. Capraro, and Mary Margaret Capraro. 2016. "The Effect of T-STEM Designation on Charter Schools: A Longitudinal Examination of Students' Mathematics Achievement." *Sakarya University Journal of Education* 6 (2): 80. https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/227587
[364] Oner, Capraro, and Capraro, "The Effect of T-STEM Designation on Charter Schools."
[365] Digest of Education Statistics, 2021. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_216.20.asp

(4) percent in 2010.[366] Although designed to expand opportunity, these programs are often skewed toward higher-income and metropolitan students.

a) Inequalities in Access

Specialized education is meant to offer merit-based advancement, but enrollment data show that it often reflects privilege rather than potential.[367] In Texas, only 17% of students in magnet or international programs come from low-income households, though 62% of all Texas public-school students qualify for free or reduced lunch.[368] Nationally, students in the top income quintile are twice as likely to be identified for gifted or specialized programs as equally high-achieving students from the lowest quintile.[369] Additionally noting that higher income students are more likely to be identified for specialized programs, not necessarily to attend.

These disparities influence long-term outcomes: access to magnet or IB programs significantly increases college attendance and completion rates.[370] Thus, while specialized schools are publicly funded, the ability to access them remains stratified by class and geography—a paradox at the heart of the "school choice" movement.[371]

b) Structural and Testing Barriers

Admissions structures dependent on standardized testing amplify inequities, as test prep access correlates closely with family income.[372] Wealthier families can afford private tutoring, transportation, and extracurricular experiences that strengthen applications.[373]

According to the U.S. Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), Black, Hispanic, and low-income students remain significantly underrepresented in gifted and advanced coursework across every state.[374] Socioeconomic inequity may thus manifest as a systemic filter—where cost and privilege silently determine who benefits from "public" opportunity.

c) Urban Concentration and Rural Exclusion

The geographic distribution of career-based schools intensifies inequality. A study reported that in a census of all U.S. schools, 56% of charter schools are located in urban areas, compared with 25% of traditional public schools.[375] A study found that "most charter and private school campuses are located in either cities or suburbs," while rural areas remain underserved.[376]

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[366] The NCES Fast Facts Tool provides quick answers to many education questions (National Center for Education Statistics). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.-c).

[367] Enrollment in Texas public schools 2023-24 Division of Research and analysis. (n.d.). https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-performance/accountability-research/enroll-2023-24.pdf

[368] Enrollment in Texas public schools 2023-24 Division of Research and analysis. (n.d.).

[369] The case for gifted education. (n.d.-c). https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/case-gifted-education

[370] The changing distribution of the return to higher education. NBER. (n.d.). https://www.nber.org/digest/202508/changing-distribution-return-higher-education?page=1&perPage=50

[371] America Uncharted Future: Navigating the 21st century by Azhar ul Haque Sario :: SSRN. (n.d.-a). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4968105

[372] Explaining achievement gaps: The role of socioeconomic factors. (n.d.-d). https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/research/explaining-achievement-gaps-role-socioeconomic-factors

[373] School choice in the United States: 2019. School Choice in the United States: 2019 | IES. (n.d.). https://nces.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/report/compendium/school-choice-united-states-2019?pubid=2019106

[374] Civil Rights Data: U.S. Department of Education. ocrdata.ed.gov. (n.d.). https://ocrdata.ed.gov/

[375] School choice in the United States: 2019. School Choice in the United States: 2019 | IES. (n.d.). https://nces.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/report/compendium/school-choice-united-states-2019?pubid=201910

[376] Schaeffer, K. (2024, June 6). U.S. public, private and charter schools in 5 charts. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/06/06/us-public-private-and-charter-schools-in-5-charts/

As of 2023, only 3.4% of rural students and 1.6% of remote rural students attended charter schools, underscoring the rural exclusion from educational innovation.[377] Magnet schools—often tied to district-level resources—are similarly absent from smaller or sparsely populated counties.[378]

This concentration of opportunity means that students in cities such as Boston, Dallas, or Los Angeles may have multiple career-based options, while those in rural Texas, Appalachia, or the Midwest have none. The imbalance also mirrors economic divides: states with the highest rural populations (e.g., Mississippi, Montana, West Virginia) report the fewest specialized programs.[379] Geography thus functions as destiny in the specialized education landscape—dictating not only who attends but who can even apply.

d) Cultural and Informational Exclusion

Beyond income and geography, cultural and informational exclusion continues to restrict participation. Immigrant, multilingual, and first-generation families often receive limited communication about program opportunities. Recruitment materials are typically distributed in English only, leaving out significant portions of bilingual populations.[380]

The 2020–21 CRDC *First Look* report found that English Learners were half as likely as native English speakers to be enrolled in gifted or advanced programs.[381] Meanwhile, schools with limited bilingual faculty or alumni representation often unintentionally signal that specialized academies are for "other" students.[382]

Digital and logistical barriers further exclude families. Many districts rely on online-only applications, assuming internet access and computer literacy that not all households possess.[383] Which along with low-income parents working multiple jobs may also be unable to attend evening recruitment meetings or interviews, has proven to limit lower-income students's ability to access charter, gifted, and magnet schools often determining placement.

Subsection IV: Upward Mobility, Employment, & Long-Term Economic Outcomes

Socioeconomic upward mobility has been found to be positively associated with charter school attendance. In general, the benefits of mobility appear strongest for students from underrepresented or low-income backgrounds.[384] Research on charter schools suggests that they can boost key indicators of long term success, such as educational attainment, test scores, and

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[377] Schaeffer, K. (2024, June 6). U.S. public, private and charter schools in 5 charts. Pew Research Center.
[378] Segregated choices: Magnet and charter schools. The Civil Rights Project. (2025a, July 18). https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/reports/segregated-choices-magnet-and-charter-schools/
[379] Coe - Public Charter School enrollment. (n.d.). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgb
[380] *Civil Rights Data: U.S. Department of Education*. ocrdata.ed.gov. (n.d.-a)
[381] *Civil Rights Data: U.S. Department of Education*. ocrdata.ed.gov. (n.d.-a)
[382] *School choice in the United States: 2019*. School Choice in the United States: 2019 | IES. (n.d.). https://nces.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/report/compendium/school-choice-united-states-2019?pubid=2019106
[383] Vogels, E. A. (2021, June 22). *Digital divide persists even as Americans with lower incomes make gains in tech adoption*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/06/22/digital-divide-persists-even-as-americans-with-lower-incomes-make-gains-in-tech-adoption/
[384] David Card and Laura Giuliano, "Does Gifted Education Work? For Which Students?," NBER, September 5, 2014, https://www.nber.org/papers/w20453.

adult earnings.[385] Students in charter schools are more likely to pursue and attend college and, consequently, earn higher wages in their mid-20s.[386]

A) High School Graduation, Academic Improvement, and Soft Skills

High school graduation is significantly positively correlated with one's future employment. The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion finds that workers with a high school diploma earn 24% more than those without a high school diploma.[387] In 2020, the median weekly earnings for full-time workers with a high school degree but no college was $781; this is $162 higher than the median weekly earnings for full-time workers without a high school degree.[388] Furthermore, a high school diploma is a standard requirement for most jobs and higher education opportunities.[389] Additionally, not completing high school can negatively affect health, employment prospects, wages, and poverty rates.[390] Charter schools are associated with a higher probability of successful high school completion.[391] One study found that charter school attendance increased high school graduation rates by 2-4%.[392] Therefore, charter schools indirectly improve the economic standing of their graduates by providing them with a higher chance at attaining a high school degree.

Academic improvements linked to charter school attendance also have implications on student upward mobility. The large positive effects of charter schools on test scores, found in the "high expectations, high support" model, have the potential to close achievement gaps.[393] In one Houston study, implementing best charter school practices practices, such as increased instructional time, more-effective teachers and administrators, high-dosage tutoring, data-driven instruction, and a culture of high expectations, led to math achievement gains that were large enough to eliminate the racial achievement gap in elementary schools in roughly three years and decrease the gap by half in secondary schools.[394] Charter school attendance also increases the likelihood of taking and performing well on Advanced Placement (AP) exams and increasing

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[385] Tim R. Sass et al., "Charter High Schools' Effects on Long‐term Attainment and Earnings," Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 35, no. 3, April 4, 2016, 683–706, https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.21913.
[386] Tim R. Sass et al., "Charter High Schools," 1.
[387] Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. 2018. "High School Graduation - Healthy People 2030 | Odphp.health.gov." Health.gov. 2018. https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/high-school-graduation.
[388] Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion."High School Graduation - Healthy People 2030 | Odphp.health.gov."
[389] Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion."High School Graduation - Healthy People 2030 | Odphp.health.gov."
[390] Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion."High School Graduation - Healthy People 2030 | Odphp.health.gov."
[391] Booker, Kevin, Tim R. Sass, Brian Gill, and Ron Zimmer. 2011. "The Effects of Charter High Schools on Educational Attainment." Journal of Labor Economics 29 (2): 377–415. https://doi.org/10.1086/658089.
[392] Chen, Feng, and Douglas N Harris. 2023. "The Market-Level Effects of Charter Schools on Student Outcomes: A National Analysis of School Districts." Journal of Public Economics 228 (December): 105015–15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2023.105015.
[393] Roland G Fryer, "Injecting Charter School Best Practices into Traditional Public Schools: Evidence from Field Experiments," Harvard University, December 2012, https://fryer.scholars.harvard.edu/publications/injecting-charter-school-best-practices-traditional-public%C2%A0schools%C2%A0evidence-field.
[394] Roland G Fryer, "Injecting Charter School," 1.

SAT/ACT scores.[395] By strengthening college readiness, charter schools strengthen pathways to postsecondary success and long-term socioeconomic mobility.

Beyond academic achievement, charter schools often prioritize noncognitive skill development that strongly predict success in higher education and the workplace. One study has found that charter schools, specifically "no-excuses" schools, increase persistence within students as they are met with more demanding expectations and school work.[396] No excuses charter schools are ones that often implement higher behavioral standards for students, and often require longer school days or years.[397] Persistence was measured through an eight-item scale and is associated with educational attainment and fewer career changes among adults.[398] Adults who exhibit greater persistence tend to have more stable career trajectories and fewer career changes over time. By promoting persistence, charter schools give their students an advantage that extends well beyond graduation.

Many charter schools integrate college and career counseling and leadership opportunities that encourage students to take ownership of their work. Massachusetts state staffing data shows that student support staff at charter schools grew by 51% between 2020 and 2022 compared to 27% at traditional public schools. Support staff includes social workers, guidance counselors, school adjustment counselors and family engagement staff.[399] This exposure to responsibility and accountability mirrors real-world professional expectations, further supporting smooth transitions into employment.

Charter schools may also be equipping students with non-cognitive and character-based skills critical for long-term success that are not fully demonstrated by standardized test scores, such as grit, persistence, self-control, conscientiousness, motivation, work habits, and values.[400] While these "soft skills" are harder to quantify than test scores or degrees, they represent an important mechanism by which charter schools improve attendee employment prospects.

B) College Access & Attainment

Researchers widely accept that attending a four-year university and attaining a bachelor's degree is financially advantageous, especially as jobs move out of the manufacturing sector and into more high-skilled professions that must have foundations in the classroom.[401] Median earnings of bachelor's degree graduates are higher than non-degree holders no matter what degree was earned.[402] A bachelor's degree graduate earns $1.19 million on average over a lifetime, which is twice what the typical high school graduate earns.[403] College attendance and

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[395] MIT Blueprint Labs. "Thirty Years of Charter Schools: What Have We Learned?" Policy Brief, November 2023, https://blueprintcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Policy-Brief_Charters_Digital-2024-07.pdf

[396] Dobbie, Will, and Roland G. Fryer. "The Medium-Term Impacts of High-Achieving Charter Schools." Journal of Political Economy, vol. 123, no. 5, Oct. 2015, pp. 985–1037, https://doi.org/10.1086/682718.

[397] Cheng, Albert, et al. "No Excuses Charter Schools: A Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence on Student Achievement." SSRN Electronic Journal, 2015, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2652401.

[398] Dobbie and Roland, "Medium-Term Impacts of High Achieving Charter Schools."

[399] "College Enrollment Is Way Down. How Charter Schools Are Adapting." Wbur.org, 16 Nov. 2022, www.wbur.org/news/2022/11/16/college-enrollment-charter-schools. Accessed 29 Oct. 2025.

[400] Tim R. Sass et al., "Charter High Schools," 20.

[401] Cheeseman Day, Jennifer, and Eric Newburger. n.d. "The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings." US Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2002/demo/p23-210.pdf

[402] Hershbein, Brad, and Melissa Kearney. n.d. MAJOR DECISIONS: WHAT GRADUATES EARN OVER THEIR LIFETIMES. https://www.hamiltonproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Major_Decisions_Lifetime__Earnings_by_Major.pdf

[403] Hershbein, Brad, and Melissa Kearney. n.d. MAJOR DECISIONS: WHAT GRADUATES EARN OVER THEIR LIFETIMES.

completion play a crucial role in shaping an individual's employment trajectory. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 86% of individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher reported being employed compared to significantly lower employment rates among those with only a high school diploma.[404] College graduates experience roughly half the employment rate of those without a degree.[405] Individuals with a college degree have better employment prospects and greater annual earnings than those with lesser levels of education.[406] Higher education provides technical knowledge and soft skills necessary for employers across all sectors.

Thus, one of the most consistent benefits of charter school attendance lies in its influence on postsecondary education, which in turn affects long-term employment outcomes. As charter school attendance increases the likelihood that one will obtain a two or four year degree, and bachelor's degree attainment improves the likelihood of employment, one can make the correlation that charter school attendance therefore improves the likelihood of employment for attendees in the long run. [407] Even if charter schools don't directly teach job-specific skills, their emphasis on college readiness creates the conditions under which graduates are more likely to secure stable employment.

a) Qualitative Outcomes

Qualitative research shows how school environments and expectations shape postsecondary trajectories. Interviews with alumni from high-performing networks highlight early exposure to college culture as a crucial determinant. Students frequently cite experiences such as "college signing days," mandatory application workshops, and required FAFSA completion as clear signals that college enrollment is not optional but expected.

b) Quantitative Outcomes

Quantitative analyses from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) show that nationally about 70 percent of charter school graduates enroll in college within one year of high school graduation, compared to 63 percent of public school graduates in similar demographic groups.[408] Another study led by economist Tim Sass found that charter school attendees were more likely to attend a two- or four-year college by an estimated nine percentage points than a non-charter school attendee.[409]

i) Urban Charters

An urban school is defined as a method of schooling that takes place in large, densely populated areas with diverse populations.[410] Urban boost four-year college enrollment by 7.9% compared to traditional public schools.[411] Attending an urban charter school raises Bachelors of

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https://www.hamiltonproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Major_Decisions_Lifetime__Earnings_by_Major.pdf

[404] National Center for Education Statistics, "Report on the Condition of Education"

[405] "How Does a College Degree Improve Graduates' Employment and Earnings Potential?" APLU, 2022, www.aplu.org/our-work/4-policy-and-advocacy/publicuvalues/employment-earnings/.

[406] National Center for Education Statistics. A Publication of the National Center for Education Statistics at IES. May 2022.

[407] Caixl, David, and Alan Krueger. *NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES LABOR MARKET EFFECTS of SCHOOL QUALITY: THEORY and EVIDENCE*. 1996.

[408] High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) . (n.d.-m). https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020003.pdf

[409] "Charter High School Graduates Achieve Higher Earnings as Adults." *Mathematica*, 2016, www.mathematica.org/news/charter-high-school-higher-earnings. Accessed 24 Oct. 2025.

[410] National Center for Education Statistics. 2019. "Urban Schools: Executive Summary." Ed.gov. 2019. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs/web/96184ex.asp.

[411] Cohodes, Sarah, and Astrid Pineda. 2024. Different Paths to College Success: The Impact of Massachusetts' Charter Schools on College Trajectories. No. W32732. National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/w32732.

Arts degree attainment by 4.2%,.[412] Urban "No Excuses" models emphasize extended instructional time, frequent feedback, and data-driven instruction, all contributing to stronger college outcomes. In Boston, earlier lottery work shows charter high schools substantially shift students from two-year to four-year institutions (with a modest effect on overall college enrollment), and produced significant gains on SAT, AP, and the state exit exam—mechanisms consistent with stronger four-year matriculation.[413] In New York City, studies of high-achieving charter models (e.g., Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy) show higher immediate college enrollment and sustained four-year attendance for lottery winners, again pointing to counseling intensity and a college-going culture as likely drivers. Network reports from Uncommon Schools also document very high college acceptance and completion rates for alumni, though these network figures are not lottery-based.[414] [415] [416] Overall, in dense urban sectors with consistent accountability and intensive advising, charters consistently increase four-year college matriculation and improve preparation indicators such as AP and SAT performance, which aligns with the findings from Massachusetts and NYC. [417]

ii) Non-urban Charters

A non-urban school is defined as a school in a small town or rural area that often serves students from wide geographic areas.[418] Non-Urban Charter Schools boost four-year college enrollment by 9.8% compared to traditional public schools.[419] Attending a non-urban charter school raises Bachelors of Arts degree attainment by 11.9%. [420]Outside cities, many charters adopt project-based learning (PBL) and career-connected pathways instead of strict behavioral regimes. In Colorado, a multi-year analysis reports that charter graduates in the Class of 2016 earned a postsecondary credential at 41.8% vs. 32.8% for non-charter peers within six

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[412] Cohodes and Pineda, *Different Paths to College Success.*

[413] Stand and Deliver: Effects of Boston's Charter High Schools on College Preparation, Entry, and Choice. (n.d.-c). https://www.eief.it/files/2014/06/angrist.pdf

[414] ARE HIGH QUALITY SCHOOLS ENOUGH TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP? EVIDENCE FROM A SOCIAL EXPERIMENT IN HARLEM. (n.d.-a). https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w15473/w15473.pdf

[415] Getting Beneath the Veil of Effective Schools: Evidence from New York City. (n.d.-c). https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf

[416] *Uncommon Schools*. Uncommon Schools New York City. (2024, January 11). https://nyc.uncommonschools.org/results/

[417] DIFFERENT PATHS TO COLLEGE SUCCESS: THE IMPACT OF MASSACHUSETTS' CHARTER SCHOOLS ON COLLEGE TRAJECTORIES. (n.d.-f). https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w32732/w32732.pdf

[418] Binkley-Jones, McKenzie. 2024. "Inner City vs. Rural Schools: Challenges, Priorities, and Strategic Outreach for Education Solution Providers | Agile Education Marketing." Agile Education Marketing. August 2, 2024. https://agile-ed.com/resources/inner-city-vs-rural-schools-challenges-priorities-and-strategic-outreach-for-education-solution-providers/.

[419] Cohodes, Sarah, and Astrid Pineda. 2024. Different Paths to College Success: The Impact of Massachusetts' Charter Schools on College Trajectories. No. W32732. National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/w32732.

[420] Cohodes and Pineda, *Different Paths to College Success.*

years—evidence that non-urban and mixed-locale charters can yield strong completion rates even when standardized test effects are smaller.[421] [422]

In Minnesota, case studies of long-standing PBL charters (e.g., Minnesota New Country School; Avalon) and broader EdVisions networks report substantial development of life skills (self-direction, collaboration, problem-solving) that alumni credit for college persistence. Although quantitative test gains may be modest, students describe PBL environments as fostering agency and resilience, attributes that contribute to long-term postsecondary success. [423]

iii) Network v. Independent Charter Models

Large Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) such as KIPP and Uncommon Schools invest in longitudinal alumni support, including college-match advising, FAFSA/verification help, and on-campus coaching. A 2023 Mathematica study following KIPP lottery cohorts finds that attending both a KIPP middle and KIPP high school produced large, statistically significant gains in college enrollment, persistence, and graduation (the strongest effects appear when middle and high school are combined). Uncommon Schools report similar trends, with high acceptance and strong completion among alumni. [424] [425] Although these network reports may reflect self-selection bias, state-verified postsecondary tracking confirms above-average persistence rates into the sophomore year of college for charter students, especially those from low-income households.

C) Long-term Earnings

Studies have begun to measure the effect of charter schools on eventual earnings in adulthood. A longitudinal study in Florida, using a one-to-one nearest-neighbor matching approach, found that former charter high school students earned an average of $2,318 more annually in their mid-20s—a 12% increase compared to demographically similar peers who attended traditional public schools. The analysis compared charter high school attendees with demographically similar students who attended a charter middle school but switched to a traditional high school for ninth grade.[426] Importantly, this earnings advantage persisted even among students who attended college.[427] These positive effects on educational attainment and earnings suggest that the full long-term impact of charter schools may be underestimated when solely focusing on test scores.

Looking at how these benefits translated into the job market, the first major study of post-graduate earnings of former Charter school attendees found that charter school graduates

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[421] CSI Market Analysis Poudre School District. (n.d.-b). https://www.csi.state.co.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Poudre-Market-Analysis_2019_update_public.pdf

[422] Institute, C. S. (n.d.). Better Choices, Better Outcomes. https://www.commonsenseinstituteus.org/colorado/research/ballot-issues/better-choices-better-outcomes-how-charter-schools-elevate-student-performance-and-family-options

[423] Ripples of Innovation . (n.d.-f). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292140626_httpfilesericedgovfulltextEJ1016251pdf

[424] *Long-term impacts of KIPP middle and high schools on college enrollment, persistence, and attainment*. Mathematica. (n.d.). https://www.mathematica.org/publications/long-term-impacts-of-kipp-middle-and-high-schools-on-college-enrollment-persistence-and-attainment

[425] *New independent research shows Kipp Public Schools are closing the College Completion Gap*. KIPP Public Charter Schools. (2023, September 15). https://www.kipp.org/events-press/mathematica-study-on-kipp-public-schools-long-term-impact/

[426] Tim R. Sass et al., "Charter High Schools," 3-4.

[427] Tim R. Sass et al., "Charter High Schools," 13.

earn an estimated $2,200 more per year than non-charter public school graduates.[428] On average, charter school students earned $22,577 more than non-charter public school students over 10, 11, and 12 year periods, and former charter middle school students earned $20,000.[429] This is a 12.7 percent increase in the maximum earnings achieved over the three-year span.[430] This study by Kevin Booker, a researcher specializing in charter schools, and Tim Sass, a microeconomist at Georgia State University, is one of the only available that specifies the increase in salary based on charter school attendance. Sass and Booker isolated this causality by looking to W2 paperwork and state databases that catalogued unemployment information for former public school attendees. Most other studies generalize the positive impact of charter schools on future earnings or make assumptions about higher college graduation rates translating into higher earnings for charter school students.

D) Mixed results & Limitations

Overall, research on the employment outcomes of charter school attendees reveals mixed results. The causal evidence finds no significant average effect of charter school attendance on early-career employment rates, though outcomes vary widely across charter models, contexts, and data utilized within each individual study.[431] Some high-performing charters appear to give students the skills and credentials that improve employability, while others, specifically virtual models, show weakest or even negative associations with workforce participation. These findings suggest that charter schools' influence on employment depends less on the "charter" label itself and more on the quality and design of each individual program.

a) Decreasing Earnings

Some studies available point towards a negative correlation between charter school attendance and higher career earnings.[432] One study by Will Dobbie, a Harvard Kennedy School Professor, and Roland G. Fryer, a Harvard Economics Professor, found that traditional charter attendance was associated with a $143.55 decrease in annual earnings in the state of Texas and had no detectable impact on employment.[433] However, their study found that "no excuses" charter schools that had higher behavioral expectations and extended school days and years were effective at raising high school graduation rates, college graduation rates, and earnings.[434] This suggests that the type of charter school a student attends has a significant impact on their future earnings.

b) Lack of Impact on Test Scores and Earnings

Despite the promising findings above, not all research supports the notion that charter schools improve employment outcomes. In one of the most comprehensive studies to date, Harvard Professors Will Dobbie and Roland Fryer Jr. estimated that charter schools have no impact on test scores and a negative impact on earnings.[435] They found that "no excuses" charter school attendance can increase test scores and four-year college enrollment, but has a statistically

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[428] Booker, Kevin, Tim Sass, Brian Gill, and Ron Zimmer. n.d. Charter High Schools' Effects on Long-Term Attainment and Earnings. https://cesr.usc.edu/documents/charter_high_school_effects_on_attainment_and_earnings.pdf

[429] Booker et al., *Charter High Schools' Effects on Long-Term Attainment and Earnings*.

[430] Booker et al., *Charter High Schools' Effects on Long-Term Attainment and Earnings*.

[431] Dobbie, Will, and Roland Fryer. "Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes." Journal of Labor Economics, 26 Sept. 2019, https://doi.org/10.1086/706534. Accessed 10 Nov. 2019.

[432] Dobbie and Fryer, "Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes."

[433] Dobbie and Fryer, "Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes."

[434] Dobbie and Fryer, "Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes."

[435] Dobbie and Fryer, "Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes."

insignificant impact on earnings, while other types of charter schools decrease test scores, four-year college enrollment, and earnings.[436]

Although Dobbie and Fryer's study focuses primarily on academic and earnings outcomes, its implications for employment are clear. If certain charter models fail to improve basic academic proficiency or do not lead to any measurable gains in workforce performance, their students may not experience any stronger employment opportunities than their peers in traditional public schools. In some cases, students might even be disadvantaged if their charter school lacks adequate career counseling or postsecondary support services.

c) Charter School Alumni Survey Outcomes

Complementing these empirical studies, alumni services paint a more qualitative picture of early career experiences among charter graduates. Nonprofit and industry alumni surveys from major charter networks show a mixed picture of early-career employment outcomes that demonstrate more short-term employment rather than long-term, secure employment.[437] Fewer than half describe their positions as stable or family-sustaining jobs with long-term growth potential.[438] One in three college graduates in our study "under-matched" and were in jobs that did not require their degree . While employment rates may be high, job quality remains uneven. These findings suggest that, although charter schools may successfully prepare students to enter the workforce, many graduates still struggle to secure high-quality employment early in their careers.[439] Many respondents report working in entry-level or transitional jobs that don't provide economic security. This suggests a gap between educational preparation and labor market success.

However, this survey data must be interpreted cautiously as they are descriptive rather than causal.[440] Self-selection can be a real issue among respondents and this particular survey lacked a control group for comparison. The mixed outcomes reflected in these alumni reports show that charter attendance alone is not a uniform predictor of employability, and its effects depend heavily on school model and support systems available.

Subsection V: Gifted Education & High-Achievement Models

Gifted and talented programs serve students who are academically advanced relative to their age or grade level.[441] These programs originated from the need to ensure that high-achieving students were not hindered by the bounds of traditional instruction.[442] Research suggests that gifted programs allow students to achieve greater long-term success in higher

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[436] Dobbie and Roland, "Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes."
[437] Charter. "What Drives Alumni Success: Insights from the 2024 Early Career Outcomes Survey." Medium, Stories and lessons from our schools, 15 Jan. 2025, stories.chartergrowthfund.org/what-drives-alumni-success-insights-from-the-2024-early-career-outcomes-survey-ee1eda24aafc.
[438] Charter, What Drives Alumni Success: Insights from the 2024 Early Career Outcomes Survey."
[439] Charter, What Drives Alumni Success: Insights from the 2024 Early Career Outcomes Survey."
[440] Charter, What Drives Alumni Success: Insights from the 2024 Early Career Outcomes Survey."
[441] Christopher Cleveland et al., "Gifted or Gone: The Impacts of Gifted Education on Public School Enrollment and Achievement," January 2023, https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/chcleveland/files/cleveland_2023_gifted_or_gone_the_impacts_of_gifted_education.pdf.
[442] Krystal Cohen, "Young, Gifted, and Black: Inequitable Outcomes of Gifted and Talented Programs," Journal of Public and International Affairs, May 20, 2022, https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/young-gifted-and-black-inequitable-outcomes-gifted-and-talented-programs.

education, vocational, and creative pursuits.[443] Some charter schools are framed with gifted students in mind.[444] Rather than establishing gifted programs within existing schools, these charter schools function as full-school alternatives focused on high achievement.[445]

A) Traditional Gifted and Talented Programs

Gifted programs aim to keep high-achieving students engaged and reduce the risk of disengagement within traditional school systems.[446] They are also seen as predictors of future success. In a longitudinal study called the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY), researchers tracked the development of gifted students over a fifty year period, beginning in 1971.[447] Early results predicted high rates of success:320 of the participants earned doctoral degrees —roughly 50 times the average expectations.[448] When again followed up with at the age of 38, 63% held master's degrees or higher.[449] Additionally, 142 of these students had doctoral degrees, and eight earned more than one doctorate.[450] For comparison, the benchmark for doctoral attainment in the U.S. is 2% of the total population.[451]

This longitudinal study provides crucial insight into how gifted programs contribute to outcomes of high achievement.[452] It highlights the value of tailoring curricula to meet the abilities of students.[453] Beyond that, the examination of acceleration of education showcases the capacity for high achievement in the cases of students placed within gifted programs that would otherwise be in a traditional classroom setting.[454]Without a relevant curriculum that matches their pace and ability, gifted students may lack intellectual stimulation and be prone to underachievement.[455]

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[443] Jonathan Wai, Lisa Bardach, and Bich Tran, "What Longitudinal Research and Large-Scale Population Representative Studies Can Tell Us about Gifted Students and Education Policy 50 Years after the Marland Report," *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* 45, no. 1 (February 7, 2022): 46–63, https://doi.org/10.1177/01623532211063942.

[444] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved," www.nationalaffairs.com, 2014, https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/gifted-talented-and-underserved.

[445] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"

[446] Jørgen Hammer Smedsrud, Berit Bungum, and Ellen Egeland Flø, "Gifted Students' Experiences with Participation in Enrichment Programs at Talent Centers in Norway," *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 69, no. 5 (September 11, 2024): 1080–96, https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2024.2394388.

[447] David Lubinski and Camilla Persson Benbow, "Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth after 35 Years: Uncovering Antecedents for the Development of Math-Science Expertise," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 1, no. 4: 316–45

[448] Jonathan Wai, Lisa Bardach, and Bich Tran, "What Longitudinal Research and Large-Scale Population Representative Studies Can Tell Us about Gifted Students and Education Policy 50 Years after the Marland Report,"

[449] Wai, Bardach, and Tran, "What Longitudinal Research and Large-Scale Population Representative Studies Can Tell Us about Gifted Students."

[450] Wai, Bardach, and Tran, "What Longitudinal Research and Large-Scale Population Representative Studies Can Tell Us about Gifted Students."

[451] Wai, Bardach, and Tran, "What Longitudinal Research and Large-Scale Population Representative Studies Can Tell Us about Gifted Students."

[452] Wai, Bardach, and Tran, "What Longitudinal Research and Large-Scale Population Representative Studies Can Tell Us about Gifted Students."

[453] David Lubinski and Camilla Persson Benbow, "Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth after 35 Years: Uncovering Antecedents for the Development of Math-Science Expertise," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 1, no. 4: 316–45

[454] David Lubinski and Camilla Persson Benbow, "Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth after 35 Years: Uncovering Antecedents for the Development of Math-Science Expertise," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 1, no. 4: 316–45

[455] Lubinski and Benbow, "Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth after 35 Years."

However, gifted programs are not always effective.[456] Dr. Christopher Cleveland, now Assistant Professor of Education and Education Policy at Brown University, examined the effects of gifted and talented programs (GT programs) in New York. Cleveland found no significant difference between the test scores of students before and after participation in GT programs.[457] He noted that these students performed well above the average for other New York City students,yet their achievement level stayed the same regardless of their participation in GT programs.[458]

Beyond limited academic impact, gifted programs can also lead to social and emotional challenges.[459] A study conducted at the Norwegian Business School noted feelings of alienation by being placed in gifted programs.[460] This contrasted with students who felt engaged in their school community and strongly identified with their classmates.[461] These students were actively engaged in learning and the social aspect of their school community.[462]

Another concern is that gifted programs can exacerbate segregation within education systems[463] Without enough space or awareness of gifted programs, minority and low income students are often excluded from gifted programming.[464] In Ohio, for example, in 2013, 254,000 students were identified as gifted, but there was only space for one in five of these students in public schools' gifted programs or accelerated classrooms.[465] Socioeconomic and racial disparities were pronounced: 21% of gifted students were identified as low income comprising 48% of the statewide population. .[466] Of those identified as gifted, only 5% were Black and 6% were Hispanic, compared to 18% of white students and 28% of Asian students[467]

B) Qualification-Based High-Achievement Models

Qualifications-based admissions policies aim to create environments that challenge and support high achieving students through demanding curriculums.[468] In some cases, such programs are magnet schools, which unlike charter schools, are permitted to use selective admissions processes. [469] In the case of a dance magnet school within a large Southern school district, some students were admitted over others because they were better dancers.[470] There was

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[456] Lubinski and Benbow, "Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth after 35 Years."
[457] Lubinski and Benbow, "Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth after 35 Years."
[458] Christopher Cleveland et al., "Gifted or Gone: The Impacts of Gifted Education on Public School Enrollment and Achievement,"
[459] Jørgen Hammer Smedsrud, Berit Bungum, and Ellen Egeland Flø, "Gifted Students' Experiences with Participation in Enrichment Programs at Talent Centers in Norway," *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 69, no. 5: 1080–96
[460] Smedsrud, Bungum, and Flø, "Gifted Students' Experiences with Participation in Enrichment Programs."
[461] Smedsrud, Bungum, and Flø, "Gifted Students' Experiences with Participation in Enrichment Programs."
[462] Smedsrud, Bungum, and Flø, "Gifted Students' Experiences with Participation in Enrichment Programs."
[463] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[464] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[465] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[466] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[467] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[468] Atila Abdulkadiroglu, Joshua Angrist, and Parag A. Pathak, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"
[469] Tim DeRoche, "Magnet Schools—the Wild West of Public School Admissions?," Education Next, February 26, 2025,https://www.educationnext.org/magnet-schools-the-wild-west-of-public-school-admissions-guardrails-magnet-enrollment-practices/.
[470] Tim DeRoche, "Magnet Schools—the Wild West of Public School Admissions?"

no algorithm or methodology that decided which students should be admitted and which shouldn't besides the discretion of administrators.[471]

Another example of a magnet school is an exam school.[472] Exam schools are magnet schools that utilize tests as a part of their admissions policy for their school.[473] These schools are highly selective with a focus on a culture of high achievement.[474] Admissions policies tend to be very strict, especially with regards to cutoff exam scores.[475] A study done by Atila Abdulkadiroglu, Joshua Angrist, and Parag Pathak examines the effectiveness of exam schools in Boston and New York to understand the ways in which school quality was gauged by parents through attractive peers.[476] Attractive peers were considered as individuals who were high achieving, often in the upper tail of entry exam scores, in classrooms with a lower proportion of nonwhite students, and among students with a greater socioeconomic status.[477] With regards to socioeconomic status, in Boston for example, students going to exam schools—specifically students either to the left or to the right of Boston Latin Academy exam school cutoff—switched from groups where 66% of students were on free lunch to 46% of students were qualifying for free and reduced lunch.[478]

TABLE II

BOSTON SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS FOR COMPLIERS[a]

	O'Bryant		Latin Academy		Latin School	
	$Z=0$ (1)	$Z=1$ (2)	$Z=0$ (3)	$Z=1$ (4)	$Z=0$ (5)	$Z=1$ (6)
Panel A. 7th Grade Applicants						
Baseline peer mean in math	−0.15	0.84	0.68	1.20	1.15	1.97
Baseline peer mean in English	−0.15	0.80	0.65	1.11	1.06	1.78
Proportion black or Hispanic	0.78	0.63	0.65	0.40	0.43	0.18
Proportion qualifying for a free lunch	0.78	0.66	0.66	0.46	0.48	0.28

However, the study found little evidence that exam schools themselves improved academic outcomes.[479] Students at Boston exam schools performed about the same as their peers

[471] Tim DeRoche, "Magnet Schools—the Wild West of Public School Admissions?"
[472] ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools," *Econometrica* 82, no. 1 (2014): 137–96, https://doi.org/10.3982/ecta10266.
[473] ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"
[474] ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"
[475]ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"
[476]ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"
[477]ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"
[478]ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"
[479]ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"

without exam schools, even after accounting for peer effects and baseline achievement.[480] The authors of the study also note that factors such as preparation for the exam school, more variety in exam school extracurriculars, and unique experiences at certain exam schools, such as learning Latin at the Boston Latin School, all contribute to the perceived impact of exam schools.[481]

C) Charter Schools as High-Achievement Alternatives

Charter schools that are crafted with gifted students in mind creates a different atmosphere.[482] The focus in this case is the specialization of education for a group of solely high achieving students.[483] In this case, students feel supported by their peers in the high achieving nature, have advisors to assist with educational stimulation, and are challenged by a competitive yet supportive environment.[484]

An example of this is a KIPP school, or Knowledge is Power Program.[485] KIPP schools require more commitment but foster the high achieving environment that gifted and talented programs aim to foster.[486] In KIPP schools, minority students benefit.[487] Each classroom is named after a college to which students in that classroom are expected to attend— imitating the idea of family expectations for legacy students in affluent and privileged families.[488]

Another charter school network that fosters similarly high expectations is the BASIS schools network that includes schools in Tucson, San Antonio, and Washington D.C..[489] These schools serve high achieving minorities that benefit from the assistance provided by charter schools with a gifted and talented focus.[490] In Cleveland's article, he notes that while GT programs are important, that New York City's Citywide GT programs—that create specialized schools—were much more desirable than District GT programs that only created GT programs within traditional schools.[491]

Per Chester E. Finn Jr, in his article "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved," specialized charter schools that focus on helping high-achieving, "gifted" students are essential.[492] They assist students that are neglected within traditional public school settings, despite the fact that they are gifted.[493] As Finn argues, specialized charter schools can play a crucial role in serving advanced learners who might otherwise be overlooked. However, their growth also raises important questions about how public education can balance excellence with equity, ensuring that opportunities for advanced learning remain accessible to all students.[494]

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[480] ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"
[481] ATILA ABDULKADIRO ˘ GLU, JOSHUA ANGRIST, AND PARAG PATHAK, "The Elite Illusion: Achievement Effects at Boston and New York Exam Schools"
[482] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[483] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[484] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[485] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[486] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[487] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[488] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[489] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[490] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[491] Christopher Cleveland et al., "Gifted or Gone: The Impacts of Gifted Education on Public School Enrollment and Achievement,"
[492] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[493] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"
[494] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"

Subsection VI: Civic Education & Democratic Engagement

The establishment of the American public school system was motivated by the belief that a civically engaged citizenry was necessary for the health of our democracy.[495] Yet, the U.S. falls short of this, as only 65.3% of the voting-age population participated in the 2024 presidential election.[496] This is lower than most developed countries.[497] Furthermore, U.S. students perform poorly on nationwide civics exams; just 22% of eighth graders passed the 2014 National Assessment of Educational Progress civics test.[498] Early advocates of the public school stated that the schools would, based on their structure, inherently promote citizenship: their operation by publicly elected officials would naturally instill the virtues and values necessary for democratic participation.[499] The creation of charter schools challenged this theory, implicitly suggesting that the direct control of elected officials is not essential to promoting effective citizenship.[500] Some researchers even claim that charter schools—due to their smaller size, unique curricula, strong parental involvement, and community engagement—positively affect youth civic participation.[501]

A) Civic Identity

Charter school students develop higher levels of civic engagement and understanding compared to traditional public school peers.[502] Most charter schools explicitly list a civic learning goal in their mission and many center aspects of their curricula around citizenship.[503] Some charter schools even mimic economic responsibility through weekly paychecks.[504] Aside from the purposeful elements, the environment of charter schools plays a role in developing civic engagement. In one in-depth analysis of a Minnesota charter school, civic engagement is traced to the idea of charter schools as counterpublics, environments where culture can be contested between fully public and private space.[505] Especially in cultural-based schools, like the Minnesota one (which was meant to serve the substantial Somali immigrant community in the

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[495] Gill, Brian, Charles Tilley, Emilyn Whitesell, Mariel Finucane, Liz Potamites, and Sean Corcoran. 2018. "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation." *ProQuest*, April. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2060935740/5452CE1B17594FA5PQ/1?accountid=11311&sourcetype=Reports

[496] Bureau, US Census. 2025. "2024 Presidential Election Voting and Registration Tables Now Available." Census.gov. April 30, 2025. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2025/2024-presidential-election-voting-registration-tables.html.

[497] "Voter Turnout - FairVote." 2025. FairVote. September 2, 2025. https://fairvote.org/resources/voter-turnout/?section=turnout-in-the-united-states.

[498] Gill, Brian P, Charles Tilley, Emilyn Whitesell, Mariel Finucane, Liz Potamites, and Sean P Corcoran. 2019. "A Life Lesson in Civics."

[499] Gill et al., *A Life Lesson in Civics*.

[500] Gill et al., *A Life Lesson in Civics*.

[501] Johnson, Chrystal S., Xiaoyue Qin, and Harvey Hinton. "The Civic Efficacy of Charter Schools: A Literature Review." Journal of School Choice 14, no. 2 (2020): 254–79. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VY149pQhXVMWqvVPuVZ3G6EH0sCrLzyQ/view?usp=sharing.

[502] Johnson, Chrystal S., Xiaoyue Qin, and Harvey Hinton. "The Civic Efficacy of Charter Schools: A Literature Review." Journal of School Choice 14, no. 2 (2020): 254–79. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VY149pQhXVMWqvVPuVZ3G6EH0sCrLzyQ/view?usp=sharing.

[503] Johnson, "Civic Efficacy." 267.

[504] Johnson, "Civic Efficacy." 267.

[505] Wilson, Terri S. "Contesting the Public School: Reconsidering Charter Schools as Counterpublics." American Educational Research Journal 53, no. 4 (2016): 919–52. https://drive.google.com/file/d/164fGlVVGvLWMWW3szjCXMaxk9jzX_O9p/view?usp=sharing.

area), increased parent engagement is contrasted with more biased public schools that essentially restrict unconventional thought.[506]

B) Civic Engagement Scores

Indeed, there is research that supports a correlation between charter school enrollment and civic engagement.[507] One 2024 study in the *International Journal of Education Development* analyzed data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Grade 8 Civics Assessment and found that American charter schools demonstrated higher average civic performance scores than traditional public schools across most testing cycles.[508] Notably, Black and Hispanic charter students scored higher than their peers in traditional public schools on civic performance measures.[509]

C) Voter Participation

Many charter schools explicitly make civic preparation a primary goal.[510] Democracy Prep, for example, is a charter network with 21 schools whose mission is to "educate responsible citizen-scholars."[511] A rigorous experimental analysis used Democracy Prep's randomized admissions lotteries to measure the causal impact of the school on civic participation.[512] The study found that simply receiving an offer of admission to Democracy Prep increased students' probability of voting in the 2016 presidential election by approximately 6 percentage points, a statistically significant result.[513] The estimated effect on voter registration was similar in size but not statistically significant.[514] Furthermore, the effect of enrolling in Democracy Prep was found to be larger than the effect of merely receiving an offer.[515] The researchers conducted a Bayesian impact analysis that grounded the results in prior research concerning the effects of educational interventions on registration and voting. This analysis produced a 98% probability that enrolling in Democracy Prep had a positive effect on both voter registration and voting in the 2016 election.[516] It further suggested that enrollment in Democracy Prep increased voter registration rates by about 16 percentage points and voting rates by about 12 percentage points.[517]

The success demonstrated by Democracy Prep provides strong evidence that schools explicitly focused on citizenship preparation can significantly boost adult civic participation.[518]

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[506] Wilson, "Contesting the Public School." 919-52.
[507] Johnson, Chrystal S, Chenchen Lu, and Godwin Gyimah. 2024. "The Civic Side of American Charter Schools."
[508] Johnson, Lu, and Gyimah, "The Civic Side of American Charter Schools."
[509] Johnson, Lu, and Gyimah, "The Civic Side of American Charter Schools."
[510] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."
[511] "Democracy Prep – Work Hard. Go to College. Change the World!" 2020. Democracyprep.org. 2020. https://democracyprep.org/.
[512] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."
[513] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."
[514] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."
[515] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."
[516] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."
[517] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."
[518] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."

This impact, validated through rigorous experimental methods, illustrates the potential for charter schools to foster lifelong civic engagement .[519] However, it is worth noting that Democracy Prep's outcomes may not be representative of all charter schools, given its unique mission.[520]

D) Limitations

Despite these successes, scholars have surfaced concerns regarding the influence of market-based ideology on the nature of civic education in charter schools.[521] Critics argue that market ideologies are fundamentally at odds with democratic values and that the incorporation of market principles can transform civic education in negative ways.[522] One study found that charter leaders often focus democratic learning opportunities primarily on advancing their institutional interests—for example, encouraging stakeholders to advocate for resources or charter renewal —rather than engaging with broader public policy concerns.[523] While this still represents a form of democratic participation, critics contend that it promotes a narrow, individualistic view of democracy, rather than one that promotes social justice and equality.[524]

Certain charter school models prioritize civic engagement, which can be linked to higher levels of voting and community involvement.[525] Two lottery-based studies demonstrated that charter school attendance increased students' likelihood of voting by as much as six percentage points, with one Boston study showing this effect was entirely driven by female students even within charter schools with no civic engagement focus.[526]

Subsection VII: Student Experience & School Culture

Charter schools have been found to provide students with a variety of different opportunities with regards to their experience as a student, both academically and socially.[527] Specifically, smaller class sizes, making up 15 students or less, and a structured school culture are just some of the ways in which charter schools provide students with an improved student experience.[528] Smaller class sizes can allow for students to get personalized attention and form

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[519] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."
[520] Gill, Tilley, Whitesell, Finucane, Potamites, and Corocan, "The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Civic Participation."
[521] Hernández, Laura E., and Elise Castillo. 2020. "Citizenship Development and the Market's Impact: Examining Democratic Learning in Charter Schools in Two Regions." *Educational Policy* 36 (January): 089590482090148. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j5UsHCugxA1XDUlk8G0pNRK-wAq1Y5xI/view?usp=sharing.
[522] Hernández and Castillo, "Citizenship Development and the Market's Impact: Examining Democratic Learning in Charter Schools in Two Regions."
[523] Hernández and Castillo, "Citizenship Development and the Market's Impact: Examining Democratic Learning in Charter Schools in Two Regions."
[524] Hernández and Castillo, "Citizenship Development and the Market's Impact: Examining Democratic Learning in Charter Schools in Two Regions."
[525] MIT Blueprint Labs, "Thirty Years of Charter Schools," 9.
[526] MIT Blueprint Labs, "Thirty Years of Charter Schools," 9.
[527] AmeriSchools Academy, "Qualities of Charter Elementary Schools - AmeriSchools Academy," AmeriSchools Academy, November 25, 2016, https://amerischools.org/2016/11/25/qualities-of-charter-elementary-schools-what-every-parent-should-know/.
[528] Great Lakes Academy Charter Schools, "The Benefits of Smaller Class Sizes in Charter Schools - Great Lakes Academy Charter School," Glachicago.org, 2023, https://glachicago.org/blog/the-benefits-of-smaller-class-sizes-in-charter-schools.

better relationships with teachers and students.[529] In addition, a structured school culture that is found in charter schools plays a role in the enhanced student experience as well.[530]

A) Smaller Class Sizes

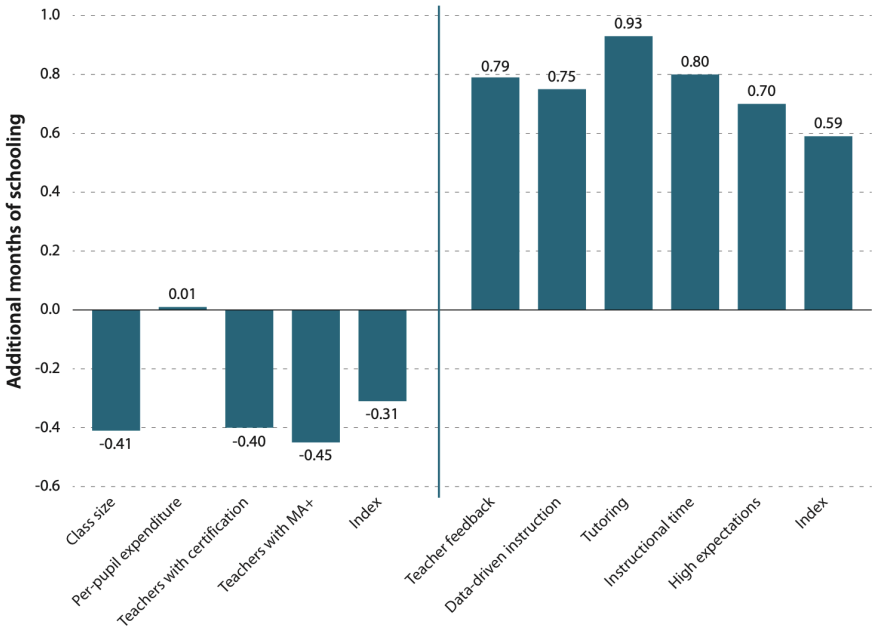
Small class sizes in charter schools create environments where students can connect with peers and teachers alongside a greater understanding of curriculum.[531] The School Superintendents Association found that class size was essential to learning; students in smaller classes, with about 15 students per class, were more likely to participate in school and demonstrate improved behavior.[532] With smaller class sizes, students are able to have access to greater 1-on-1 help for better comprehension of curriculum.[533] However, the National Center for Education Statistics paints a different picture of class sizes in charter schools compared to that of traditional public schools.[534] Data from the 2015-2016 school year shows that across elementary, middle, and high schools, class sizes were very similar for both charter and traditional public schools.[535] Average class size for teachers in departmentalized instruction were between 24-27 students per teacher at both charter and traditional public schools[536] The biggest difference was between average class size for teachers in departmentalized instruction at the elementary school level with on average 24.6 students in a charter school classroom and 26.7 students in a traditional public school classroom.[537]

Additionally, Roland Fryer, an economist and professor at Harvard University, found that class size may not always be a determining factor of success within charter schools.[538] In The Hamilton Project, Fryer found that charter schools in New York that were a part of his sample had no correlation between smaller class size and effectiveness.[539] In fact, Fryer found that schools with smaller class sizes, among other factors, contributed to lower achievement from students.[540]

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[529] Great Lakes Academy Charter Schools, "The Benefits of Smaller Class Sizes in Charter Schools - Great Lakes Academy Charter School,"
[530] Sarah Cohodes and Susha Roy, "Thirty Years of Charter Schools: What Does Lottery-Based Research Tell Us?," *Journal of School Choice* 19, no. 1 (August 8, 2024): 1–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2024.2379644.
[531] Great Lakes Academy Charter Schools, "The Benefits of Smaller Class Sizes in Charter Schools - Great Lakes Academy Charter School,"
[532] Charles Achilles, "Small Classes, Big Possibilities," AASA, June 30, 2010, https://www.aasa.org/resources/resource/small-classes-big-possibilities.
[533] Bellevue Children's Academy Bellevue, "Why Class Size Matters in Private Schools - Bellevue Children's Academy," Bellevue Children's Academy, July 25, 2022, https://bcacademy.com/2022/07/25/why-class-size-matters-in-private-schools/.
[534] National Center for Education Statistics, "National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS)," nces.ed.gov, n.d., https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps_7t_051617.asp.
[535] National Center for Education Statistics, "National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS),"
[536] National Center for Education Statistics, "National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS),"
[537] National Center for Education Statistics, "National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS),"
[538] Roland Fryer, "Learning from the Successes and Failures of Charter Schools," 2012, https://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/THP_Fryer_Charters_DiscPaper.pdf.
[539] Roland Fryer, "Learning from the Successes and Failures of Charter Schools"
[540] Roland Fryer, "Learning from the Successes and Failures of Charter Schools"

School Inputs and Practices, and School Effectiveness



B) School Culture

A structured school culture that encourages students to work hard through high standards and an environment amongst students that celebrate academic achievement is an aspect of charter schools that can play a role in the student experience.[541] In his studies of charter schools and public schools across the country, especially with his focus in Houston, Fryer was able to find that a key aspect of student experience contributing to increased success of charter schools was a structured school culture defined by high standards of academic achievement.[542] This meant ensuring that students were held to high expectations to ensure high academic achievement and student engagement.[543] Fryer's analysis of charter schools in a variety of states across the U.S. and in his experiment in Houston ensured that by raising standards for students while also ensuring a culture that makes sure to encompass the student fully both academically and socially students were likely to perform better.[544]

Students with disabilities also tend to be overlooked at traditional public schools because they are unable to receive the full attention they need.[545] Compared to traditional public schools, the support community of counselors and assistance at charter schools are conducive for specialized assistance.[546] A study done by Jane Finn, Katherine Caldwell, and Tara Raub at Hope College found that parents of students with disabilities were more likely to prefer charter schools in place of traditional public schools for a variety of reasons.[547] They chose charter schools partly

[541] Roland Fryer, "Learning from the Successes and Failures of Charter Schools"
[542] Roland Fryer, "Learning from the Successes and Failures of Charter Schools"
[543] Roland Fryer, "Learning from the Successes and Failures of Charter Schools"
[544] Roland Fryer, "Learning from the Successes and Failures of Charter Schools"
[545] Jane Finn, Katherine Caldwell, and Tara Raub, "Why Parents Choose Charter Schools for Their Children with Disabilities"
[546] Jane Finn, Katherine Caldwell, and Tara Raub, "Why Parents Choose Charter Schools for Their Children with Disabilities"
[547] Jane Finn, Katherine Caldwell, and Tara Raub, "Why Parents Choose Charter Schools for Their Children with Disabilities"

because their students were able to get more individualized attention but also because they felt that their students were less prone to feeling anxious due to the smaller community that they had and the stronger relationships that they had with teachers.[548] Chester E. Finn Jr notes the effect of these communities when pointing to KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) schools that provide effective support for students that need it within an environment that keeps standards high.[549]

Examples of charter schools with structured school cultures include BASIS schools, KIPP schools, that can be found in Tucson, San Antonio, and Washington D.C.[550] These schools create a culture where students are held to high expectations and buy-in to the school standards as well.[551]

C) Mental Health

Charter schools have overall mixed effects on the mental health of their students. In one case study on the mental health of students at the Promise Academy, a lottery-based charter school in the Harlem Children's Zone, respondents who attended Promise Academy report marginally worse but unimpactful differences in mental health compared to public school students.[552]

The selective pressure that comes with competition for a spot at a charter school could increase stress and decrease confidence in students.[553] Due to higher funding per student for public schools compared to public charter schools, non-charter schools are also better equipped with mental health resources to support students' needs.[554] In terms of just staffing, there is not a clear relationship between charter schools and hiring of mental health professionals such as counselors.[555] When evaluated in the Chicago Public Schools system, charter school rigor caused increased anxiety and feelings of depression as early as sixth grade due to intense testing standards.[556] In parent relationships, the high rigor of charter schools also resulted in increased conflict leading to the deterioration of student mental health.[557]

However, some studies illustrate a causal link between the option for charter schools and improved mental health for students.[558] Specifically, in a metanalysis of state adoption of charter school laws, the estimated effect of the adoption of a charter school law is approximately a 10%

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[548] Jane Finn, Katherine Caldwell, and Tara Raub, "Why Parents Choose Charter Schools for Their Children with Disabilities"

[549] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"

[550] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"

[551] Chester E. Finn Jr., "Gifted, Talented, and Underserved"

[552] Dobbie, Will, and Roland G. Fryer. "The Medium-Term Impacts of High-Achieving Charter Schools." Journal of Political Economy 123, no. 5 (2015): 985–1037. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DeYdaQtkGYW3K_-YFzbcr5I-GbdtE7k0/view?usp=sharing.

[553] DeAngelis, Corey A., and Angela K. Dills. "The Effects of School Choice on Mental Health." School Effectiveness and School Improvement 32, no. 2 (2021): 326–44. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sIP9gSTq0S9pyvrnC1LIeXGtFLjGsiG8/view?usp=sharing.

[554] Wolf, Patrick, Larry Maloney, Jay May, and Corey DeAngelis. "Charter School Funding: Inequity in the City." School Choice Demonstration Project, May 9, 2017. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BEy6dXQa9QMQSq9Uq5eaGce1Tzidt03b/view?usp=sharing.

[555] Crutchfield, Jandel, Kate Phillippo, and Annahita Ball. "School Mental Health in Charters: A Glimpse of Practitioners from a National Sample." International Journal of School Social Work 7, no. 1 (2022). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BpJ6zUvilZ5d4Olq0S53VHbFCz2CitxB/view?usp=sharing.

[556] Waitoller, Federico R., Nicole Nguyen, and Gia Super. "The Irony of Rigor: 'No-Excuses' Charter Schools at the Intersections of Race and Disability." International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education 32, no. 3 (2019): 282–98. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SI3QAfHYKynmlcBYt0D0QPT99dxdRhLN/view?usp=sharing.

[557] Waitoller, "Irony of Rigor." 292.

[558] DeAngelis, "Effects of School Choice." 339.

reduction in suicide rates for 15- to 19-year olds.[559] This is found consistently and usually begins around three years after the adoption of a charter school law.[560]

D) Student Satisfaction

The original rationale of charter schools presumes that increased innovation and quality lead to higher student satisfaction.[561] In practice, there are slight increases in overall student enjoyment in public charter schools (about 40.6%) compared to traditional public schools (about 35.4%).[562] Parent satisfaction is comparatively much higher, with each measurement—satisfaction with school, satisfaction with teachers, satisfaction with academic standards, satisfaction with order and discipline, and satisfaction with school staff's interactions with parents—displaying around a 10 percentage point difference.[563]

However, satisfaction levels with charter schools vary along multiple demographic differences. Girls and younger students are significantly more likely to report satisfaction with their school than other students.[564] In virtual charter schools, disabled students are also more likely to report school satisfaction than their non-disabled counterparts, possibly due to the more accessible nature of the academic environment.[565]

Subsection VIII: Teacher Labor Outcomes

The ability for charter powers to have more influence to fire and hire teachers based on performance has been considered the most important flexibility as part of charter schools.[566] In public schools, it's often considered that public schools take longer to remove underperforming teachers, due to protocol embedded within collective bargaining agreements negotiated between school districts and teachers' unions.[567] Payne and Knowles argue charter schools organize labor, rather than argue against organized labor by ensuring high performance standards for teachers and school quality.[568] This can be exemplified through high turn-over rates; an analysis of the Knowledge Is Power Program network of 60 charter schools found school's teacher turnover rates ranged from 18 to 49 percentage points higher when compared to their urban public school district counterparts.[569] Other factors, such as schedule flexibility and budgetary flexibility, may

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[559] DeAngelis, "Effects of School Choice." 333.
[560] DeAngelis, "Effects of School Choice." 334.
[561] Bulkley, Katrina, and Jennifer Fisler. "A Decade of Charter Schools: From Theory to Practice." Educational Policy 17, no. 3 (2003): 319. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R_1KzS6nCaNTgXRv0RgD6jwD9NEroZP6/view?usp=sharing.
[562] DeAngelis, Corey A. "School Sector and Satisfaction: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Sample." School Effectiveness and School Improvement 33, no. 2 (2022): 218–35. https://drive.google.com/file/d/18zy1HjH4FABamfJs0HhNx6Buyi-1CWEM/view?usp=sharing.
[563] DeAngelis, "School Sector and Satisfaction." 222.
[564] Ding, Cody, and Alice Hall. "GENDER, ETHNICITY, AND GRADE DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCES AMONG ADOLESCENTS." Studies in Educational Evaluation 33, no. 2 (2007): 159–74. https://drive.google.com/file/d/18BwKC-7JM9kxOSDuGJr0mOJvi7OtbeSj/view?usp=sharing.
[565] Beck, Dennis E., Robert Maranto, and Wen-Juo Lo. "Determinants of Student and Parent Satisfaction at a Cyber Charter School." The Journal of Educational Research 107, no. 3 (2014): 209–16. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UvtN-BaIVoPiESXkPEul81zEzqsrIRbT/view?usp=sharing.
[566] Payne, Charles, and Tim Knowles. 2009. "Promise and Peril: Charter Schools, Urban School Reform, and the Obama Administration." *Harvard Educational Review* 79 (2): 227–39. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yFg0yxriyQmIGEhXC_2Qk-NH4ctwHg8a/view?usp=sharing
[567] Payne, Charles, and Tim Knowles. 2009. "Promise and Peril"
[568] Payne, Charles, and Tim Knowles. 2009. "Promise and Peril"
[569] Payne, Charles, and Tim Knowles. 2009. "Promise and Peril"

also improve teachers' access to resources and job performance.[570] In fact, some researchers argue a teacher's credential, such as an added master's degree, or years of experience do not necessarily relate to a teacher's performance, advancing the support behind charter schools' hiring flexibility. [571]

On the contrary, some researchers suggest this employment flexibility leads to lower salaries, lower experienced teachers, and longer hours.[572] In one case study of Pine Ridge Community and Middle School, upon its transformation to a charter school, no teachers chose to reapply, despite being encouraged to.[573] Located in one of Philadelphia's lowest income neighborhoods, researchers, through interviews of current teachers at the school, found common reasons for staying included their desire to support the most vulnerable through education.[574] When new private management promised new infrastructure and additional resources, teachers initially felt hopeful, but were soon focused on their dismay regarding treatment from the school district itself.[575] Other concerns included the potential implementation of harsher disciplinary procedures, diminished teacher authority, and the loss of union memberships to ensure certain educational and monetary protections.[576]

A study of teacher survey data from the United States Department of Education found teachers in public charter schools (PCS) reported greater autonomy compared to their counterparts in traditional public schools (TPS); teachers in both school types reported the same feelings of accountability.[577] However, teachers in educational management organization-run (EMO) charters schools reported less accountability.[578] Researchers found a statistically significant difference between teachers in PCS and TPS, with TPS teachers reporting a greater amount of paperwork; PCS teachers more likely agreed about their greater amount of control and independence within the classroom.[579] There was no statistically significant difference in teachers' responses about their autonomy over grading, technique, and discipline.[580] Regarding unions, there were no statistically significant differences between union membership and autonomy perception; TPS union members were more likely to agree their job security was related to academic performance, unlike their PCS counterparts who agreed less their job security and rewards related to their job performance.[581] Researchers conclude by acknowledging teachers' self-selection of which schools to apply to may affect results, meaning a combination of the factors of school structure, management, culture, and self-selection may be affecting

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[570] Payne, Charles, and Tim Knowles. 2009. "Promise and Peril"
[571] Rivkin, Steven G., Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain. 2014. "Corrigendum to 'Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement.'" *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society* 82 (4): 1543–1543. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CjaMajxebFbJ1IhVfjYAFlRyefvU-_4v/view?usp=sharing
[572] Kitzmiller, Erika M. 2020. "'We Are the Forgotten of the Forgottens': The Effects of Charter School Reform on Public School Teachers." *Harvard Educational Review* 90 (3): 371–96. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vox1pqQ963b7IDb8ZayQLr3wqQyln896/view?usp=sharing
[573] Kitzmiller, Erika M. 2020. "'We Are the Forgotten of the Forgottens':
[574] Kitzmiller, Erika M. 2020. "'We Are the Forgotten of the Forgottens':
[575] Kitzmiller, Erika M. 2020. "'We Are the Forgotten of the Forgottens':
[576] Kitzmiller, Erika M. 2020. "'We Are the Forgotten of the Forgottens':
[577] Oberfield, Zachary W. 2016. "A Bargain Half Fulfilled: Teacher Autonomy and Accountability in Traditional Public Schools and Public Charter Schools." *American Educational Research Journal* 53 (2): 296–323. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EZHNVwA1Ed7PPvt6n8w_wQETTmmHJWlH/view?usp=sharing
[578] Oberfield, Zachary W. 2016. "A Bargain Half Fulfilled"
[579] Oberfield, Zachary W. 2016. "A Bargain Half Fulfilled"
[580] Oberfield, Zachary W. 2016. "A Bargain Half Fulfilled"
[581] Oberfield, Zachary W. 2016. "A Bargain Half Fulfilled"

teachers' perceptions of their experiences.[582] Researchers acknowledge public-charter schools are still held accountable to elected officials and public opinion due to the source of their budgets, meaning there is less autonomy for the management to switch to their personally-desired models such as within EMO schools.[583] They conclude with three conclusions: teachers in TPS who perceived higher red tape (such as paperwork) did not feel more accountable than PCS teachers with less red tape, all teachers indicated high autonomy and low accountability, and EMO schools may in fact increase the similarity of TPS and PCS with more red-tape and lower autonomy typically expected in charter schools.[584]

A separate study surveyed charter school principals and teachers within the 1999-2000 school year, where 86% of known charter schools responded; researchers generalized the sample results to all charter schools for that school year.[585] The mean charter school principal salary was $55,248, and student-staff ratios varied across states, with 30:1 students to teachers in California compared to 20:1 in Michigan charter schools.[586] California charter schools had a higher rate of credentialed teachers compared to states such as Michigan, where 55% of all teachers did not possess a current teaching credential.[587] In California, 42% of charter schools had a labor union contract for its teacher, compared to 7% of charter schools with labor unions in Michigan.[588] Regarding teacher salaries, researchers found charter salaries increased when charter schools were situated in higher-earning zip codes.[589] Indicators suggested by the researchers include how zip codes hosting charter school locations had a median income $5000 greater than zip codes hosting charter schools in Arizona and Michigan counterparts; Michigan schools enrolled a higher African-American population (43%) in charter schools compared to 10% in California.[590] Another indicator was private firms operating 16% of California charter schools compared to 58% of Michigan charter schools.[591] Researchers associate differences between teachers' outcomes, including student to teacher ratio and salaries, based on the charter school's geographic location and community served.[592] For example, researchers identified charter schools with higher African American enrollment pay higher salaries, have less-experienced teachers in terms of credential, longer school days, and teachers' perceiving less impact

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[582] Oberfield, Zachary W. 2016. "A Bargain Half Fulfilled"
[583] Oberfield, Zachary W. 2016. "A Bargain Half Fulfilled"
[584] Oberfield, Zachary W. 2016. "A Bargain Half Fulfilled"
[585] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter School Resources—the Influence of State Policy and Community." *Journal of Education Policy* 23 (1): 1–33. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZTN1qhljJ4KUmHAcBAghfbuYejLWYKby/view?usp=sharing
[586] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."
[587] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."
[588] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."
[589] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."
[590] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."
[591] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."
[592] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."

regarding their work.[593] On the other hand, Asian-American majority charter schools pay higher salaries, but communities with more community organizations, which indicates a standard of community support and a higher likelihood to offer child care programs before/after school, paid higher salaries without needing to increase reliance on as many uncredentialed teachers.[594] Schools with higher majority populations of Asian-American, African-American, and Latino students were found to pay a salary of $5167, on average, higher compared to salaries of teachers and principals at white-majority charter schools.[595]

A) Michigan: Traditional vs Charter School Salaries

In public schools in Michigan, teachers' salaries are negotiated based on a salary schedule, taking into teaching experience, degree-level, and certifications, as negotiated by the school district and teacher's union.[596] In charter schools in Michigan, teachers' salaries are determined by how the school's owners and operators value various qualities, unless the school is part of a public school district.[597] For the analysis, researchers utilized data from 723 public school teachers, weighted to match trends of over 86,000 public school teachers, and 468 charter school teachers, weighted to match trends of over 1,900 charter school teachers.[598] Researchers found charter school teachers earned, on average, 33% less compared to their public school teacher counterparts, or a difference of $15,560.[599] Differences cited included different base salaries, different reward systems, and lack of participation in the state's retirement system.[600] Public school teachers had on average 16 years of experience compared to charter school teachers 5.6 years, as charter schools are more likely to exercise emergency or temporary credentials.[601] Similarly, it's suggested the lack of participation in the retirement system may be a reason why experienced teachers choose to maintain their employment in the public school environment, while charter schools favor younger applicants.[602] 53.5% of public school teachers have master degrees compared to 22.0% of charter school teachers; 22.9% of charter school teachers do not have a professional, temporary or permanent, certification, while 95.7% of public school teachers are certified.[603] Researchers concluded that charter school teachers are rewarded for advanced experience, but the magnitude of the reward is minimized compared to the rewards set up in a public school teachers' salary schedule.[604]

The ideas of what type of teachers are employed at traditional public schools compared to charter schools are further outlined by a researchers' study of North Carolina public school

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[593] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."
[594] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."
[595] Bodine, Edward, Bruce Fuller, María-Fernanda González, Luis Huerta, Sandra Naughton, Sandra Park, and Laik Woon Teh. 2008. "Disparities in Charter."
[596] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar or Moving the Target: A Wage Decomposition of Michigan's Charter and Traditional Public School Teachers." *Educational Administration Quarterly: EAQ* 42 (3): 424–60. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Lpt2C6pq6GyeggXDl4QHO3HIPcw5UJjb/view?usp=sharing
[597] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."
[598] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."
[599] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."
[600] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."
[601] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."
[602] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."
[603] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."
[604] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."

and charter school teachers from 1995 through 2006.[605] Through economic lenses, contrary to theories that increased charter schools diminishes and draws teachers away from public schools, researchers concluded that teachers often moving to charter schools from public schools are ones who possess lower qualifications; therefore, charter schools act as alternative employment.[606] In fact, when schools enter charter status, researchers find a decline in teacher quality, the number of new teachers hidden, but an increase in teacher pay to retain teachers. Overall, researchers concluded a negligible event of charter school competition, as the balance comes through schools balancing expenditures and salaries with teacher retention.[607] Common factors for higher turnover in charter schools included the lack of long-term employment guarantee, longer days, and less retirement benefits, characteristics of the differences between several school districts presented earlier.[608] In addition, charter schools have limited data to assess prospective employees compared to school districts being able to oversee and analyze the performance of their own employees.[609] Lastly, charter schools also would then have to balance whether to invest in improving a current teacher, or if the opportunity cost merits finding a replacement teacher.[610] Specifically, researchers concluded a strong relationship between a teacher's salary and their performance in a "deregulated" market in New Orleans, meaning hiring is decentralized, there are multiple employers competing, teacher performance data is accessible to employers, and schools have incentives to establish performance-based contracts.[611]

Subsection IX: Private Schools

Charter schools are defined as public schools that are different from normal public school districts because they operate independently but are still supported by public funding.[612] Private schools, on the other hand, are not public schools in the sense that they are not supported by public funds and still have autonomy with regards to curriculum and other aspects.[613] Currently, increased concentration of charter schools has led to shifts in enrollment between charter and private schools.[614] Some studies suggest no shifts in enrollment effects between charter and private schools.[615] Others suggest that there are shifts towards enrollment in charter schools.[616]

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[605] Kirabo Jackson, C. 2012. "School Competition and Teacher Labor Markets: Evidence from Charter School Entry in North Carolina☆." *Journal of Public Economics* 96 (2012): 431–48. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y9pjOqW3g-ycYvtSJ_V9X959oixk2yzz/view?usp=sharing

[606] Kirabo Jackson, C. 2012. "School Competition"

[607] Kirabo Jackson, C. 2012. "School Competition"

[608] Barrett, Nathan, Deven Carlson, Douglas N. Harris, and Jane Arnold Lincove. 2022. "When the Walls Come down: Evidence on Charter Schools' Ability to Keep Their Best Teachers without Unions and Certification Rules." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 44 (2): 283–312. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IQqR2YAcNaQH9N0rcEH6qa-irBYRcSyQ/view?usp=sharing

[609] Barrett, Nathan, Deven Carlson, Douglas N. Harris, and Jane Arnold Lincove. 2022. "When the Walls".

[610] Barrett, Nathan, Deven Carlson, Douglas N. Harris, and Jane Arnold Lincove. 2022. "When the Walls".

[611] Barrett, Nathan, Deven Carlson, Douglas N. Harris, and Jane Arnold Lincove. 2022. "When the Walls".

[612] Cohodes, Sarah. 2018. "Charter Schools and the Achievement Gap." *The Future of Children* 1000 (1): 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2018.0008.

[613] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment? Evidence from Michigan," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, no. 472 (2010), https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1676941.

[614] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments. Policy Analysis. No. 707.," no. 407 (August 28, 2012).

[615] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?

[616] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments"

Studies also note that charter schools are more accessible in rural areas than private schools.[617] Additionally, charter schools are more socioeconomically and racially diverse compared to private schools.[618]

A) Enrollment Effects

Studies suggest that in urban areas, there is a prevalence for charter schools to impact private school enrollment levels. In a study by Richard Buddin at the Cato Institute, he notes that charter schools pull students away from private schools.[619] Per Buddin, about 8% of charter students across elementary and 11% of middle, and high school charter students were drawn from private schools.[620] For highly urban areas, Buddin found that number to go up by more than double for elementary, middle, and high school students.[621] Buddin suggested that charter schools are more likely to impact private school enrollment in highly urban areas than non-urban areas.[622]

However, other research indicates a different relationship between private and charter school enrollment — both with regards to secular and religious private schools.[623] Using rigorous statistical analysis, specifically the FE-IV method, Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy found that there was no causal relationship between charter school and private school enrollment rates.[624] Their study accounted for many factors including religion and regional location.[625] This study was based out of Michigan.[626]

Chakrabarti and Roy acknowledge that the results of their study go against the general public perception of charter schools draining private school enrollment.[627] They cite that Michigan may not necessarily be representative of charter schools and private schools across the country.[628] Additionally, raw enrollment numbers do not necessarily indicate causal relationships.[629] When the media cites these numbers, there may be other factors contributing to the differences in enrollment numbers.[630] Those other factors include pre-existing trends in private school enrollment, regular mobility between schools, and state policies that may affect shifts.[631]

Regardless of whether charter schools have or have not drawn from private school enrollment, they continue to see continued growth.[632] In the past few years, charter school

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[617] Fiona Sheridan-McIver and Christy Wolfe, "Charter Schools in Rural Areas" (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2023).
[618] Katherine Schaeffer, "U.S. Public, Private and Charter Schools in 5 Charts," Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, June 6, 2024), https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/06/06/us-public-private-and-charter-schools-in-5-charts/.
[619] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments"
[620] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments"
[621] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments"
[622] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments"
[623] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?
[624] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?
[625] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?
[626] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?
[627] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?
[628] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?
[629] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?
[630] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?
[631] Rajashri Chakrabarti and Joydeep Roy, "Do Charter Schools Crowd out Private School Enrollment?
[632] Drew Jacobs, "DO YOU KNOW WHERE the CHILDREN ARE? A Five-Year Analysis of Public School Enrollment" (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, October 8, 2024), https://info.publiccharters.org/hubfs/2024%20Enrollment%20Report/2024%20Final%20Enrollment%20Report.pdf.

enrollment grew by almost 400,000 students nationwide.[633] After the pandemic, virtual charter school enrollment spiked. (infopublic charters).[634]

B) Fiscal Impacts

One effect to note that Buddin pointed out, when discussing the enrollment effect charter schools have on private schools, was the shift in fiscal burdens from private to charter schools. As students shifted from private to public schools, so did the educational cost.[635] For members of charter school districts, this would therefore result in the need for greater tax revenues.[636] This shift in increased need tax revenue would then fall upon residents of that district.[637] This increased education burden may also result in the decline of certain educational services within the charter school.[638]

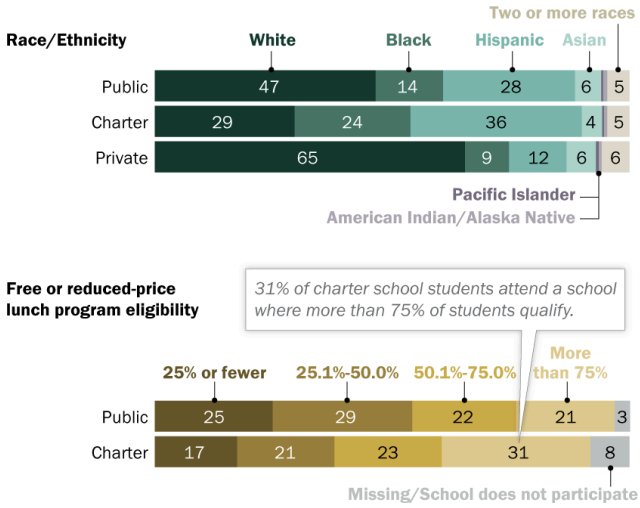
C) Racial and Socioeconomic Effects

Charter schools remain more diverse than private schools.[639] They are made up mostly of Hispanic and African American students — with 36% being Hispanic and 24% being African American — in contrast to private schools which are made up predominantly white students.[640] More students at charter schools are also reliant on free or reduced lunch, unlike private school students — that tend to be wealthier.[641] Statistically, 31% of charter school students attend a school where 75% or more of their classmates are on free and reduced lunch.[642] On the other hand, 21% of private school students go to school where 75% of their classmates are on free and reduced lunch programs.[643]

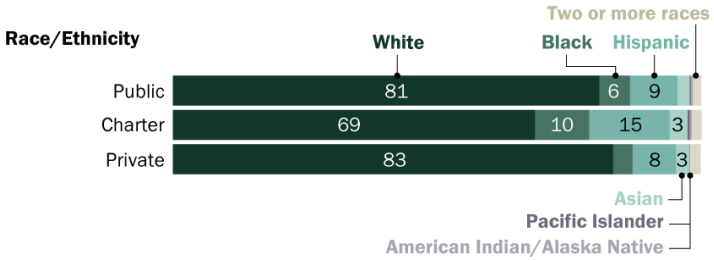
Data provided by the National Alliance for Public Charter School indicates continued diversity trends in charter schools.[644] As of the 2022-23 school year, 36.4% of charter school students nationwide were Hispanic and 24.2% of students nationwide were Black.[645]

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[633] Drew Jacobs, "DO YOU KNOW WHERE the CHILDREN ARE? A Five-Year Analysis of Public School Enrollment"
[634] Drew Jacobs, "DO YOU KNOW WHERE the CHILDREN ARE? A Five-Year Analysis of Public School Enrollment"
[635] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments"
[636] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments"
[637] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments"
[638] Richard Buddin, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollments"
[639] Katherine Schaeffer, "U.S. Public, Private and Charter Schools in 5 Charts," Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, June 6, 2024), https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/06/06/us-public-private-and-charter-schools-in-5-charts/.
[640] Katherine Schaeffer, "U.S. Public, Private and Charter Schools in 5 Charts"
[641] Katherine Schaeffer, "U.S. Public, Private and Charter Schools in 5 Charts"
[642] Katherine Schaeffer, "U.S. Public, Private and Charter Schools in 5 Charts"
[643] Katherine Schaeffer, "U.S. Public, Private and Charter Schools in 5 Charts"
[644] National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, "NAPCS – Data Dashboard – –," Publiccharters.org, 2024, https://data.publiccharters.org.
[645] National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, "NAPCS – Data Dashboard – –"



Private schools also have less teaching diversity than charter schools.[646] Charter schools tend to have more Black and Hispanic teachers, 10% and 15% respectively per Pew Research, compared to private schools that have majority white teachers with less than 15% of their teaching staff being Black or Hispanic.[647]



D) Geographical Accessibility Effects

For rural families, charter schools fill gaps that are oftentimes not filled by private schools.[648] 92% of urban families have access to a private school no more than 5 miles away from them, compared with just 34% of rural families.[649] Increases in vouchers take away tax revenue from rural school districts.[650] Rural families may send their children to private schools outside of the state or the country, as is the case for some families in Vermont, using these vouchers.[651] Vermont is the most rural state in the United States.[652] Increased use of these vouchers threatens education opportunities for over 9.8 million students in the United States that

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[646] Katherine Schaeffer, "U.S. Public, Private and Charter Schools in 5 Charts"
[647] Katherine Schaeffer, "U.S. Public, Private and Charter Schools in 5 Charts"
[648] Fiona Sheridan-McIver and Christy Wolfe, "Charter Schools in Rural Areas" (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2023).
[649] Mishka Espey, "RELEASE: Private School Choice Movement Hurts Outcomes for 9.8 Million Rural Students," Center for American Progress
[650] Mishka Espey, "RELEASE: Private School Choice Movement Hurts Outcomes for 9.8 Million Rural Students," Center for American Progress
[651] Mishka Espey, "RELEASE: Private School Choice Movement Hurts Outcomes for 9.8 Million Rural Students," Center for American Progress
[652] Mishka Espey, "RELEASE: Private School Choice Movement Hurts Outcomes for 9.8 Million Rural Students," Center for American Progress

are a part of rural communities and attend public schools in rural districts that are seeing declines in tax revenue.[653]

The Charter Schools Program looks to fill rural community education gaps by establishing charter schools in rural districts.[654] Only 11% of charter schools are currently in rural areas.[655] However, charter schools in rural areas have the opportunity to bridge educational gaps through innovative curriculum.[656] Currently, many of rural charter schools are alternative charter schools — institutions that serve at-risk students including those in the juvenile justice system or foster care.[657]

In urban areas, charter schools are measured to have significantly improved achievement among disadvantaged students.[658] Sarah Cohodes, of the University of Michigan Ford School of Public Policy, found that in major cities where studies were conducted — Boston, New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles — students' reading and math scores improved.[659] In some cases, Cohodes saw improvements by 0.4 standard deviations (for middle school students).[660]

Subsection X: Systemic Effects & Public School Competition

A) Systemic Improvements

Charter schools may promote systemic improvements in public education because when faced with the prospect of losing students to charter schools, there is more pressure for reform undertaking and performance improvement.[661] Public pressure in the form of this marketplace has been theorized to improve regular public education; a proposed "school choice" program to encourage such improvement, piloted in Cleveland and Milwaukee, gave parents and students ability to use public money to attend private schools.[662] However, this program was extremely controversial and only existed in a few cities.[663] One analysis of the competitive effects of charter schools in Michigan and Arizona finds strong support for the idea that elementary school students in traditional public schools perform better in the presence of charter schools.[664] However, declines in public school enrollment is a decline in funding that may hurt public school development. In the Houston, Texas, Independent School District, officials claim that the loss of close to 12,000 students to charter schools has cost the district $50 million in state aid.[665] In Kansas City, Missouri, school officials estimate that close to $41 million in state aid has been diverted to the district's seventeen charter schools.[666] The school system of Dayton, Ohio, has

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[653] Mishka Espey, "RELEASE: Private School Choice Movement Hurts Outcomes for 9.8 Million Rural Students," Center for American Progress
[654] Fiona Sheridan-McIver and Christy Wolfe, "Charter Schools in Rural Areas"
[655] Fiona Sheridan-McIver and Christy Wolfe, "Charter Schools in Rural Areas"
[656] Fiona Sheridan-McIver and Christy Wolfe, "Charter Schools in Rural Areas"
[657] Fiona Sheridan-McIver and Christy Wolfe, "Charter Schools in Rural Areas"
[658] Juan Ochoa, "Lessons Learned: Urban Charter Schools Demonstrate Potential to Improve Student Performance | Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy," fordschool.umich.edu, February 22, 2024, https://fordschool.umich.edu/news/2024/lessons-learned-urban-charter-schools-demonstrate-potential-improve-student-performance.
[659] Juan Ochoa, "Lessons Learned: Urban Charter Schools Demonstrate Potential to Improve Student Performance
[660] Juan Ochoa, "Lessons Learned: Urban Charter Schools Demonstrate Potential to Improve Student Performance
[661] Bohte, "Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[662] Bohte, "Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[663] Bohte, "Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[664] Bohte, "Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[665] Bohte, "Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[666] Bohte, "Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."

lost approximately $19 million from its annual education budget of $250 million to charter schools.[667] The roughly 60,000 students enrolled in Arizona's charter schools receive $4,500 in state aid per pupil that would normally flow to traditional public schools.[668] The uneven distribution of losses in different grade levels and subject areas makes it also difficult to just cut costs.[669] When data revealed that many public schools outperform charter schools, however, several boards of education, including the Coalition for Public Education in Ohio, published newsletters in protest of state funding, claiming that traditional public school districts posted higher performance than privately operated charter schools in every tested subject at every grade level.[670] Financial oversight problems were highlighted: many charters lacked basic fiscal safeguards, with some deemed "inauditable.[671]"

B) Competition with public schools

The premise behind charter school competition is that they can foster marketlike environments that offer parents and students the ability to flee underperforming public schools into more innovative and less bureaucratic settings.[672] Charter schools may promote systemic improvements in public education because when faced with the prospect of losing students to charter schools, there is more pressure for reform undertaking and performance improvement; Higher pass rates on TAAS exams and greater emphasis on programs aimed at high-achieving student populations are tangible indicators of progress that traditional public schools can use to market themselves to parents and students who have the ability to move to charter schools.[673] One analysis of the competitive effects of charter schools in Michigan and Arizona finds strong support for the idea that elementary school students in traditional public schools perform better in the presence of charter schools.[674] However, declines in public school enrollment is a decline in funding that may hurt public school development. In the Houston, Texas, Independent School District, officials claim that the loss of close to 12,000 students to charter schools has cost the district $50 million in state aid.[675] In Kansas City, Missouri, school officials estimate that close to $41 million in state aid has been diverted to the district's seventeen charter schools.[676] The school system of Dayton, Ohio, has lost approximately $19 million from its annual education budget of $250 million to charter schools.[677] The roughly 60,000 students enrolled in Arizona's charter schools receive $4,500 in state aid per pupil that would normally flow to traditional public schools.[678] The uneven distribution of losses in different grade levels and subject areas makes it also difficult to just cut costs.[679]

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[667] Bohte, "Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[668] Bohte, "Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[669] Bohte, "Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[670] "Academic Performance in Traditional Public Schools Eclipses Charter Schools." 2008., Aug 27US Fed News Service, Including US State News. https://search.proquest.com/wire-feeds/academic-performance-traditional-public-schools/docview/469759735/se-2.
[671] "Traditional Schools Eclipse Charter Schools" 1.
[672] Bohte, J. (2004), Examining the Impact of Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools. Policy Studies Journal, 32: 501-520. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oTy8G2xlaItuMEBEwJSqYgocleUYjNIo/view?usp=sharing
[673] Bohte, "Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[674] Bohte, "Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[675] Bohte, "Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[676] Bohte, "Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[677] Bohte, "Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[678] Bohte, "Performance in Traditional Public Schools."
[679] Bohte, "Performance in Traditional Public Schools."

C) Opportunity Costs

Other research also suggests that charter schools increase the efficiency of providing education.[680] These improvements are larger in the long-term than in the short-term.[681] An example of this is that districts and traditional public schools may introduce new programs or reallocate resources toward more effective uses when they view charter school expansion as a source of competitive pressure. [682] Furthermore, although charter schools typically receive significantly less funding per pupil than TPS, they consistently demonstrate higher cost-effectiveness and a higher estimated Return on Investment (ROI) on education dollars which is defined as the amount a student will earn in their lifetime per dollar invested in their education.[683] Across nine cities, charter schools were found to be approximately 40% more cost-effective than traditional public schools in generating academic outcomes per dollar received.[684]

In terms of opportunities provided by charter schools, disadvantaged students who display relatively weaker preferences for charter schools gain larger academic gains compared to students with stronger preferences for the charter school experience.[685] Ultimately, the annual financial benefit to the community can range from $38,000 to $41,600 per graduate per year if a charter school is able to transform a student from a drop-out to a college graduate.[686] These greater academic gains can translate into long-term societal financial benefits that are expected to counteract any negative fiscal impact on a school district. [687]

D) Debate over Charter Schools

Despite their popularity and rapid expansion, the charter school approach and the use of market-based strategies in education remain highly contested.[688] However, it is a common sentiment that the debate on charter schools is grounded more on ideology and interest-group polarization than on evidence.[689] Among advocacy coalitions for charter school policies are two main groups: the "traditional education establishment" and the "reform coalition".[690] The main policy actors in the traditional coalition include teachers unions, school boards, school administrators associations, and their interest group allies; while the reform coalition consists primarily of the business com-munity, private foundations, think tanks, and education reform interest groups.[691] With variations in legal and political contexts across local and state settings, the argument and standpoint of each advocacy coalition consequently also varies from location to location.[692]

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[680] Christian Buerger and Robert Bifulco, "The Effect of Charter Schools on Districts' Student Composition, Costs, and Efficiency: The Case of New York State," Economics of Education Review 69 (April 2019), 61-72 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2019.01.003.

[681] Buerger and Bifulco, "Charter Schools," 61.

[682] Buerger and Bifulco, "Charter Schools," 61.

[683] Alison H. Johnson et al., "Still a Good Investment: Charter School Productivity in Nine Cities," ScholarWorks@UARK, November 2023, 5, https://scholarworks.uark.edu/scdp/89/.

[684] Johnson et al., "Still a Good Investment," 4.

[685]Christopher R Walters, "The Demand for Effective Charter Schools," National Bureau of Economic Research, November 3, 2014, https://www.nber.org/papers/w20640.

[686] Arkin and Hassel, "Bottom Line," 6.

[687] Arkin and Hassel, "Bottom Line," 6.

[688] "Policy Narratives and Public Opinion Concerning Charter Schools," accessed October 24, 2025, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/polp.12120.

[689] Ertas, "Policy Narratives and Public Opinion concerning Charter Schools."

[690] Ertas, "Policy Narratives and Public Opinion concerning Charter Schools."

[691] Ertas, "Policy Narratives and Public Opinion concerning Charter Schools."

[692] Ertas, "Policy Narratives and Public Opinion concerning Charter Schools."

In terms of academic performance, advocates argue that charter schools transform low performers into middle and high performers and lead to academic success, while critics state that charter schools have not proven to be academically superior.[693] In the facet of race, advocates believe that charter schools mainly help students who are at-risk, gifted, or bullied at traditional schools, while critics say that they tend to separate children by race and class.[694] Because the United States is a country that aims to teach democratic ideals to younger generations, the charter school system is often viewed as a threat to equality in the way it "segregates" based on race, class, and special needs statuses.[695]

One concern that has been made by the general public is that individuals want to make profits off of the establishments of charter schools.[696] Aside from the positive ideals of charter schools, they're seen to be driven by profiteers for financial and political influence.[697] In one specific example, certain charter schools are found to be pushing for the employment of less credentialed teachers to lessen the costs of instruction and weaken the formation of teacher unions.[698]

From the perspective of the parents of students in charter schools, most choose to send their children to charter schools because they are not satisfied with their local public schools and are seeking higher standards, small class sizes, and more supportive environments.[699] Despite statistics providing no conclusive evidence of higher academic success in charter schools compared to public schools, parents continue to find them appealing.[700] Many disadvantaged parents view charter schools as an opportunity to escape from under-performing inner-city schools and seek the illusion of exclusivity.[701] While their children continue to have moderate results, on average, parents continue to maintain a level of satisfaction.[702] When asked about what constitutes a "better learning environment", parents generally refer to factors such as smaller classes, better teachers, teacher famil-iarity, sense of belonging, one-on-one attention, and supportive staff—affective factors that lead to a false reflection of true academic improvements.[703] These positive feelings that parents refer to are often not about academic satisfaction, but about the way they feel as part of the school.[704]

According to economic theorists, competition should make school systems feel pressured to perform at a level and efficiency that was previously unreached. However, a study of public schools' responses to the introduction of charter schools revealed three reasons why this has not been the case: 1) school districts don't view this shift as a matter of quality competition, but as an administrative shift in resources and funding, 2) districts respond to this competition in different manners that make it difficult to draw a linear conclusion, 3) most schools do not

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[693] Ertas, "Policy Narratives and Public Opinion concerning Charter Schools."
[694] Ertas, "Policy Narratives and Public Opinion concerning Charter Schools."
[695] Ertas, "Policy Narratives and Public Opinion concerning Charter Schools."
[696] Patricia C Glascock, *AN ASSESSMENT OF PERCEPTION*, n.d.
[697] Glascock, *AN ASSESSMENT OF PERCEPTION*.
[698] Glascock, *AN ASSESSMENT OF PERCEPTION*.
[699] "The Charter School Allure," accessed October 24, 2025, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epdf/10.1177/0013124506291786.
[700] "The Charter School Allure."
[701] "The Charter School Allure."
[702] "The Charter School Allure."
[703] "The Charter School Allure."
[704] "The Charter School Allure."

respond at all.[705] In addition, the type of charter school can play a role in determining whether and how public schools respond—a conversion charter school that was once a public school may heavily rely on public funds while a market charter school that is run by external organizations may lead to different levels of competition.[706]

When public schools do react, one common response is for them to change curricula or develop new academic programs out of a fear that students might abandon them for emergent charter schools.[707] To provide a specific example, school officials in Mesa, Arizona increased teacher training and added basic education programs when faced with competition from new charter schools.[708] In cases of negative responses, opponents of charter schools have tried to thwart their progress by reducing the scale of their abilities.[709] Some school districts have refused to transfer credits or student records to charter schools, while others have deliberately cut their regular programs in an effort to shift the blame onto charter schools and stir up negative public resentment.[710]

SECTION III: CASE STUDIES

Subsection I: Palisades Charter High School

A) Background and History

Palisades Charter High School (PCHS) was founded in 1961 in Pacific Palisades, California, and at the time of construction, it was the most expensive school built in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).[711] Located in the Westside region of the city Los Angeles, Pacific Palisades has a median age of 48, a population that is 81.9% white, and has a median household income of $191,836 per year.[712] The neighborhood's socioeconomic profile suggests substantial family resources and heightened parental capacity to engage in school choice and academic support. In its first decades, PCHS operated under the traditional LAUSD governance model as a regular public high school serving grades 9-12 and primarily drawing its students from the Pacific Palisades area. Over the years, it developed a strong academic reputation, but also became noted for high levels of drug and alcohol abuse among the student population.[713]

Around 1992, declining enrollment led LAUSD to consider closing the school. To counteract this, the administration and staff advocated for converting PCHS into a charter.[714] In

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[705] Matthew Linick and Christopher Lubienski, "How Charter Schools Do, and Don't, Inspire Change in Traditional Public School Districts," *Childhood Education* 89, no. 2 (2013): 99–104, https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2013.774203.

[706] Linick and Lubienski, "How Charter Schools Do, and Don't, Inspire Change in Traditional Public School Districts."

[707] "Examining the Impact of Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools," accessed October 24, 2025, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2004.00078.x.

[708] "Examining the Impact of Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."

[709] "Examining the Impact of Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."

[710] "Examining the Impact of Charter Schools on Performance in Traditional Public Schools."

[711] Priscella, Wohlstetter. PALISADES CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL Staff, Parent, and Student Satisfaction Survey Results. 18 Sept. 2019, palihigh.org/pdfs/Palisades%20Report_%20Columbia%20Survey%20Results.pdf.

[712] "Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles, ca Household Income, Population & Demographics | Point2." Point2homes.com, 2019, www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/CA/Los-Angeles/Pacific-Palisades-Demographics.html.

[713] ROSENBERG, HOWARD. "TV REVIEW : '20/20' Takes a Look at Palisades High School." Los Angeles Times, 21 Apr. 1989, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-04-21-ca-2297-story.html. Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

[714] "Los Angeles Magazine." Google Books, 1998, books.google.com/books?id=510EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA66#v=onepage&q&f=false. Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

1993, the Los Angeles Board of Education approved a charter for PCHS along with three feeder elementary schools. This was one of the earliest charter authorizations in California and the first time a group of schools became charters together.[715] The new model introduced a stricter behavior code and structural reforms intended to improve student achievement. This conversion towards a charter school model is a clear example of a well-resourced suburban high school choosing charter conversion to gain flexibility and competitiveness rather than escaping under-resourcing.

By 1994, PCHS had grown substantially and a Magnet Program in mathematics, science, and technology was added.[716] In 2003, all stakeholder groups unanimously agreed to transition to a fully independent charter governed as a nonprofit public-benefit corporation with its own Board of Directors.[717]

Under the charter model, PCHS gained greater operational flexibility. It became financially independent, able to make independent staffing decisions, scheduling chives, curricular changes, and manage its budget distinct from direct LAUSD control. According to the 2019 Charter Renewal petition, a charter was entirely necessary as educators wanted to create policies and educational practices tailored to PCHS's "unique school community" and expand access beyond its immediate neighborhood.[718]

The charter conversion also enabled PCHS to attract students from a broader geographic area. By 2018, the school served nearly 3,000 students from over 115 zip codes in the Los Angeles area.[719]

B) Student and School Demographics

The 2024-2025 School Profile listed a total enrollment of about 3,000 students with a graduation rate of 98%.[720] The student body is composed of 54% White students, 9% African-American students, 23% Latino/Latinx students, 5% Asian and Pacific Islander students, and 9% mixed-race students.[721] These figures position PCHS as substantially less diverse than both LAUSD, which is over 70% Hispanic/Latino, and California's public school population, which is approximately 77% students of color.[722] [723] In terms of socioeconomic status, approximately 31% of students are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program.[724] This is far lower than LAUSD's average of 82% of students who are eligible for the free and reduced lunch

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[715] CHAVEZ, STEPHANIE. "Palisades Schools Get OK for Charter Status : Reform: Program at Four Campuses Is an Attempt to Raise Student." *Los Angeles Times*, 29 June 1993, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-06-29-me-8169-story.html. Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

[716] Department of Education. Learning from Experience: Case Studies of Employer-Linked. 1998. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED435812.pdf?

[717] Palisades Charter High School. School Profile. 16 Aug. 2019, palihigh.org/pdfs/School%20Profile%20-%202019%20-2020.pdf?

[718] Palisades Charter High School. 2020-2025 CHARTER RENEWAL PETITION a CALIFORNIA DISTINGUISHED SCHOOL. 7 Oct. 2019.

[719] Palisades Charter High School. School Profile. 16 Aug. 2019

[720] "At a Glance." Www.palihigh.org, www.palihigh.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=412621&type=d.

[721] "At a Glance." Palisades Charter High School

[722] California Department of Education. "DataQuest (ca Dept of Education)." *Ca.gov*, 2020, dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/.

[723] US News. "Palisades Charter High School." Usnews.com, 2025, www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/california/districts/palisades-charter-high-district/palisades-charter-high-school-2604. Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

[724] "At a Glance." Palisades Charter High School

program.[725] This economic composition reflects the affluence of the surrounding Pacific Palisades neighborhood, where the median household income exceeds $190,000.

113 ZIP Codes were represented in the student population.[726] The school's independent charter status allows it to enroll students from beyond its local attendance boundaries, attracting families who seek its academic reputation, and specialized magnet programs. This wide catchment area contributes to limited but measurable diversity gains, with some students commuting from neighborhoods such as Venice, Inglewood, and South Central Los Angeles.

The student-teacher ratio at PCHS is higher than the California average, sitting at 24:1 versus California's 22:1.[727] In 2023, 69% of students are proficient in reading and 42% are proficient in Math, with an average SAT score of 1261 and ACT score of 28.3.[728] Furthermore, the graduation rate consistently exceeds 95%, and 75% of students meet the University of California "A–G" requirements, a key benchmark for college readiness.[729]

These demographic features have important implications for interpreting outcomes and program effects. First, a majority White, affluent student body typically comes with higher parental education levels, greater access to supplementary education resources, and stronger college preparedness. The low share of economically disadvantaged students suggests fewer structural barriers for students at PCHS than in many other public high schools.

Second, the broad geographic draw indicates that PCHS is not strictly limited to its immediate neighborhood. Students attend from over 2 hours away, and often are bused in from areas seeking the school's academic offerings. This suggests several selection effects: students and families choosing PCHS may be more academically ambitious or have greater capacity to support enrichment.

C) Admissions

To gain admission into Palisades Charter High School, each student must submit one application. Applications are not reviewed on a "first come, first serve" basis and are rather determined by a weighted lottery system..[730] Based on policies set by the Palisades Charter High School Board of Trustees, admission is granted to students in the following order: 1) Residents of the former attendance area of Palisades High School, 2) Siblings of pupils admitted or attending Palisades Charter High School, 3) Children of staff not to exceed 5% of the school's enrollment, 4) Students who have culminated from Paul Revere Charter Middle School, 5) Those who qualify for free or reduced-price meals, 6) Applicants who reside within LAUSD's attendance boundaries, and 7) Applicants who reside within California but not within LAUSD boundaries.[731] The number of applicants who are accepted are determined by grade level–in the 2026-2027 school year, there are 750 openings in the 9th grade, 50 in the 10th grade, 10 in the

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[725] Carvalho, Alberto. "EdData - District Profile - Los Angeles Unified." Ed-Data.org, 2023, www.ed-data.org/district/Los-Angeles/Los-Angeles-Unified/ps_MjQzNjg%5E.

[726] "At a Glance." Palisades Charter High School

[727] State, AAA. "Which U.S. States Have the Highest and Lowest Student/Teacher Ratios? | AAA State of Play." AAA State of Play, Mar. 2023, www.aaastateofplay.com/which-us-states-have-the-highest-and-lowest-student-teacher-ratios/?srsltid=AfmBOooHK3ZnHhW-sJEZA5xQByB5CfzmfuQZYG3DFVjDHdHquW0OrjFA. Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

[728] PCHS PROFILE 2023-2024. https://www.palihigh.org/ourpages/auto/2023/9/15/37559508/AA_PCHS%20School%20Profile%202023-2024%20_4_.pdf

[729] "At a Glance." Palisades Charter High School

[730] "Admissions Home - Admissions - Educational Support Departments - Palisades Charter High School," accessed November 2, 2025, https://www.palihigh.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=411328&type=d.

[731] "Admissions Home - Admissions - Educational Support Departments - Palisades Charter High School."

11th grade, and 50 in the 12th grade.[732] To add on, admission has historically been so competitive that there was originally a waiting list.[733] In the 1999-2000 school year, six years after its transition into a charter school, there was a 700-name waiting list with students and locals from inner-city neighborhoods getting off first.[734] Lastly, to gather interest from prospective families to begin with, the Palisades Charter High School Admissions Office also hosts parent tours and presentations at roadshows to inform families about the school and further engagement opportunities.[735]

D) Impact of the Transition

Before 1993, PCHS had such poor attendance that it was in jeopardy of closing.[736] When a team consisting of Principal Merle Price, his staff, and a group of parents transformed the public school into a charter school, they brought back 200 students from surrounding private schools and from 115 zip codes across Los Angeles.[737] This newfound interest also led to high volumes of private donations, particularly from notable figures in the local area. For one, Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks donated $100,000 to launch the school's New Media Academy, which was one of three in all of the LAUSD.[738]

a) Governance Structure

After transitioning from a public school to a charter school, PCHS adopted a new governance structure. Rather than being operated solely under the authority of the LAUSD like public schools in the region, Palisades Charter High School utilizes a Board of Trustees system with voting stakeholders.[739] Parents, students, and staff can all attend board meetings and stakeholders have the opportunity to vote for trustees, run for the board, and participate in specific committees.[740] A student board member also has a nonvoting voice in each Board of Trustees meeting, and the board has several subcommittees dedicated to Academic Achievement, Safety, and Elections, each with a voting student member. All decisions are made on the school site, ensuring that outside influences and agendas don't conflict with the interests of students, effectively maintaining independence outside of the school district structure.[741]

E) Outcomes and Performance

For over 30 years, PCHS has undergone a clear and measurable academic and structural transformation, reflecting both the intentions of early charter reform and the tensions inherent in sustaining high performance within an affluent context.

The school's original 1993 charter sought to raise student achievement through autonomy and experimental governance. The Los Angeles Times reported that PCHS and three feeder elementary schools became the first "school cluster" charters in California, with a plan to improve achievement by 10% per year and ensure that 95% of students attended college. The

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[732] "Admissions Home - Admissions - Educational Support Departments - Palisades Charter High School."
[733] "Admissions Home - Admissions - Educational Support Departments - Palisades Charter High School."
[734] "Los Angeles Magazine - Google Books," accessed November 2, 2025, https://books.google.com/books?id=510EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA66#v=onepage&q&f=false.
[735] "School Accountability Report Card," accessed November 2, 2025, https://sarconline.org/public/print/19647331995836/2021-2022#conditions.
[736] "Los Angeles Magazine - Google Books."
[737] "Los Angeles Magazine - Google Books."
[738] "Los Angeles Magazine - Google Books."
[739] Palisades Charter High School, *Independent Charter Status Sheet 2025*, Pacific Palisades, CA: Palisades Charter High School, 2025, PDF, accessed November 2, 2025, https://www.palihigh.org/pdfs/CharterInfo/PCHS%20Independent%20Charter%20Sheet%202025.pdf
[740] Palisades Charter High School, *Independent Charter Status Sheet 2025*.
[741] Palisades Charter High School, *Independent Charter Status Sheet 2025*.

new model emphasized "school-within-a-school" interdisciplinary learning, individualized courses, and the inclusion of community service as a graduation requirement.[742] This was part of the larger LEARN (Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now) reform movement, making PCHS a test case for decentralized decision-making and parent-led innovation[743]

By the early 2000s, longitudinal indicators reflected that this autonomy was correlated with measurable academic growth. PCHS transitioned into a fully independent nonprofit charter in 2003, and subsequent oversight reports from LAUSD's Charter Schools Division show sustained progress. In the 2022–2023 Annual Performance-Based Oversight Visit Report, PCHS was rated "Proficient" in Student Achievement and Educational Performance and "Accomplished" in Governance, with the district noting "positive academic achievement and growth for all students." The report recorded 69% reading proficiency and 42% math proficiency, a graduation rate exceeding 95%, and continuous compliance with charter and district accountability requirements.[744] Likewise, the 2021–2022 School Accountability Report Card (SARC) documents a SAT mean score of 1261 and ACT mean score of 28.3, along with 75% of students meeting University of California "A–G" requirements, indicating high levels of college readiness well above both LAUSD and California state averages.[745] These results reinforce the school's ability to sustain its founding academic targets from the 1990s while serving a more demographically diverse population drawn from over 115 ZIP codes across Los Angeles.

The school's demographic and structural evolution has also influenced its longitudinal outcomes. According to LAUSD oversight data, PCHS enrolled 2,967 students in 2023, maintaining near-capacity levels with 31% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, compared to 82% districtwide, underscoring its relative socioeconomic advantage.[746] This advantage has enabled consistent access to qualified teachers, 163 certificated staff, and an academic program with multiple advanced placement and magnet pathways.

However, recent evaluations point to emerging challenges in maintaining equitable progress across subgroups. The 2024 FCMAT Special Education Review found that while PCHS met all state Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) benchmarks, it continues to rely on "pull-out" programs that separate students with disabilities from general education peers. The report recommended greater investment in co-teaching models, standardized study skills courses, and faculty training to strengthen inclusion and alignment with statewide best practices.[747]

Taken together, longitudinal data portray PCHS as a sustained high-achieving charter model with robust governance and instructional continuity. Since its conversion, it has exceeded both district and state averages in graduation and college-readiness outcomes, while maintaining fiscal stability and strong community engagement. Yet, as external reviews highlight, PCHS's

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[742] ANNUAL PERFORMANCE-BASED OVERSIGHT VISIT REPORT* 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR https://www.palihigh.org/ourpages/auto/2020/10/19/57023948/PALIHS%208798%20Annual%20Performance-Based%20Oversight%20Visit%20Report%202022-2023.pdf?rnd=1697146892891 Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

[743] ANNUAL PERFORMANCE-BASED OVERSIGHT VISIT REPORT* 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

[744] Los Angeles Uniformed School District Charter School Division, ANNUAL PERFORMANCE-BASED OVERSIGHT VISIT REPORT* 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

[745] California State Department of Education, Palisades Charter High School Accountability Report for 2021-2022 https://sarconline.org/public/print/19647331995836/2021-2022 Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

[746] ANNUAL PERFORMANCE-BASED OVERSIGHT VISIT REPORT* 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

[747] Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team Special Assistance Team, June 17, 2024 https://www.fcmat.org/PublicationsReports/palisades-charter-hs-final-report-1468.pdf Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.

enduring success is partly shaped by its affluent geographic base and selective enrollment dynamics, factors that complicate replication in less-resourced or urban charter settings. In essence, the Palisades case exemplifies how autonomy and local control can produce sustained academic excellence as substantial institutional capacity and community investment are in place.[748][749]

Subsection II: BASIS Charter Schools

A) History

BASIS charter schools are a network of K-12, tuition-free public charter schools that have several locations throughout the United States, as noted on the BASIS website.[750] Michael and Olga Block opened the first BASIS charter school in 1998 in Tucson, Arizona.[751] In 2004, BASIS opened its second Arizonian school in Scottsdale.[752] They first expanded outside of the state through the establishment of BASIS Washington, D.C. in 2012.[753] Since then, BASIS has expanded to 40 campuses in Arizona, Louisiana, Texas, and Washington, D.C. serving over 20,000 students.[754] They have peaked high school ranking charts—with BASIS Tucson North placing #1 in U.S. News 2025 High School Rankings, and they are nationally accredited by Cognia.[755]

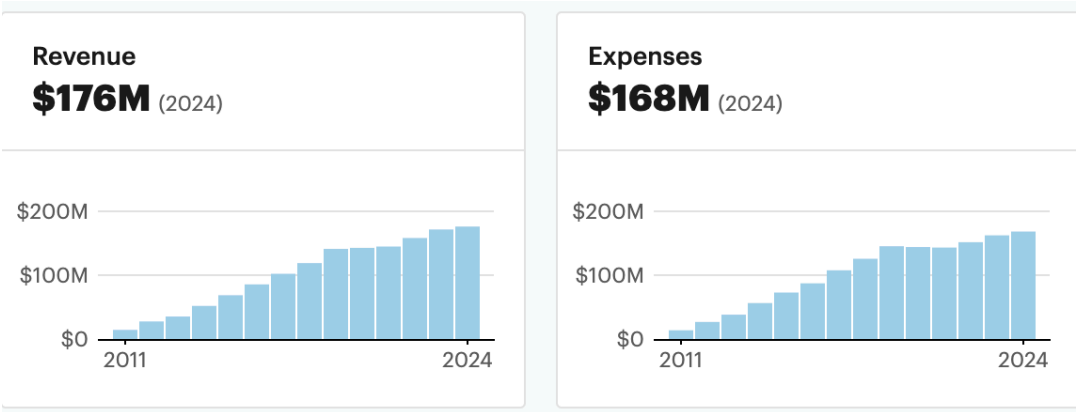


Table: Basis Charter Schools Inc, Revenue and Expenses, 2011-2024[756]

Basis Charter Schools Inc., based in Scottsdale, Arizona had a revenue of $176 million in the 2024 fiscal year, including $168 million in expenses for a net income of a little over $7.7

[748] ANNUAL PERFORMANCE-BASED OVERSIGHT VISIT REPORT* 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.
[749] Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team Special Assistance Team, June 17, 2024 Accessed 1 Nov. 2025.
[750] BASIS, "About BASIS Charter Schools," BASIS Charter Schools, accessed October 30, 2025, https://enrollbasis.com/about-basis-charter-schools/.
[751] Alison Levosky et al., "Arizona's BASIS for High-Achieving Charter Schools – Yale Education Studies Student Research," Yale.edu, April 4, 2017, https://campuspress.yale.edu/edstudiescourses/arizonas-basis-for-high-achieving-charter-schools/.
[752] BASIS, "History Timeline."
[753] BASIS, "History Timeline."
[754] BASIS, "History Timeline."
[755] BASIS, "Awards and Rankings," BASIS Charter Schools, accessed October 31, 2025, https://enrollbasis.com/about-basis-charter-schools/awards-and-rankings/.
[756] Suozzo, Andrea, Alec Glassford, Ash Ngu, and Brandon Roberts. n.d. "Basis Charter Schools Inc, Fiscal Year Ending June 2024." ProPublica. Accessed November 3, 2025. https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/860908854.

million.[757] 90.1% of its total revenue is generated through program service, while 48.7% of its expenses are dedicated towards salaries and wages.[758]

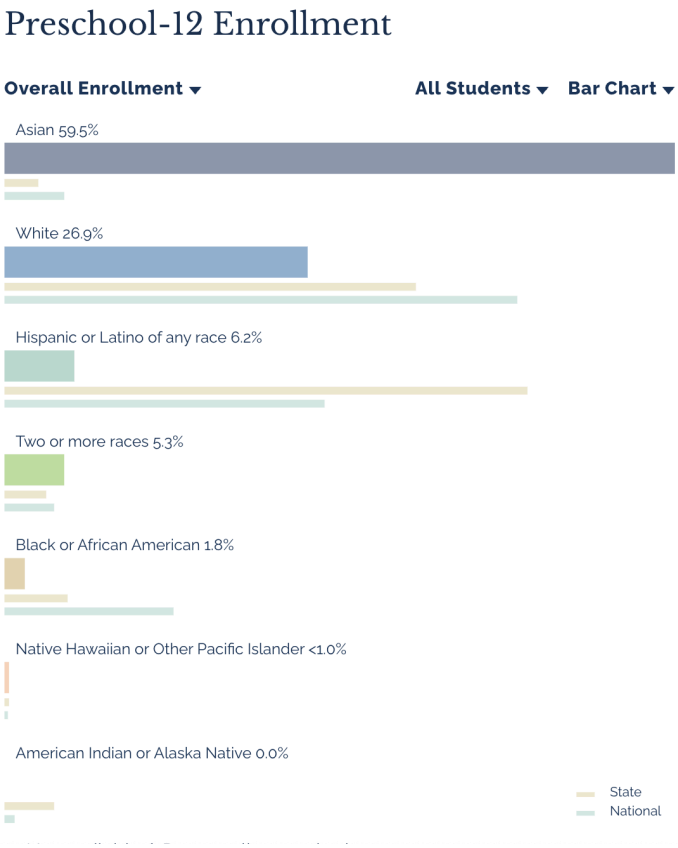


Table: Basis Demographics, 2020-2021[759]

According to a 2020-2021 data set, the most recently available data from the Civil Rights Data Collection in the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights said that of 1,137 students, 59.5% Asian, 26.9% white, 6.2% Hispanic/Latino, 5.3% two or more races, and less than 2% each for African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian.[760] Its Asian enrollment was higher than state and national averages, while white, Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, and African American enrollment were all below state and national averages.[761]

B) Structure

The BASIS charter schools, unlike many of its high performing peer schools, operate on a system of open enrollment that does not accept specific students based on their conceptions of

[757] Suozzo, Andrea, Alec Glassford, Ash Ngu, and Brandon Roberts. n.d. "Basis Charter."
[758] Suozzo, Andrea, Alec Glassford, Ash Ngu, and Brandon Roberts. n.d. "Basis Charter."
[759] "Civil Rights Data - Basis Charter Schools Inc. (81078)." n.d. Civil Rights Data Collection Office for Civil Rights U.S. Department of Education. Accessed November 3, 2025. https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/profile/us/az/basis_charter_schools_inc._%252881078%2529?surveyYear=2020&nces=0400608
[760] "Civil Rights Data - Basis Charter Schools Inc."
[761] "Civil Rights Data - Basis Charter Schools Inc."

merit.[762] Students apply through an online portal, but if applications exceed capacity, a lottery is used to randomly select admitted students rather than having a committee choose which of those students to accept.[763] BASIS is built around academic rigor, and it is classified as an Academically Intensive Charter School (AICS) by one study.[764] In contrast with public schools that emphasize social and athletic programs for student experience, AICS unapologetically prioritize academic rigor.[765] The school operates on a trimester system.[766]

BASIS schools emphasize teacher specialization, a co-teaching model, and accelerated academic programs.[767] In grades 1-3, each classroom is assigned two teachers: one Learning Expert Teacher that specializes in education and pedagogical support, and one Subject Expert Teacher that specializes in the academic subject.[768] In addition, they use accelerated programs to master subjects above students' grade level, often leading them to complete graduation requirements by the 11th grade.[769] Starting at grade 3, students take benchmark exams to track their progress and grow used to test-taking.[770]

By grade 4, students start rotating classrooms on their own, and by middle school, students' education is designed to prepare them for AP courses especially with the introduction of accelerated STEM classes.[771] In middle school, benchmark exams may take up 30% of a course's final grade, and students are given cumulative exams that build on prior content.[772]

In grades 9-12, a strong focus is placed on college preparation through AP courses.[773] In fact, students are required to start taking AP courses in grade 9 and to complete six AP exams by the end of high school in order to graduate.[774] The AP exam is accounted for in the final course grade, meaning students may end up passing the class with a good AP test score even if they were failing the course.[775] Seniors take a College Counseling seminar for the first two-trimester to assist with college applications and financial aid, and they complete a Senior Project internship in their final trimester.[776] Students at these charters generally take around ten different classes in elementary school, nine in middle school, and seven in high school.[777]

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[762] BASIS, "Enrollment Guide," BASIS Charter Schools, accessed October 31, 2025, https://enrollbasis.com/enrollment-guide/.
[763] BASIS, "Enrollment Guide."
[764] Robert Maranto, Jamison White, and Sean Woytek, "An Exploratory Analysis of U.S. Academically Intensive Charter Schools (AICS)," *Education Sciences* 15, no. 7 (July 21, 2025): 933, https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15070933.
[765] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.
[766] BASIS, "Curriculum - Main," BASIS Charter Schools, accessed October 31, 2025, https://enrollbasis.com/curriculum/.
[767] BASIS, "Curriculum."
[768] BASIS, "Curriculum."
[769] BASIS, "Curriculum."
[770] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.
[771] BASIS, "Curriculum."
[772] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.
[773] BASIS, "Curriculum."
[774] Amy Licht, "BASIS Students Excel on 2024 AP Exams," BASIS Charter Schools, September 24, 2024, https://enrollbasis.com/basis-charter-schools-2024-ap-exams/.
[775] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.
[776] BASIS, "Curriculum."
[777] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.

BASIS schools in Arizona reportedly spend two-thirds of the average funding per pupil than traditional public schools with the middle schools having class sizes up to 30.[778] Additionally, these charters tend to give teachers a level of autonomy with their curriculum design in implementing their expertise.[779] They may receive lists of concepts to teach, but teachers are able to decide how they teach them.[780] These teachers also often come from industry or academia, many of them holding graduate degrees (up to 60% had MAs in Arizona).[781] Teachers leading AP classes receive bonuses for each of their students that score a 4 or 5 on the AP exam.[782] Based on this meritocratic model, low-performing teachers must show improvement in helping their students reach certain academic standards or else they are dismissed.[783] Teachers are not expected to focus on behavioral management or professional development, encouraging them to engage primarily in academic support for students.[784] They are responsible for supporting underperforming students and to report to parents about any failures on a test starting in grade 3.[785]

C) Academic Outcomes

BASIS charter schools have emerged as a defining example of what researchers call Academically Intensive Charter Schools (AICS): institutions that emphasize content mastery, external benchmarks, and accelerated coursework to achieve academic outcomes.[786] BASIS aimed to replicate the academic rigor of European gymnasia within an American public framework; the network expanded across Arizona and into Washington D.C., Texas, and beyond, producing measurable results that routinely surpass both national and international performance benchmarks.[787]

Requiring students to pass standards-based exams to move forward in school is highly common among top-performing nations, including the Czech Republic, Korea, Japan, and Finland.[788] At BASIS schools, middle and high school students only advance by passing their classes and year-end exams.[789] Julia Toews, BASIS network's vice president of academics, said that "Holding kids to that mastery has been one of the main reasons for our success."[790]

a) Test Scores

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[778] June Kronholz, "High Scores at BASIS Charter Schools," Education Next, September 26, 2013, https://www.educationnext.org/high-scores-at-basis-charter-schools/.
[779] Kronholz, "High Scores at Basis Charter Schools."
[780] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.
[781] Kronholz, "High Scores at Basis Charter Schools."
[782] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.
[783] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.
[784] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.
[785] Maranto, "An Exploratory Analysis," 933.
[786] Maranto, Robert, Jamison White, and Sean Woytek. 2025. "An Exploratory Analysis of U.S. Academically Intensive Charter Schools (AICS)." Education Sciences 15, no. 933 (July): 1-14. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oVP6tOl8iRiyzcH9NBgZVbwgx2KE_JpQ/view?usp=sharing.
[787] Kronholz, June. , 2014. "High Scores at BASIS Charter Schools," Education Next 14 (1). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1grH2DgE3OmLprQgJBg4boROXOtUAK4n-/view?usp=sharing
[788] Stringer, Kate. 2018. "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices." Getting Smart. January 7, 2018. https://www.gettingsmart.com/2018/01/07/basis-inside-the-acclaimed-school-network-blending-the-worlds-best-education-practices/.
[789] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[790] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."

BASIS Tucson North's results on the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) stunned educators worldwide.[791] Its average math score was 618, which was 131 points above the average score in the US, and higher than the average score of any individual participating nation.[792] BASIS Scottsdale, a sister campus, scored even higher, at 51 points above Shanghai in math and 42 points higher in science, placing both campuses in what the Wall Street Journal later described as the "scholastic stratosphere."[793] While such data are exceptional, they reflect BASIS's design: early algebra, daily science instruction, and cumulative exams requiring mastery rather than completion.[794] Students who fail even a single end-of-year comprehensive must repeat the grade, ensuring proficiency before advancement.[795] At the state level, BASIS Scottsdale achieved 100 percent proficiency in both math and reading among 10th graders in 2012, compared with 92 percent and 80 percent, respectively, in the surrounding district.[796] Even when scaled to Arizona's modest per-pupil funding (roughly two-thirds of that of traditional public schools) the network consistently performs at or near the top of U.S. rankings by U.S. News & World Report and The Washington Post.[797] A defining marker of BASIS academic outcomes is its Advanced Placement participation and success rates. BASIS students are required to take six AP exams, but most take many more.[798] BASIS students average ten AP exams per person, compared with a national average of fewer than three.[799] In 2013, BASIS students achieved an average AP score of 3.9 out of 5, well above the U.S. mean of 2.83.[800] Teachers receive performance bonuses of $200 per student scoring 5 and $100 for a 4 on any AP exam, creating direct incentives tied to external, standardized measures rather than internal grading systems.[801]

In 2024, BASIS self-reported that 93.2% of BASIS students passed AP-exams related to English and foreign language, compared to 67.7% nationally.[802] 93.5% of BASIS students passed math/science AP exams compared to 63.8%, and 96.7% of BASIS students passed social sciences AP exams compared to a 55.9% national average, all of which is self-reported data.[803]

b) Curriculum

The BASIS curriculum scaffolds from elementary through secondary grades to support AP success. Fifth-graders study Latin and complete 90 minutes of homework daily; by middle school, they spend nine hours a week in combined biology, chemistry, and physics courses.[804] Algebra begins in 6th grade, and AP Calculus is a graduation requirement.[805] High-schoolers

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[791] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[792] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[793] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[794] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[795] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[796] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[797] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[798] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[799] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[800] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[801] Maranto, Robert, Jamison White, and Sean Woytek. 2025. "An Exploratory Analysis of U.S. Academically Intensive Charter Schools (AICS)." Education Sciences 15, no. 933 (July): 1-14. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oVP6tOl8iRiyzcH9NBgZVbwgx2KE_JpQ/view?usp=sharing.
[802] Licht, Amy. 2024. "BASIS Students Excel on 2024 AP Exams." Enrollbasis.com. September 24, 2024. https://enrollbasis.com/basis-charter-schools-2024-ap-exams/.
[803] Licht, Amy. 2024. "BASIS Students Excel"
[804] Kronholz, June. , 2014. "High Scores at BASIS Charter Schools," Education Next 14 (1). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1grH2DgE3OmLprQgJBg4boROXOtUAK4n-/view?usp=sharing
[805] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."

must pass year-end comprehensive exams in every subject; failure in even one triggers grade repetition, reinforcing content mastery.[806] Teachers are also retained or dismissed based on whether students reach target proficiency thresholds, ensuring instructional accountability.[807] Unlike "No Excuses" networks emphasizing behavioral compliance, BASIS and similar AICS focus on internal motivation and peer collaboration; in classrooms, students routinely review graded tests together, identifying errors without teacher prompts.[808] This self-directed rigor combined with the intense graduation requirements and the self selection that catalyzes correlates with consistently high external assessment outcomes.[809]

c) Controversy

BASIS's model is challenging, and many critics dislike its exact standards and emphasis on test scores.[810] BASIS schools have also drawn attention from critics due to their high attrition rates.[811] For instance, a 2006 article noted that 40 percent of eighth-graders at the BASIS Tucson school decided not to attend the neighboring BASIS high school.[812] Furthermore, by 12th grade in 2021-22, BASIS Shavano had lost 65% of the student cohort that entered into 8th grade in 2017-18.[813] In 2013, Washington D.C. refused to allow the one-year-old BASIS school to expand, citing attrition as a reason.[814] Then-BASIS Head of School, Paul Morrissey told *The Washington Post* that attrition often occurs in the first years as students and the community adjust to the academic rigor.[815] BASIS Independent Brooklyn reported that 93% of families returned the following year.[816] Julia Toews, BASIS network's vice president of academics, stated, "I think the distinguishing factor for successful students is that they're willing to work hard and that they're invested in academics. It's really a program designed to make success achievable for the average student now."[817] BASIS has made some changes to help some students adjust, including beginning science instruction in younger grades and stretching some AP courses over two years.[818]

Patti Everitt, a policy and research consultant on Texas public schools, criticized BASIS Shavano, a BASIS school in Texas.[819] Everitt stated that data displays that in the past 3 academic years, BASIS Shavano only graduated one African American student and zero special education students out of 182 graduates.[820] She further states that BASIS Shavano serves only 9.7% economically disadvantaged students and only 14.7% at-risk students, which is much less than

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[806] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[807] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[808] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[809] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."
[810] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[811] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[812] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[813] Everitt, Patti. 2022. "Setting the Record Straight on Charter Schools." Friends of Texas Pub. August 18, 2022. https://www.fotps.org/post/setting-the-record-straight.
[814] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[815] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[816] Stringer, Kate. "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[817] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[818] Stringer, "BASIS: Inside the Acclaimed School Network Blending the World's Best Education Practices."
[819] Everitt, Patti. 2022. "Setting the Record Straight on Charter Schools." Friends of Texas Pub. August 18, 2022. https://www.fotps.org/post/setting-the-record-straight.
[820] "Texas Education Agency - Student Enrollment Reports." *Rptsvr1.Tea.texas.gov*, rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/adhocrpt/adste.html.

neighboring schools.[821] Given that they accept students through a lottery, this low number is likely due to insufficient outreach, high transportation costs, or and cyclical self-selection. She goes on, expressing that BASIS Shavano enrolls only 30% African American and Hispanic students, a significantly lower percentage than neighboring schools.[822] She also mentions that despite transportation funds being available from the state, BASIS Shavano spends $0 on transportation for students.[823] Additionally, she affirms that BASIS spends $814 per student on general administrative expenses, more than five times what a nearby school spends.[824] Other allegations, including from Julie Erfle, parent of a BASIS student, said the turnover rate is "astronomical," where hundreds of students register for the waitlist during 5-6th grade and only 20-30 students end up graduating.[825] Erfle acknowledges the structure of highly-advanced learning through high-stakes testing and advanced workload, but she points out the impacts on time spent for extracurricular activities.[826] In her editorial, Erfle argues that BASIS's success also stems from the advantages students possess, such as high-income backgrounds.[827]

In 2023, teachers at BASIS Tucson North — which was named in 2025 by the U.S. News and World Report the best public high school in the United States — unionized and agreed to a contract with the school's management.[828] The contract, ratified in 2025, is the first bargaining agreement and unionization for a charter school in Arizona.[829] The contract specifically outlines guarantees for paid time off, including up to 10 days which carry over to the next school year; balanced schedules to diminish from a 40+ hour work week requirement; and teachers benefits.[830] Other processes outlined by the agreement included guaranteed raises and benefits as well as a grievance process.[831] Teachers said it is difficult for them to contact administrators, which BASIS said the contract agreement reflects "standard operational practices", "academic excellence", and "compensation and raise structure."[832]

Subsection III: Religious Charter Schools

A) History and Background

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[821] Texas Education Agency. "Texas Academic Performance Reports." *Tea.texas.gov*, 7 Nov. 2019, tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/texas-academic-performance-reports.
[822] "Texas Education Agency - Student Enrollment Reports."
[823] Agency, Texas Education. "PEIMS Financial Standard Reports." *Tea.texas.gov*, 21 June 2021, tea.texas.gov/finance-and-grants/state-funding/state-funding-reports-and-data/peims-financial-standard-reports.
[824] Agency, Texas Education. "PEIMS Financial Standard Reports."
[825] Erfle, Julie. 2015. "The Secret behind Those 'Highly Performing' Charter Schools." Tuscon Sentinel. February 5, 2015. https://www.tucsonsentinel.com/opinion/report/020515_charter_schools_op/the-secret-behind-those-highly-performing-charter-schools/.
[826] Erfle, Julie. 2015. "The Secret behind
[827] Erfle, Julie. 2015. "The Secret behind
[828] Christiansen, Andrew. 2025. "Teachers at Foothills Charter School Agree on Contract with Administration." KGUN 9 Tucson News. September 4, 2025. https://www.kgun9.com/news/community-inspired-journalism/catalina-foothills-news/teachers-at-foothills-charter-school-agree-on-contract-with-administration.
[829] Butter, Kayla. 2025. "Popular Tucson Charter School First in State to Unionize." KOLD. September 3, 2025. https://www.kold.com/2025/09/03/popular-tucson-charter-school-first-state-unionize/.
[830] Christiansen, Andrew. 2025. "Teachers at Foothills
[831] Butter, Kayla. 2025. "Popular Tucson Charter."
[832] Christiansen, Andrew. 2025. "Teachers at Foothills

Religious schools date back to the 1600s in American history.[833] The first schools created by settlers were religious and made the public education that is now secular.[834] These schools educated young settlers while also reinforcing religious beliefs.[835] Christian education was the basis and foundation for much of the American education system, both K-12 schools and universities.[836] Over time, however, public education in the U.S. became increasingly secular.[837]

In 1925, religious and private schools were legally able to operate after the Pierce vs. Society of Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary case in the Supreme Court.[838] This decision stated that the United States government could not mandate students to attend a state-owned school.[839] Now, the majority of private schools are religious private schools, with only 17% of private schools making up non-religious institutions.[840] Families sending their children to religious private schools mimic the interests of families in the early settler communities of the United States.[841] Families seeking to endow religious values and lessons on their children, utilize religious private schools as a means of doing so.[842] In some areas, specifically Milwaukee and Cleveland, families overwhelmingly utilize vouchers, as a part of voucher programs, to send their children to private religious institutions.[843]

Now, families looking for a Christian education turn to home-schooling or private christian schools.[844] Recently, there have been movements to introduce religious charter schools as parents are looking for an outlet for the children to get education that aligns with their values.[845] Unlike religious private schools that can have government funding but little to no government oversight, religious charter schools are sponsored by non-secular organizations and fall under the charter school distinction while also receiving the majority of their funding from the federal government as long as they meet the requirements of their charter.[846] The first religious charter school was established in Oklahoma in 2023.[847] St. Isidore of Seville Catholic

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[833] NWEF, "The History of Christian Schools," Noah Webster Educational Foundation, May 23, 2022, https://nwef.org/2022/05/23/the-history-of-christian-schools/.
[834] NWEF, "The History of Christian Schools," Noah Webster Educational Foundation
[835] NWEF, "The History of Christian Schools," Noah Webster Educational Foundation
[836] NWEF, "The History of Christian Schools," Noah Webster Educational Foundation
[837] NWEF, "The History of Christian Schools," Noah Webster Educational Foundation
[838] Marcia F Bailey and Bruce A Cooper, "The Introduction of Religious Charter Schools: A Cultural Movement in the Private School Sector," *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, December 7, 2009, https://doi.org/10.1080/10656210903345255.
[839] Marcia F Bailey and Bruce A Cooper, "The Introduction of Religious Charter Schools: A Cultural Movement in the Private School Sector"
[840] Danny Cohen-Zada and William Sander, "Religion, Religiosity and Private School Choice: Implications for Estimating the Effectiveness of Private Schools," *Journal of Urban Economics* 64, no. 1 (July 2008): 85–100, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2007.08.005.
[841] Danny Cohen-Zada and William Sander, "Religion, Religiosity and Private School Choice: Implications for Estimating the Effectiveness of Private Schools"
[842] Danny Cohen-Zada and William Sander, "Religion, Religiosity and Private School Choice: Implications for Estimating the Effectiveness of Private Schools"
[843] Danny Cohen-Zada and William Sander, "Religion, Religiosity and Private School Choice: Implications for Estimating the Effectiveness of Private Schools"
[844] NWEF, "The History of Christian Schools," Noah Webster Educational Foundation
[845] Michael J. Petrilli, "For Better or Worse, Religiously-Affiliated Charter Schools Are on Their Way," The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, November 5, 2020, https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/better-or-worse-religiously-affiliated-charter-schools-are-their-way
[846] Michael J. Petrilli, "For Better or Worse, Religiously-Affiliated Charter Schools Are on Their Way,"
[847] Gaurav Mukherjee, "America's First Religious Public School?," LPE Project, January 27, 2025, https://lpeproject.org/blog/americas-first-religious-public-school/.

Charter School had their application for charter school status approved by the Oklahoma Virtual Charter School Board in a narrow vote in a move that was very different from precedent, where religious organizations applying for charter school status typically drop their explicit religious affiliations to create secular institutions for education.[848] With the approval of St Isidore, a new precedent has been set that will pave the path for future religious charter schools and how religious charter schools might be approved considering that they were not previously.[849]

B) Structure and Legality

Although Arabic, Jewish, Christian, Greek Orthodox, and other religious charter schools have frameworks that are culturally relevant to the religious group, they generally do not claim to be only for that specific group.[850] They are required to admit children from other faith backgrounds and hire teachers who are not from that religion, which is a requirement if these charter schools are to be constitutional under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which discusses a separation of church and state.[851] Additionally, these religious charter schools often teach values that are guided by the faith, but do not force students to practice prayers or worship.[852] Because they simply provide opportunities to practice the faith before or after school but don't explicitly require students to do so, these religious charter schools often allow students of other faiths to leave school, arrive late, or simply opt out.[853] It must be made clear that religious charter schools merely teach about the religion, not practice it.[854]

There is a movement of religious or faith-based schools seeking the flexibility and autonomy of public school systems.[855] Many faith-based schools attempt to close and reopen as charter schools in order to guarantee that their religiously-guided teachings continue to survive, especially since a purely religious school faces risky tightness between legal definitions of church and state.[856] Then, these religious charter schools are allowed to continue teaching with their pre-existing faith-based values through charter school status and public funding.[857] It also does not violate the constitution, as these schools were not established to infiltrate the public school system with the intention of converting students.[858]

Since one of the goals of charter schools is to increase parental involvement, allowing religion-based charter schools is logical and should be expected.[859] Once the school begins to shift the balance of power to be more heavily weighted towards parental views, religious parents

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[848] Gaurav Mukherjee, "America's First Religious Public School?"
[849] Gaurav Mukherjee, "America's First Religious Public School?"
[850] "The Introduction of Religious Charter Schools: A Cultural Movement in the Private School Sector," accessed November 15, 2025, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/10656210903345255?needAccess=true.
[851] "The Introduction of Religious Charter Schools: A Cultural Movement in the Private School Sector."
[852] "The Introduction of Religious Charter Schools: A Cultural Movement in the Private School Sector."
[853] "The Introduction of Religious Charter Schools: A Cultural Movement in the Private School Sector."
[854] MARCIA J. HARR BAILEY and BRUCE S. COOPER, "The Introduction of Religious Charter Schools: A Cultural Movement in the Private School Sector," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 18, no. 3 (2009): 272–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/10656210903345255.
[855] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org," accessed November 15, 2025, https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/byuelj2015&id=96&men_tab=srchresults.
[856] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org."
[857] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org."
[858] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org."
[859] "Religious Charter Schools: Gaining Ground Yet Still Undefined," accessed November 15, 2025, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/10656210903345172?needAccess=true.

must also be included.[860] Religious charter schools allow parents to send their children to schools that respect and adapt to religious viewpoints without compromising the education.[861]

Additionally, districts that can only afford to support some religious charter schools risk violating the first amendment when they are forced to favor some religious groups over others.[862] Districts may also feel the need to place higher stress on policing or regulating religious charter schools over other forms of publicly funded schools.[863]

Whether or not religious organizations can legally operate religious charter schools is based on state legislation.[864] Since charter schools are operated under state policies, certain states have prohibited charter schools that are run by religious groups.[865] Additionally, federal law requires that charter schools who desire federal funding must not be run by churches, synagogues, mosques, or other religious institutions.[866] Because of these combinations of local, state, and federal policies, many religious charter schools have been denied, with some passing regulations by not identifying with any official affiliations.[867]

In terms of academic performance, students from religious charter schools have been found to perform better than other school types. A collection of 90 religious school studies found that the average standardized test score for religious school students is .29 of a standard deviation higher than that for traditional public school students, while the average score for charter school students is only .01 of a standard deviation higher.[868] Additionally, the achievement gap between races/ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses is roughly 25 percent narrower in faith-based schools than in public schools.[869]

C) St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual Charter School: An Example

St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual Charter School in Oklahoma was approved by the Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board in June 2023 as the first publicly funded religious charter school in the United States.[870] Backed by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and the Diocese of Tulsa, St. Isidore's was set to open in August 2024 and was created to serve K-12 students in rural or underserved areas throughout Oklahoma, incorporating Catholic education directly into the online curriculum.[871] Religion courses would cover topics such as the lives of Catholic saints, the Ten Commandments, and core teachings of the Church, according to the school's website.[872] Elements of faith would appear in other classes as well. In science, students would study the work of Catholic figures like Copernicus or Galileo. High school

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[860] "Religious Charter Schools: Gaining Ground Yet Still Undefined."
[861] "Religious Charter Schools: Gaining Ground Yet Still Undefined."
[862] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org," accessed November 15, 2025, https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/ylr118&id=569&men_tab=srchresults.
[863] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org."
[864] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org."
[865] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org."
[866] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org."
[867] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org."
[868] Council for American Private Education, Outlook: Voice of America's Private Schools, no. 385 (May 2013), https://capenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Outlook385-1.pdf
[869] Council for American Private Education, Outlook,
[870] University of Notre Dame, "St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School v. Drummond (U.S.)," Lindsay and Matt Moroun Religious Liberty Clinic, accessed November 15, 2025, https://religiousliberty.nd.edu/clinic/cases/st-isidore-of-seville-catholic-virtual-school-v-drummond-u-s/.
[871]Sarah Mervosh, "St. Isidore, an Online Catholic Charter School, Would Be the First of Its Kind," The New York Times, April 30, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/30/us/politics/st-isidore-religious-charter-school.html.
[872] Mervosh, "St. Isidore, an Online Catholic Charter School"

English reading lists would feature Catholic texts including Pope John Paul II's poetry collection The Place Within.[873]

In October 2023, the Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond sued the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board.[874] The Oklahoma Supreme Court determined that St. Isidore's was unconstitutional. The court noted that charter schools are considered public under state law, and that the First Amendment's Establishment Clause prevents public schools from being religious.[875] The justices also pointed to provisions in Oklahoma's state constitution that prohibit dedicating public funds to religious organizations, concluding that a faith-based charter school would violate those rules.[876] In response, St. Isidore appealed that charter schools are private, therefore, the Establishment Clause does not apply in this case.[877] They also claimed that the state's prohibition of religious charter therefore violates the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause.[878]

The Supreme Court of the United States heard oral arguments for the case on April 30, 2025. [879] The case sought to answer the following questions: 1) Whether a private school's teaching and academic decisions count as state actions because it contracts with the state to offer free education to students and 2) Whether a state violates the Free Exercise Clause when it blocks religious private schools from joining its charter school program only because they are religious, or whether the state can defend this rule by pointing to church–state separation concerns that go beyond what the Establishment Clause requires.[880] In May 2025, the Supreme Court of the United States blocked the use of public funding to establish St. Isidore by affirming the lower court's decision with an equally divided vote of 4-4 (Justice Barrett recused herself).[881] The dispute over St. Isidore's religious affiliation highlights the broader question of whether charter schools should be treated as public or private institutions and also exemplifies the tension between religious freedom and public education. St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual Charter School will ultimately serve as a precedent for future attempts at establishing religious charter schools.

Subsection IV: Montessori Charter Schools

A) Background
    a) History

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[873] Mervosh, "St. Isidore, an Online Catholic Charter School"
[874] University of Notre Dame, "St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School"
[875] Preston Green and Suzanne Eckes, "Split Supreme Court Blocks Oklahoma's Catholic Charter School," UConn Today, May 30, 2025, https://today.uconn.edu/2025/05/split-supreme-court-blocks-oklahomas-catholic-charter-school/.
[876] Green and Eckes, "Split Supreme Court Blocks"
[877] Green and Eckes, "Split Supreme Court Blocks
[878] Green and Eckes, "Split Supreme Court Blocks
[879] Supreme Court of the United States, Docket No. 24-396, St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School v. Gentner Drummond, accessed November 15, 2025, https://www.supremecourt.gov/search.aspx?filename=%2Fdocket%2Fdocketfiles%2Fhtml%2Fpublic%2F24-396.html.
[880] Nos. 24-396, 24-394 in the Supreme Court of the United States, accessed November 15, 2025, https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/24/24-394/351350/20250305181244391_24-396%2024-394%20Brief%20for%20Petitioner.pdf.
[881] 24-394 Oklahoma Statewide Charter School Bd. V. ..., accessed November 15, 2025, https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/24pdf/24-394_9p6b.pdf.

As her name suggests, the Italian physician and educator, Maria Montessori, created the Montessori educational approach.[882] She opened her first school, Casa dei Bambini, in Rome in 1907, which is where she developed her philosophical approach toward children's education.[883] Montessori developed an unconventional pedagogical method that values individual choice and freedom for the children within a well-organized system.[884] Through a series of successful visits to the US, Montessori popularized her method among policymakers and the first Montessori school in the United States was established in 1911.[885] By 2018, there were over 22,000 Montessori schools in 110 countries with 4,500 in the United States.[886] The majority of these US schools serve children in preschool through kindergarten.[887]

b) Montessori Philosophy and Practices

Montessori education is built upon freedom within limits and self-guided learning while prioritizing psychological development.[888] They promote self-motivated, autonomous, and collaborative learning through trial and error.[889] Although there are several different definitions of Montessori education and what constitutes the educational practices in this system, one study lists six different principles that are common among Montessori schools: "supporting Montessori philosophy; mixed-age groupings; Montessori-trained teachers; Montessori materials; freedom of choice; and an uninterrupted work block."[890] Montessori schools manifest these principles through some practices such as: classrooms mixed with students across three grades, pupils engaging in various activities simultaneously, and students choosing to engage with whatever activities and materials they want.[891]

A Montessori school classroom ideally has lots of natural light, and hands-on materials are spread out throughout the class for students to freely engage with.[892] The materials—or "Montessori materials"—are specially designed items that train cognitive senses through tactile learning.[893] The Puzzle Map, for instance, is a material where children learn spatial relations by tracing out the puzzle pieces and recreating the map on paper.[894] Such practices allow children to engage in learning that aligns movement with cognition, developing skills that translate into

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[882] Selda Al, Reyhan Midilli Sari, and Nimet Candas Kahya, "A Different Perspective on Education: Montessori and Montessori School Architecture," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46 (2012): 1867, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.393.

[883] Keith Whitescarver and Jacqueline Cossentino, "Montessori and the Mainstream: A Century of Reform on the Margins," *Teachers College Record* 110, no. 12 (December 1, 2008): 2573, https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810811001202.

[884] Whitescarver and Cossentino, "Montessori and the Mainstream," 2573-2574.

[885] Whitescarver and Cossentino, "Montessori and the Mainstream," 2577.

[886] Elisabeth Hiles, "Parents' Reasons for Sending Their Child to Montessori Schools," *Journal of Montessori Research* 4, no. 1 (May 15, 2018): 1, https://doi.org/10.17161/jomr.v4i1.6714.

[887] Hiles, "Parents' Reasons for Sending Their Children to Montessori Schools," 2.

[888] Al et al., "A Different Perspective on Education," 1867.

[889] Mira Debs et al., "Global Diffusion of Montessori Schools Global Diffusion of Montessori Schools: A Report from the 2022 Global Montessori Census," (2022), 3. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1372150.pdf.

[890] Debs et al., "Global Diffusion of Montessori Schools," 8.

[891] Al et al., "A Different Perspective on Education," 1867.

[892] Justus Randolph et al., "Montessori Education's Impact on Academic and Nonacademic Outcomes: A Systematic Review," *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 19, no. 3 (August 7, 2023), 4. https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1330.

[893] Angeline Lillard, "How Important Are the Montessori Materials?," *Montessori Life*, 2008, 21 https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Angeline-Lillard/publication/265403769_How_Important_Are_the_Montessori_Materials/links/54e49dfe0cf276cec171c183/How-Important-Are-the-Montessori-Materials.pdf.

[894] Lillard, "How Important Are Montessori Materials?" 22.

improved academic performance.[895] Although students may pursue any activities they want and choose how they spend their time in a given time frame of the school day, teachers create a structured environment where students must pursue activities and use materials in a prescribed way.[896]

c) Montessori Middle Schools

Although Montessori schools primarily serve elementary grade level students, observing the practices of Montessori middle schools provides some insight into useful practices and principles that contribute towards student outcome. Another study identifies nine characteristics in Montessori middle schools that lead to better quality of experience whilst engaging in academic work.[897] These are freedom of choice, elimination/de-emphasis of grades, learning by doing, deep concentration, a prepared environment, self-regulated attention, aesthetic order, movement, and emphasis on nature.[898] Freedom of choice is self-directed education. For example, one Montessori student was able to engage in a personal project about Zimbabwe's political turmoil, participate in a social change youth conference, and create a presentation for their social studies class, all through the encouragement of the teacher.[899] Another notable feature of these characteristics is the elimination of grades, which may allow students to focus on their learning by detaching it from extrinsic incentives.[900] Deep concentration is also a core component of Montessori schools, where teachers often operate their curriculum with high flexibility and adjust their teaching plans to dive deeper into topics that the class expresses interest in.[901] Particular attention is also drawn to the physical features of the classroom, based on the belief that the aesthetic order is "reflected in the beauty and order of the mind," and physical movement is encouraged in adherence to neuroscience research that suggests the existence of the embodied mind—connection between human movement and cognition.[902]

B) Social and Behavioral Outcomes

A study conducted by Angeline Lillard and Nicole Else-Quest in 2006 utilized a Montessori lottery admission; admitted Montessori students became the trial group, and non-admitted students became the control group.[903] 53 control and 59 Montessori students, of similar average incomes, were studied across social and behavioral measures.[904] Lillard and Else-Quest focused on five-year-old and twelve-year-old students, and control students attended a variety of non-Montessori schools including public inner city, suburban public, private/voucher, and charter.[905] The five-year-old students were given relatable social-conflict scenarios, (for example, another student hoarding a swing) and asked how they would go about resolving each problem.[906] In this test, the Montessori students were significantly more likely (43% vs 18%) to

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[895] Randolph et al., "Montessori Education's Impact," 4.
[896] Randolph et al., "Montessori Education's Impact," 4.
[897] Kevin Rathunde, "Understanding Optimal School Experience: Contributions from Montessori Education," *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 116, no. 13 (April 2014): 258, https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811411601317.
[898] Rathunde, "Understanding Optimal School Experience," 258-72.
[899] Rathunde, "Understanding Optimal School Experience," 258-59.
[900] Rathunde, "Understanding Optimal School Experience," 259-60.
[901] Rathunde, "Understanding Optimal School Experience," 263.
[902] Rathunde, "Understanding Optimal School Experience," 265- 69.
[903] Lillard, Angeline, and Nicole Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education." *Science*, vol. 313, no. 5795, Sept. 2006, files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED622858.pdf.
[904] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[905] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[906] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."

refer to justice or fairness in order to convince the student to relinquish the object, which was assessed as a higher level of reasoning.[907] Furthermore, qualitative observations at the playground during recess indicated that Montessori students were more likely to be involved in "positive shared peer play" and significantly less likely to be involved in rough play.[908]

The twelve-year-old students were administered a social test where they read about difficult situations (example given: not being asked to a party) and asked to choose from four possible responses.[909] Montessori students were much more likely to choose the "positive assertive" response (example given: verbally expressing one's hurt feelings to the host).[910] Additionally, on a questionnaire that students filled out, Montessori students indicated having a greater sense of community at school.[911]

A meta-analysis, conducted by Alison Demangeon, Stéphanie Claudel-Valentin, Alexandre Aubry, and Youssef Tazouti, investigated the data from 33 studies comparing Montessori to other forms of education.[912] These studies were conducted in North America, Asia, or Europe, and spanned from 1991 to 2021.[913] This meta-analysis investigated, among other characteristics, whether or not Montessori education improved students' social skills across 14 studies.[914] Using Hedges' unbiased g to estimate effect size and a 3-level multilevel meta-analytic approach, the researchers found that a Montessori education significantly improves social skills and that the effect size varies due to factors that differ between studies.[915]

C) Academic Outcomes

The 2006 study conducted by Angeline Lillard and Nicole Else-Quest also investigated academic achievement differences between Montessori and non-Monestessori students.[916] To measure academic ability in five-year-olds, the researchers administered the seven scales of the Woodcock-Johnson (WJ III) Test Battery.[917] Montessori students scored significantly higher on three WJ tests: Letter-word identification, Word Attack (phonological decoding ability), and Applied Problems (math skills).[918] No significant differences were found in three WJ tests: the Picture Vocabulary, Spatial Reasoning, and Concept Formation.[919] The researchers suggested that the lack of difference in Picture Vocabulary may be due to the strong influence of family background on vocabulary development.[920] Furthermore, Montessori students performed

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[907] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[908] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[909] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[910] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[911] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[912] Demangeon, Alison, et al. "A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Montessori Education on Five Fields of Development and Learning in Preschool and School-Age Children." *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, vol. 73, Apr. 2023, p. 102182, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dG0pSRZF7HznT5WzeCO4m7NRVQ9AEC58/view?usp=sharing.
[913] Demangeon, et al. "A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Montessori Education on Five Fields of Development and Learning in Preschool and School-Age Children."
[914] Demangeon, et al. "A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Montessori Education on Five Fields of Development and Learning in Preschool and School-Age Children."
[915] Demangeon, et al. "A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Montessori Education on Five Fields of Development and Learning in Preschool and School-Age Children."
[916] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[917] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[918] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[919] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[920] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."

significantly better on an executive function test, but a test of the children's ability to delay gratification did not indicate any difference.[921]

In the academic tests of the twelve-year-old students, students were given an essay test as well as the Woodcock-Johnson (WJ III) Test Battery.[922] The Montessori students' essays were found to be significantly more creative and to use more sophisticated sentence structures, but there were no significant differences in spelling, punctuation, or grammar.[923] Unlike the five-year-old students, however, the twelve-year-old Montessori students did not perform significantly differently from the non-Montessori students on the WJ tests.[924] The researchers proposed two possible explanations: either the non-Montessori students had caught up to the Montessori students by age twelve, or the Montessori students had not really been ahead when they were five.[925]

The aforementioned meta-analysis, conducted by Demangeon, Claudel-Valentin, Aubry, and Tazouti, also investigated ME's impact on academic achievement.[926] Across 19 studies, they found that students who received Montessori education improved their academic performance in a large and statistically significant way.[927]

Subsection V: The Decline of Charter Schools in Canada

A) Historical Inception

The implementation of charter schools in Canada began in Alberta in 1994, but the momentum behind charter schools sharply declined, to the point at which charter schools no longer occupy a central place in Canadian educational discourse or represent a major reform option.[928] While charter schools remain popular, albeit controversial, in the United States, Canadians seem broadly uninterested in such reforms and continue to show strong support for their public systems of education.[929]

a) Educational Reform

The emergence of charter schools ought to be contextualized by the larger-scale discourse on school choice systems and market-driven reforms in education as a neoliberal response to a perceived inefficacy and inefficiency of public education.[930] At the end of the twentieth century, growing pressure to move away from public education contributed to conflict over declining tax support, new metrics such as standardized testing, increased parental choice, and expanded funding for private schools.[931] Amidst globalization and an ostensible shift from meritocracy in society to credentialism, parents experienced increased anxiety in looking for any sort of advantage for their children in an increasingly competitive job market environment, fueling the

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[921] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[922] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[923] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[924] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[925] Lillard and Else-Quest. "Evaluating Montessori Education."
[926] Demangeon, et al. "A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Montessori Education on Five Fields of Development and Learning in Preschool and School-Age Children."
[927] Demangeon, et al. "A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Montessori Education on Five Fields of Development and Learning in Preschool and School-Age Children."
[928] Mindzak, Michael. 2015. "What Happened to Charter Schools in Canada?" *Equity & Excellence in Education* 48 (1): 105–17. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1W-eLg6ORMR61uk15ZBLAPxQieOOGkx7Z/view?usp=drive_link
[929] Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (105)
[930] Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (107)
[931] Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (107)

movement for charter schools in Alberta.[932] Structurally, in Alberta, charter schools can be most accurately described as independent public schools that operate separately from regular public schools but still rely on public funding, with charters being renewed in a fixed-year cycle. Originally, they were relicensed on a 3-5 year basis, but recent policy changed extended renewal periods to 10-15 years.[933] They still must abide by the provincially mandated curriculum, and are accountable to the public system in terms of spending, fulfillment of the charter mandate, and student performance. However, each school is primarily responsible to the parents of students in their schools, with parent-governing boards exerting substantial influence over operations.[934] Thus, charter schools in Alberta differentiate most prominently from standard public schools in the philosophy of education for each school and the manner in which the mandated curriculum is taught.[935] An important additional aspect of Albertan charter schools is per-pupil funding, which meant that charter schools were subject to the aforementioned competitive market pressures that school choice was designed to exploit. This created a parent-centric and market-responsive approach to education.[936]

b) Legislation

The political movement for Charter schools began most markedly in 1993 under Premier Ralph Klein's leadership.[937] A year later, in 1995, Albertan minister of education Halvar Johnson emphasized the experimental nature and concept of charters, suggesting that charters were a pilot project to later be reevaluated.[938] To date, Alberta remains the only province that officially recognizes and allows charter schools, with 23 currently in operation.[939] The ambiguous role of the federal government in Canadian education complicated the extent to which charter school popularity could spread across the country.[940] This context stems from the "legal and practical power of the provinces in the area of education, the tendencies toward regional identity, and the awkward but real presence of the federal government" that stems from religious and political factioning at the time Canada joined the confederation, meaning that there was historically less separation between religion and state without an expectation for distinct secularism, allowing for regional and subsequently religious identity to play a large role in educational policy and organization.[941] Alberta, frequently characterized as the most "American" province in Canada due to its distinctly strong sense of individualism and corporatism parallel to the United States, took on a more neoconservative approach to public policy, of which charter schools seemed to be an extension of during the leadership of Premier Klein.[942] Since the 1970s, there has been a consistent continuation of individualist, school choice policy, as shown by the development of funding for alternative schools, acceptance of private schools, and revisions to the School Act of 1998, which established one of the most accommodating school-choice frameworks in Canada.[943]

c) Requirements for Approval

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[932]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (107)
[933]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (107)
[934]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (107)
[935]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (107)
[936]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (107)
[937]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (107)
[938]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (107-108)
[939] "Public Charter Schools." Alberta.ca. Accessed November 14, 2025. https://www.alberta.ca/public-charter-schools.
[940]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (108)
[941]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (109)
[942]Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (110)
[943] Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (110)

To apply for a charter school establishment, applicants must explain how its offering differs "significantly" from other public schools in Alberta.[944] There also must be evidence of "significant community support" and research backing the pedagogical and strategical goals of the charter school.[945] A charter school is first approved for a five year term before having the opportunity to reapply for a 15 year term.[946] There is also a requirement for the charter board to share its research findings, such as teaching practices, to other members of the education community, including public school counterparts.[947]

d) Education Programs

In addition to the charter school program, Alberta offers over five other educational pathways for its students.[948] Although the charter schools are blocked from being denominational schools, families can choose a publicly-funded Catholic school system run by Alberta's government.[949] Another option are alternative programs, public schools that focus on other religious denominations, or even arts and language immersion programs.[950] Alberta runs a Francophone school system in a bilingual format to accommodate its French-speaking population.[951] Homeschool families and students may receive public funding to cover educational needs, while other independent schools receive 70% of the per-student funding typically given to publicly-funded schools.[952]

B) Regionalism and Political Breakdown

Canada is recognized as the only industrialized country without an agency overseeing education at the federal level, resulting in each province developing its own guidelines, including independently against adopting charter school procedures.[953] Notably, a separation between church and state is lacking within the Canadian education system for two reasons: the lack of law against establishing a religion in state (unlike the United States) and religious pluralism which occurs throughout the provinces, where various sects of Christainitys often populate within particular provinces.[954] However, Alberta does not permit charter schools to be religiously affiliated.[955] Researchers have found Alberta to be supportive of school choice policies, which started with alternative school funding and private schools, ultimately leading to the creation of charter school accommodations.[956] The network of teachers, administrators, and students self-selecting into the charter school can foster a strong connection and network.[957] In a series of

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[944] "Charter Schools Regulation" (March, 2025) Alberta Regulation 85/2019. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EAadxQ4-r6LvIEOc2SlU2OUOOwJe5lp6/view?usp=sharing

[945] "Charter Schools Regulation" (March, 2025)

[946] "Charter Schools Regulation" (March, 2025)

[947] "Charter Schools Regulation" (March, 2025)

[948] "*Education Options*" (n.d.). Alberta.Ca. Retrieved November 17, 2025, from https://www.alberta.ca/education-options

[949] "*Education Options*" (n.d.). Alberta.Ca

[950] "*Education Options*" (n.d.). Alberta.Ca

[951] "*Education Options*" (n.d.). Alberta.Ca

[952] "*Education Options*" (n.d.). Alberta.Ca

[953] Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (109)

[954] Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (109)

[955] Thompson, Merlin, Dianne Gereluk, and Eugene Kowch. 2016. "School Identity in the Context of Alberta Charter Schools." *Journal of School Choice* 10 (1): 112–28. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2015.1132934#d1e270

[956] Mindzak, 2015. "Canadian Charters." (110)

[957] Thompson, Merlin, Dianne Gereluk, and Eugene Kowch. 2016. "School Identity in the Context of Alberta Charter Schools." *Journal of School Choice* 10 (1): 112–28. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2015.1132934#d1e270

interviews, researchers found, “Charter school stakeholders offered personally and collectively meaningful stories in which the personal dynamics of trust, risk, vulnerability, and authenticity shed light on their school’s identity.”[958] Researchers’ conclusion on applications to schools besides charter schools suggested all those involved in a school community had to be committed to the “multi-layered” development, evaluation, and protection of the school identity, especially personal challenges beyond pedagogical challenges.[959]

The Canadian Teachers’ Foundation and other teacher unions were among early advocates against the establishment of charter schools, expressing concern regarding “inequality and elitism through competition”; specifically, the Alberta Teachers’ Association still strongly opposes charter schools in Alberta.[960] Outside of Alberta, researchers found elementary and secondary school funding is more equitable there the United States, since there is less disparities between different provinces compared to different states in the United States; this course of policy by Canadian politicians is said by researchers to reflect of Canada’s “strong commitment to equity and public education for all.”[961]

Other researchers have found charter schools create “competitive pressures” between public education and charter schools, while responding to public demand. Charter school teachers have to be certified in Alberta but cannot be members of the Alberta Teachers’ Association. In a recent three-week strike, charter school teachers still went to work while ATA teachers held out for a bill eventually passed by Alberta’s government to force teachers to return to work under the “notwithstanding clause.”[962]

A 2010 review comparing student achievement scores in Alberta charter schools found that although charter school students performed equally as well or better than their student counterparts, there was also a broader range of student performance in charter schools, often varying across charter school format and communities.[963] Charter schools for ESL and at-risk youth recorded lower scores compared to their gifted charter school counterparts.[964] Students in Grade 6 outperformed by a statistically significant difference in language arts, but no significant difference in mathematics; at Grade 9, charter school students scored with a statistically significant difference higher in both subjects compared to their counterparts.[965] Researchers also point out high parent satisfaction and waiting lists as indication of the benefits that school choice, including selection and application for charter school provides, while also providing the opportunity for charter schools to test and assess various teaching practices and the results.[966] However, the limited number of charter schools in Alberta restricts the generalizability of

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[958] Thompson, Merlin, Dianne Gereluk, and Eugene Kowch. 2016. “School Identity
[959] Thompson, Merlin, Dianne Gereluk, and Eugene Kowch. 2016. “School Identity
[960] Mindzak, 2015. “Canadian Charters.” (111)
[961] Mindzak, 2015. “Canadian Charters.” (114)
[962] French, J. (2025, October 28). Alberta Teachers’ Association vows to get bargaining rights back, in or out of court. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/notwithstanding-clause-alberta-teachers-association-legal-9.6957570
[963] Bosetti, Lynn & Butterfield, Phil 2016. “The politics of educational reform: The Alberta charter school experiment 20 years later.” *Global Education Review, 3*(2). 103-109 https://ger.mercy.edu/index.php/ger/article/view/199/199
[964] Bosetti, Lynn & Butterfield, Phil 2016. The politics of educational reform
[965] Bosetti, Lynn & Butterfield, Phil 2016. The politics of educational reform
[966] Bosetti, Lynn & Butterfield, Phil 2016. The politics of educational reform

performance comparisons, even after Alberta lifted its previous cap of 15 possible authorities.[967] [968]

A charter school in Alberta specializing in Indigenous cultural teachings and pedagogical methods closed in the summer of 2024.[969] The charter school board voted to give up the charter after enrollment declined over the past few years, peaking at 120 but dropping to 20 students.[970] The school focused on serving students from Paul First Nation, but many families moved to a nearby reserve where a new school was being constructed, reducing local enrollment.[971]

SECTION IV: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Recommendation #1: Attract Better Teachers Through Teacher Credential Programs

A) Sub-recommendation #1: States' Requirement for A Form of Teacher Credential in Public Charter Schools or Alternative Pathway

a) Background

In a research study covering charter schools in Michigan, researchers utilized data from 723 public school and 468 charter school teachers, weighted in accordance with Michigan's over 86,000 public school teachers and 1,900 charter school teachers.[972] Researchers found public school teachers averaged 16 years of experience compared to charter school teachers 5.6 years, as charter schools are more likely to exercise emergency or temporary credentials.[973] 53.5% of public school teachers have master degrees compared to 22.0% of charter school teachers. Researchers also found that 22.9% of charter school teachers lacked any form of temporary or permanent professional certification, compared to 95.7% of their public school teacher counterparts who possessed their state's certification.[974]

b) Recommendation

States should require public charter school teachers to possess a credential, either temporary or permanent, or via an alternative pathway agreed upon by the state and the charter school itself. Teachers transitioning from workplace-experience careers into a charter school teaching position should have an option to apply for a temporary teaching credential while they fulfill their credential. Offered by the state, credential requirements should extend beyond the requirement of a bachelor's degree and may include a certification of subject competency, teacher shadowing experience, and submission of sample teaching plans and syllabi, though not necessarily the completion of a teacher credential program at a university or college.

c) Evidence

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[967] Bosetti, Lynn & Butterfield, Phil 2016. The politics of educational reform

[968] Cummings, Madeleine. July 18 2024. "Indigenous Charter School in Alberta Permanently Closing Due to Low Enrolment." *CBC News*, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/mother-earths-childrens-charter-school-closing-1.7265432.

[969] Cummings, Madeleine. July 18 2024. "Indigenous Charter School"

[970] Cummings, Madeleine. July 18 2024. "Indigenous Charter School

[971] Cummings, Madeleine. July 18 2024. "Indigenous Charter School

[972] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."

[973] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."

[974] Harris, Debbi C. 2006. "Lowering the Bar."

Charter schools provide unique flexibility that other schools are not able to provide. For example, Alabama public charter schools are exempt from teacher credential requirements typically required for public schools in the state.[975]

Charter schools can offer optionality for its administrators to hire, compensate, and fire teachers based on their merit.[976] Research recognizes charter schools can attract teachers with work experience from the field, and that additional graduate degrees do not correspond with better teacher performance, according to one study of teachers in North Carolina.[977] Teachers in North Carolina are exempt from such credentialing requirements.[978]

Credential requirements can also help avoid "fake" certifications utilized by some charter school teachers; a court case ruled that a charter school committee in New York had gone beyond its authority for certification of its charter school teachers.[979] In particular, according to a teacher union's lawsuit, the suit alleged the school committee had not mandated teachers to complete a certification exam or possess a bachelor's degree, along with lower teaching and shadowing requirements compared to the state of New York's requirements.[980]

Massachusetts charter schools suggest its credential test, which assess communication, literacy, and subject-knowledge, for charter school teachers builds trust, and are" designed to help ensure that Massachusetts educators can communicate adequately with students, parents/guardians, and other educators and that they are knowledgeable in the subject matter of the license(s) sought."[981] The chair of the California Assembly Education Committee says credentialing can also extend to safety reasons; in California, charter school teachers are not currently "guaranteed" to go through a state background check, while recognizing charter school's abilities and desire to recruit teachers with work experience.[982]

d) Considerations for implantation

The California Charter School Association has argued that not every teacher should possess a credential, especially for non-core subjects to hire professionals.[983] Its president said, "I

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[975] Bentley, Robert. 2015. "Alabama State Department of Education Office of Public Charter Schools Guidelines for Alabama Public Charter Schools." Alabamaachieves.org. 2015. https://www.alabamaachieves.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/PCS-Guidelines-for-Alabama-Public-Charter-Schools.pdf.

[976] Carruthers, Celeste K. 2012. "The Qualifications and Classroom Performance of Teachers Moving to Charter Schools." *Education Finance and Policy* 7 (3): 233–68. https://doi.org/10.1162/edfp_a_00067.

[977] Carruthers, "The Qualifications and Classroom Performance of Teachers."

[978] Tell, Shawgi. 2021. "Countless Charter Schools Hire Many Uncertified Teachers —." Hampton Institute. June 27, 2021. https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/countless-charter-schools-hire-many-uncertified-teachers.

[979] Tell, Shawgi. 2021. "Countless Charter Schools

[980] "Court Rejects Fake Certification Scheme for Charter School Teachers." n.d. Nysut.org. Accessed November 25, 2025. https://www.nysut.org/news/2019/october/court-rejects-fake-certification-scheme-for-charter-school-teachers.

[981] Massachusetts Department of Elementary, and Secondary Education. n.d. "Access and Equity." Mass.edu. Accessed November 25, 2025. https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/sped/?section=licensure.

[982] Taketa, Kristen. 2019. "Should All Teachers Be Credentialed? Charter School Advocates Say No." *San Diego Union-Tribune*, July 21, 2019. https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2019/07/21/should-all-teachers-be-credentialed-charter-school-advocates-say-no/.

[983] California Charter Schools Association. n.d. "Let's Clear the Air about Charter Schools and Teacher Credentialing." Ccsa.org. Accessed November 25, 2025. https://info.ccsa.org/blog/charter-schools-teacher-credentialing.

wouldn't want to be the one that tells Governor Jerry Brown that he can't teach a government class because he would otherwise have to go back to college."[984]

Alternatively, credential programs offered by alternative certification avenues within charter school committees can still maintain similar standards for credentials offered by the state compared to the committee.[985] This alignment can also cause concerns of limited opportunities and a devaluation of the teacher credential system, where teacher credential can ensure rigorous preparation is needed to address high-needs students.[986] Certifications can still ensure public charter school teachers meet certain pedagogical expertise and safety training beyond their professional experience, as standardized to their public school teacher counterparts. This allows states and public charter schools to ensure that teachers are still well-certified, avoiding charter schools' criticism of being limited to hire highly-skilled and highly-specialized teachers from particular positions of experience.[987]

B) Sub-recommendation #2: Prioritized Hiring Incentives for High-Need Subject Areas

a) Background

Given that there are shortages in specialized charter schools (e.g STEM schools), many charter vacancies in these subjects go unfilled or are staffed with early-career teachers, long-term substitutes, or educators working outside their credentialed field.[988] Research shows that experienced teachers produce the strongest gains in high-need subjects, yet they are less likely to move into charters due to lower salaries, limited benefits, and fewer incentives.[989] This contributes to instructional inequities and lower stability for already underserved students.[990] These targeted incentives directly address structural shortages and improve instructional quality where it matters most.[991]

b) Recommendation

Establish a targeted incentive program that provides charter schools with dedicated funding to recruit and retain experienced teachers in high-need subjects, functioning in two distinct parts:

1. Hiring Incentive Grants: Charter networks would receive state-funded hiring supplements for recruiting experienced teachers in STEM, Special Education, bilingual education, and ELL. Eligible teachers [defined as having at least three years of effective classroom experience] would receive a state-backed signing bonus upon hiring, with charter networks required to verify credentials and placement in a designated shortage area.

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[984] California Charter Schools Association. n.d. "Let's Clear the Air about Charter Schools and Teacher Credentialing." Ccsa.org. Accessed November 25, 2025. https://info.ccsa.org/blog/charter-schools-teacher-credentialing.

[985] Saboda, Jennifer. 2018. "Charter Schools: The Destruction of Teacher Certification in New York State." https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/86242bbf-da70-420f-bfbd-7e174f52a209/content

[986] Saboda, Jennifer. 2018. "Charter Schools:

[987] "The Best Charter Schools Deserve More Leeway on Hiring." 2017. Nytimes.com. November 3, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/03/opinion/charter-schools-hiring.html.

[988] Stuit, David A., and Thomas M. Smith. 2012. "Explaining the Gap in Charter and Traditional Public School Teacher Turnover Rates." *Economics of Education Review* 31 (2): 268–79. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2011.09.007.

[989] Kalogrides, Demetra, Susanna Loeb, and Tara Béteille. 2013. "Systematic Sorting: Teacher Characteristics and Class Assignments." *Sociology of Education* 86 (2): 103–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040712456555.

[990] Kalogrides, Demetra, Susanna Loeb, and Tara Béteille. 2013.

[991] "A Path to a Six-Figure Teacher Salary." 2019. Texas Public Charter Schools. October 15, 2019. https://txcharterschools.org/a-path-to-a-six-figure-teacher-salary/.

2. Retention Incentive Track: Experienced teachers hired through this pathway would also qualify for annual state-funded retention bonuses tied to multi-year service commitments in high-need roles. Participating teachers would complete a brief annual professional development module aligned with state priorities for their subject area, ensuring continued instructional quality while improving long-term staffing stability in charter schools.

c) Evidence

National data from the U.S. Department of Education identifies STEM, Special Education, bilingual education, and ELL as "chronic shortage areas" in nearly every state for the past decade, as documented in the Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing.[992] Salary disparities further intensify shortages: national NCES data shows that charter schools often pay 10–15% lower salaries and offer fewer benefits than district schools.[993] Empirical evidence from state incentive programs— such as Tennessee's High-Need STEM Teacher Signing Bonus Pilot— demonstrates that targeted financial incentives significantly increase applications from experienced teachers in shortage subjects.[994] Additional research analyses of incentive pay in educational evaluation, finds that hiring and retention bonuses reliably increase teacher recruitment and reduce vacancy rates.

d) Considerations for implementation

i) Clear eligibility criteria: States must define what counts as an "experienced teacher" (e.g., 3+ years experience, evaluation ratings, or advanced certifications) to ensure bonuses target high-impact educators.

ii) Subject-area verification: Charter schools must verify that hired teachers are placed specifically in state-designated shortage subjects (STEM, SPED, bilingual/ELL) before receiving incentive funding.

iii) Sustainable funding model: Legislators must determine whether incentives will be funded through annual appropriations, existing educator quality grants, or a dedicated high-need teacher fund.

iv) Equity safeguards: Ensure that incentives do not disproportionately benefit large charter networks over smaller or independent charters that also face staffing shortages.

v) Retention monitoring: Require charters to submit annual reports on retention rates and teacher outcomes to prevent misuse and assess effectiveness of multi-year commitments.

vi) Inter-agency coordination: State education agencies must coordinate with charter authorizers to track hiring, verify placements, and distribute incentive payments efficiently.

vii) Professional development alignment: Incentivized teachers should complete targeted PD modules to ensure subject-specific skill alignment without creating unnecessary burdens

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[992] "Teacher Shortage Areas." U.S. Department of Education. Accessed November 25, 2025. https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/professional-development/teacher-shortage-areas

[993] "National Teacher and Principal Survey - National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS)/Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)." National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. Accessed November 25, 2025. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/.

[994] Effective teacher retention bonuses. Accessed November 25, 2025. https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/springer-et-al-2016-effective-teacher-retention-bonuses-evidence-from-tennessee.pdf.

Policy Recommendation #2: Creating More Equitable Charter Schools Through Better Outreach

A) Sub-recommendation #1: Establishing a Family/Community Centered Engagement and Retainment Pipeline

a) Background

Demographic trends of enrollment vary extremely based on the type of charter school, location, and size. On average, contrary to popular belief, charter schools enroll a higher number of minority students. However, it is important to note that many individual charters are, in reality, more racially homogeneous, either white or more minority-concentrated, than nearby district schools. This sentiment is reflected within the realm of magnet schools as well. 37% Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP) funded magnets noted that prospective families and students perceived a lack of diversity in these schools.[995] In order to combat these disparities, charter and magnet schools should adopt a structured outreach strategy that engages families from a variety of backgrounds and districts, establishing a network within and around the school and strengthening trust and enrollment retention.

b) Recommendation

Establish a standardized outreach strategy that intentionally creates family-family, family-teacher, and community-school partnerships to increase trust and diverse enrollees. This approach relies on two components:

1. Community Connectivity Marketing Events: During admissions season, charter and magnet schools would collaborate with community organizations and centers to host recurring marketing events that introduce families to the school's mission and support services. These events would be intentionally located in neighborhoods with historically low application or enrollment rates to ensure equitable access. Activities may include curricular informational sessions, student showcases, school tours, multilingual Q&As, and community resource fairs. The ultimate goal being to lower informational and social barriers to entry.
2. Family Partnership Network: Once families enroll, schools would implement a structured Family Partnership Network that pairs incoming families with trained parent ambassadors and establishes regular family–teacher check-ins. This network would serve as a consistent support system, helping families navigate academic expectations and resource needs in order to strengthen diverse retention.

c) Evidence

i) Parent and family involvement in urban charter schools results in positive and significant effects on academic and behavioral outcomes.[996] Achievement indicators affected by parent involvement include better grades, attendance, attitudes, expectations, homework completion, and state test results. Additionally, this type of support results in lower dropout rates and fewer retention.

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[995] Institute of Education Sciences, "STUDY SNAPSHOT Drawing across School Boundaries: How Federally Funded Magnet Schools Recruit and Admit Students," (2021) https://ies.ed.gov/sites/default/files/migrated/nces_pubs/ncee/pubs/2021003/pdf/2021003.pdf.

[996] Joanna Smith et al., "Parent Involvement in Urban Charter Schools: New Strategies for Increasing Participation," The School Community Journal 21, no. 1 (2011), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ932201.pdf.

ii) Evidence from Hartford, Connecticut's interdistrict magnet program demonstrates that sustained community engagement and targeted outreach, including a $350,000 investment in marketing through the Regional School Choice Office, were critical for attracting diverse families and balancing racial enrollment across schools.[997]

d) Considerations for Implementation

i) Institutions should implement designated outreach coordinators or trained staff to manage the community/family partnerships and marketing efforts. It is also essential that parent ambassadors for the Family Partnership Network receive structured training on communication, cultural competency, and school policies.

ii) Throughout the duration of both the Family Partnership Network and the Community Connectivity Marketing Events, schools should distribute regular surveys to ensure feedback on the efficacy of these strategies. When families ultimately enroll in the school, they should be asked what events most informed their enrollment choice. These data points will help schools refine outreach efforts and allocate resources toward the highest-impact activities.

iii) Outreach should be intentionally designed to avoid reinforcing existing enrollment patterns. Ambassador networks should also be diverse in race, language, grade level, and experience so families can connect with peers they relate to.

B) <u>Sub-recommendation #2: Equity and Accountability Data Collection and Transparency</u>

a) Background

Data collection and transparency is one aspect to consider with regards to the administration of charter schools. In the case of California, charter schools seeking to increase racial diversity aimed at doing so through the means of focusing on socioeconomic diversity.[998] Without any way to distinguish poor White and poor minority students, schools yielded no improvement in diversity; in other cases, many wealthier families gentrified neighborhoods in order to improve their chances of admission.[999] In an effort to ensure greater connection and understanding between communities and charter schools, avoiding misconceptions that lead to flawed admissions practices and community mistrust, charter schools can look to implement quantitative measures that include funding designations for community-impact and outreach practices paired alongside daily community feedback and information surveys.

b) Recommendation

Establish a data-based approach to community-outreach and recruitment that focuses on creating the quantitative basis for positive community connections and fair, representative recruitment.

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[997] Janel George and Linda Darling-Hammond, "Advancing Integration and Equity through Magnet Schools," 2021, https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/513/download?inline&file=Magnet_Schools_REPORT.pdf.

[998] Sophia Seifert et al., "Pursuing Diversity: The Context, Practices, and Diversity Outcomes of Intentionally Diverse Charter Schools," *Teachers College Record* 124, no. 12 (2022): 95–134, https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221150546.

[999] Sophia Siefert, "Pursuing Diversity."

1. **Target Equity Outreach Mandate:** Charter schools will designate a certain portion of their budget to facilitate community outreach initiatives that connect charter schools with a broader group of individuals such as multilingual materials and partnerships with local community groups. The goal is to ensure a greater funding basis for outreach efforts.
2. **Trust and Accountability Metrics:** After funding allocations have been made, part of the community initiatives charter schools take should be daily analysis of how community members are engaging with the school, any concerns they might have, and other metrics including analyzing applicant retention. All of these metrics should have the aim of being transparent to ensure a level of trust and connection between charter schools and the communities they serve.
    c) Evidence
        i) Community involvement in schools builds up an atmosphere that fosters academic achievement among students.[1000] A longitudinal study in Chicago found that schools that were strong across five essential areas of support, including parent-community engagement, contributed to gains in reading and math scores — compared to schools weak in those areas.[1001] The increase in collective trust with these connections serves as a point of strength that contributes to higher academic achievement.[1002]
        ii) Community schools, a strategy that focuses on partnering schools with local agencies, in California provided success with regards to improvements of math scores.[1003] The California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) was able to yield an average increase in math test scores by 0.06 standard deviations, compared to other schools — an increase that equates 43 additional days of instruction.[1004]
    d) Considerations for Implementation
        i) Institutions should consider publicizing data from community surveys and other statistics that they collect as a means of community connections because it creates transparency that the community can count on. This building of trust allows for students and families to feel secure within the charter school.
        ii) These surveys and data collection initiatives should take place daily to ensure that the charter school always has a firm and up-to-date understanding of the school and community environment. This also ensures that communities feel heard and effective changes can be made quickly to adjust to community and student needs.

[1000] Anna Maier, Sarah Klevan, and Naomi Ondrasek, *Leveraging Resources Through Community Schools: The Role of Technical Assistance* (Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2020), https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/leveraging-resources-community-schools-technical-assistance-brief.
[1001] Maier, Klevan, and Ondrasek, Leveraging Resources Through Community Schools.
[1002] Maier, Klevan, and Ondrasek, Leveraging Resources Through Community Schools.
[1003] Walker Swain, Melanie Leung-Gagné, Anna Maier, and Cassandra Rubinstein, *Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence from California* (Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2025), https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/ca-community-schools-impact-student-outcomes-brief.
[1004] Walker Swain, Melanie Leung-Gagné, Anna Maier, and Cassandra Rubinstein, *Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence from California*

iii) By continually gathering information on the communities they serve, charter schools should seek to analyze that data and utilize it to refine school function. This might mean assessing recruitment practices or engaging with the community more with events.

Policy Recommendation #3: Regulate and Phase Out For-Profit EMOs

A) Background

Broadly speaking, education management organizations (EMOs) are private firms that use public funds to manage schools, particularly charter schools.[1005] Their prominence has grown alongside the increase in the number of charter schools.[1006] EMOs have authority over the operation, management, curriculum, and instruction of the charter schools they manage.[1007] In 2018-2019, EMOs reportedly operated 3,729 public charter and district schools, 900 of which were managed by for-profit EMOs and 2,829 by nonprofits.[1008] For-profit EMOs generally function as a business to return profits for stakeholders, whereas nonprofit EMOs tend to have social objectives or charter expansion missions.[1009] These organizations contract with the school board that governs a charter school. For-profit EMOs, on average, have higher enrollment per school at 631 students compared to their nonprofit counterparts at 488 students.[1010] This higher enrollment at for-profit EMO schools could be understood through the principle of "economies of scale," which states that as a business grows in enrollment size, the schools become more cost-effective at overall operations.[1011]

Compared to independently-run charter schools, EMO-managed charter schools are generally larger.[1012] By the 2018-2019 school year, a little over 53% of all charter school students—or around 1.95 million students—were enrolled in EMO-operated schools.[1013]

B) Recommendation

States should regulate and ultimately phase out the operation of for-profit EMOs by adopting the following measures:

1. Ban or recommend banning the use of public education funds for contracts with for-profit EMOs, while permitting partnerships with nonprofit EMOs or independent charter boards: Amend state charter school statutes to explicitly ban governing boards from entering or renewing management contracts with for-profit EMOs. All new charter applications should be required to certify that no for-profit management entity participates in ownership, staffing, or curriculum decisions.

[1005] Nevbahar Ertas and Christine H. Roch, "Charter Schools, Equity, and Student Enrollments," *Education and Urban Society* 46, no. 5 (September 12, 2012): 549, https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124512458118.
[1006] Ertas and Roch, "Charter Schools, Equity, and Student Enrollments," 548-79.
[1007] David R. Garcia, Rebecca Barber, and Alex Molnar, "Profiting from Public Education: Education Management Organizations and Student Achievement," *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 111, no. 5 (May 2009): 1353, https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810911100504.
[1008] Gary Miron et al., "Profiles of For-Profit and Nonprofit Education Management Organizations: Fifteenth Edition," *Nepc.colorado.edu*, (February 25, 2021): 4, https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/emo-profiles-fifteenth-ed.
[1009] Gar Miron et al., "Profiles of For-Profit and Nonprofit," 9-10..
[1010] Gar Miron et al., "Profiles of For-Profit and Nonprofit," 5.
[1011] Gar Miron et al., "Profiles of For-Profit and Nonprofit," 21.
[1012] Gar Miron et al., "Profiles of For-Profit and Nonprofit," 23.
[1013] Gar Miron et al., "Profiles of For-Profit and Nonprofit," 23-25.

2. Implement comprehensive audits of all existing for-profit EMO contracts to evaluate fiscal transparency, instructional quality, and compliance with equity standards: These audits should include detailed reporting on the percentage of funds allocated to instruction versus management fees, teacher salary bands, turnover rates, and overall staff experience levels. They should also require independent academic evaluations comparing for-profit EMO schools to comparable district and nonprofit charter schools on measures of higher-order learning, not just basic skills. Authorizers should condition contract renewal on meeting minimum thresholds related to student growth, financial transparency, and equitable enrollment patterns. Schools that fail to meet these standards should be placed under heightened oversight or have their contracts revoked.
3. Strengthen equity and enrollment safeguards to prevent EMOs from recruiting disproportionately low-cost, low-needs student populations: All EMO-managed schools should participate in unified enrollment systems that prevent selective admissions practices. Additionally, schools should be required to maintain proportional enrollment of students with disabilities, English learners, and low-income students relative to district averages. Annual equity audits should flag demographic disparities and trigger corrective action if a school's enrollment significantly diverges from the surrounding district. States should also prohibit incentive structures in EMO contracts that reward reductions in special education identification or decreases in spending on high-need students.

C) Evidence

One study analyzing subtest scores found that EMO-managed schools tended to show small positive gains in basic skills like reading vocabulary, but showed small negative effects on complex skills like reading comprehension compared to non-EMO schools.[1014] This could be due to the fact that EMOs prefer standardized curricula that could be taught by teachers with less experience, leading to gains in basic skills but losses in complex skills in reading.[1015] Due to their profit-seeking nature, for-profit EMOs spend less than the funds they gather.[1016] They have an incentive to save costs, which may present a conflict with providing higher quality education.[1017] This economic incentive is what leads to the hiring of less experienced teachers with lower salaries who are most likely to quit.[1018] This is particularly important in the context of a report that revealed that 28 out of 30 studies found a significant positive association between teacher experience and teacher effectiveness.[1019] For example, in a study of 250,000 North Carolina middle school students, a teacher with 12 years of experience raised ELA test scores by 0.08 standard deviations and math test scores by 0.18 standard deviations compared to a teacher with no experience.[1020]

EMOs are less likely to establish schools in areas with higher numbers of low-income families than other charter schools.[1021] Additionally, smaller scale EMOs tend to serve less

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[1014] Garcia, Barber, and Molnar, "Profiting from Public Education," 1369.
[1015] Garcia, Barber, and Molnar, "Profiting from Public Education," 1369-70.
[1016] Garcia, Barber, and Molnar, "Profiting from Public Education," 1370.
[1017] Garcia, Barber, and Molnar, "Profiting from Public Education," 1370.
[1018] Sean Sandoloski, "Profiting on America's Youth - A Study of Educational Management Organizations," Ohio Northern University Law Review 37, no. 1 (2011): 210. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1awxVVsY6JaIeQDL6Auc-FfaszfNgwjBK/view?usp=sharing
[1019] Anne Podolsky and Tara Kini, "Does Teaching Experience Increase Teacher Effectiveness? A Review of US Research," *Journal of Professional Capital and Community* 4, no. 4 (June 28, 2019): 15, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606426.pdf.
[1020] Podolsky and Kini, "Does Teaching Experience Increase Teacher Effectiveness?" 16.
[1021] Ertas and Roch, "Charter Schools, Equity, and Student Enrollments," 555.

minority students than larger EMOs or other charter schools.[1022] Schools managed by EMOs seek to recruit and enroll students that are the "least demanding" in order to cut labor costs.[1023]

The "economies of scale" theory does not necessarily mean that more students mean better and more cost-efficient; one study has shown that lowest average cost is attained with 6,000 students.[1024] For-profit EMOs that serve a number greater than this may have too many students to the point that the economic advantage of having a large number of students is lost.[1025]

D) Considerations for Implementation

Although this overwhelming evidence points to the fact that for-profit EMOs are harmful, immediately eliminating them will uproot the educational experiences of thousands of students. Therefore, the transition away from for-profit EMOs must be measured, with the government ensuring that no individual student is left behind.

Policy Recommendation #4: Eliminate Funding Disparities

A) Background

With charter schools being a relatively recent development in the history of education in the United States in 1992, the popularity and prevalence of charter schools have grown rapidly to 42 states in just 30 years.[1026] Like public schools, charter schools receive funding from federal, state, and local sources based on enrollment, location, and student demographics. However, it's been shown that charter schools receive less district funding than similar public schools. The American Federation of Teachers identified that the funding disparity between these two types of schools range between $549 to $1,814 per pupil.[1027] In a similar study analyzing 84% of the nation's charter school students between 2002-2003, it was found that the funding gap was $3,453 at its highest (39.5% disparity).[1028] The greatest gaps were identified in urban settings where the average gap was $2,256 per pupil.[1029] In a larger federal context, this funding disparity between public and charter schools have only increased in recent years, expanding more than 54% in only eight years.[1030] This gap can be attributed to early advocates of charter schools claiming that charter schools could do more with less money. When education establishments then feared a loss of funding for original public schools, this resulted in comparably lower rates of funding for charter schools.[1031] They were applauded for their economic efficiency over student achievement and were used as evidence that private establishments were more efficient than governments.

Recognizing that districts often fund charter schools less than public schools, many states have taken action to rectify this. For example, Arizona offered charter schools $1,600 per pupil more than they did for similar public schools, on the state funding level.[1032] In other states like

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[1022] Ertas and Roch, "Charter Schools, Equity, and Student Enrollments," 558.
[1023] Sandoloski, "Profiting on America's Youth," 210.
[1024] Sandoloski, "Profiting on America's Youth," 209.
[1025] Sandoloski, "Profiting on America's Youth," 209-10.
[1026] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.Org." Accessed October 11, 2025. https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/frdurb46&id=92&men_tab=srchresults.
[1027] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline."
[1028] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline."
[1029] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline."
[1030] Batdorf, Meagan, Larry D Maloney, Jay F May, Sheree T Speakman, Patrick J Wolf, and Albert Cheng. *Charter School Funding: Inequity Expands*. n.d.
[1031] "Law Journal Library - HeinOnline."
[1032] Osberg, Eric. *Charter School Funding*. n.d.

North Carolina, policymakers have produced legislation requiring that districts provide equal amounts of funding for both the public and charter schools in their jurisdictions.[1033] Despite these efforts to provide balanced funding between these types of educational institutions, many federal and state funding programs are designed to route through a Local Education Agency, or school districts.[1034] From there, individual districts can easily control and even exclude charter schools from receiving funding.

Private donations are one pathway that certain charter schools use to make up for the insufficient public funding. In California between 2001-2002, the average per-pupil value of donations was $0.00 for public schools and $293 for start-up charter schools, discounting three outlier charter schools that received donations of over $10,000 per pupil[1035]. The higher level of private donations can be attributed in part to these schools requiring additional support in securing faculty, supplies, and other resources, particularly in the beginning of their establishments.[1036] Despite this opportunity, private donations generally don't make up for the public funding disparity between public and charter schools.

B) Recommendation

Establish Statewide Funding Parity Mandates with Automatic Enforcement. This means that every public school—charter schools and non-charter schools—would receive the same funding through the same funding formula that is used. Although the actual formula is different by state, with some states rewarding performance, and others simply having a flat funding rate for each pupil, the exact same formula should be applied to charter schools as well. Moreover, the same agency should look after the funding of all publicly funded schools to ensure that the enforcement is efficient and consistent.

C) Evidence

A central challenge in resolving charter-district funding disparities is the lack of enforceable mechanisms that require school districts to distribute funds equitably. Although 28 states, or 61% of states, have adopted statutory language mandating equalized funding between traditional public schools and charter schools, these measures often lack practical enforcement.[1037] As a result, Local Education Agencies that are responsible for allocating state and federal dollars retain substantial discretion over charter funding. This discretion allows districts to exclude charters from categorical programs or distribute less than the charter's proportional share. Because districts often perceive charter growth as a fiscal threat, they have incentives to preserve resources for their own schools. Specifically, charter schools received, on average, 30% less in funding than traditional public schools in the same district ($7,147 less per pupil) during the 2019-2020 school year, according to a study across 18 major cities and 16 states.[1038] Establishing statewide funding parity mandates with automatic enforcement is essential to guarantee equitable resource distribution.

[1033] Osberg, Eric. *Charter School Funding*. n.d.
[1034] Osberg, Eric. *Charter School Funding*. n.d.
[1035] Krop, Cathy, and Ron Zimmer. "Charter School Type Matters When Examining Funding and Facilities: Evidence from California." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 13 (December 2005): 50. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v13n50.2005.
[1036] Krop, Cathy, and Ron Zimmer. "Charter School Type Matters When Examining Funding and Facilities: Evidence from California." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 13 (December 2005): 50. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v13n50.2005.
[1037] National School Boards Association, *How States Fund Charter Schools: Research Brief* (Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association, 2021), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED628315.pdf
[1038] Alison H Johnson et al., *Charter School Funding: Little Progress Towards Equity in the City*, n.d.

A parity mandate would begin with a clear requirement that all charter schools receive funds through the same state general funding formula used for district schools, regardless of whether that formula is based on enrollment or performance. In many states, the general aid formula is often complex and includes improvement incentives or need-based weights tied to different academic outcomes. While some states provide charter schools access to local revenues, some do not provide access to local revenue from property taxes or bond measures. For charter schools that are partially funded through local taxes and bonds, there are often limitations about how and what revenues can be applied.[1039] Districts often exploit this complexity by claiming that certain formula components do not apply to charter schools or by withholding portions of the allocation that flow through local education agencies. A statewide parity mandate could close these loopholes by legally defining how every element of the state's formula applies to charters. This ensures that no matter what metrics are utilized to decide how funds are distributed, charter schools receive their full and proportionate share rather than a reduced allocation filtered through district discretion.

This clarification is important, specifically for categorical aid. English Language Learner programs and low-income weights within state funding formulas are often distributed unevenly due to district-level gatekeeping. Mandating uniform application of the general formula ensures that charters receive proportional funding tied to their student populations and measured performance instead of district interpretation. Standardizing these rules prevents districts from using the flexibility within complex formulas as a pretext to limit the resources available to charter schools.

Additionally, enforcement must include meaningful consequences for noncompliance. Penalties could include withholding administrative funds from violating districts or, in major cases, placing district finances under state supervision. The goal isn't punitive but rather corrective. Districts must understand that withholding charter funds carries real administrative and financial consequences. Establishing such costs also addresses the structural conflict of interest inherent when districts act as education providers and fiscal intermediaries for charter schools that compete for student enrollment.

Implementation of this parity mandate would also require states to redesign the administrative architecture through which funds are tracked and transferred. Districts may combine local, state, and federal funds into consolidated budgets and then distribute only a portion to charters without providing documentation or justification. A strong framework must include mandatory transparency requirements that make districts publish annual funding allocation reports with specific spotlights on charter funding. These reports would outline the distribution of all funds governed by the state's general funding formula, including categorical weights and performance adjustments. Making this allocation data public will reduce the capacity for district-level budgeting behind closed doors and prompt charters and community members to identify discrepancies before they become entrenched in budgets.

D) Considerations for Implementation

Beyond transparency, states must also develop a direct appeals process that does not rely solely on district cooperation. Although state law requires authorizers to monitor the financial conditions of their authorized charter schools, it does not prescribe specific procedures that

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[1039] National School Boards Association, *How States Fund Charter Schools: Research Brief* (Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association, 2021), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED628315.pdf

authorizers must follow to fulfill this responsibility.[1040] This leads to certain school districts following unclear procedures and not always following best practices, such as incorporating clear checklists into periodic reviews.[1041] Under current systems, charters frequently must petition district finance offices for clarification or correction of budgetary matters. This approach is flawed given the misaligned incentives between the two entities. A stronger model would permit charters to submit funding-related concerns directly to state education agencies, which would then be required to review financial reports and issue a binding determination as to whether the budget is allocated fairly within a defined timeframe.

Another component of a strong parity mandate is the use of real-time monitoring tools. Many states rely on end-of-year checks to verify funding accuracy, meaning that problems are discovered long after the academic year has ended. Establishing real-time monitoring systems, like quarterly reports and digital auditing trails, addresses these timing issues. These tools would allow state officials to identify red flags early and intervene before budget shortfalls affect staffing decisions or program quality.

Finally, legislatures should pair parity mandates with statutory clarity about the purpose of charter funding. Many funding conflicts arise from disagreements as to whether charters should be treated as equivalent public schools or as semi-autonomous entities entitled to fewer public resources. Some argue that charter schools are private entities and should not receive taxpayer money to operate privately-controlled schools without the same rules and responsibilities as public schools, leading to further complications in the funding pathway.[1042] A parity mandate with automatic enforcement implicitly affirms that charters are full public schools within the state's educational system and thus must be funded according to the same formula and under the same conditions as district schools. Codifying this principle reduces opportunities for conflict and ensures that both districts and charters have a shared understanding of how funding should be allocated.

Policy Recommendation #5: Pay Monetary Bonuses to Teachers with Students Who Score Highly on AP Exams

A) Background

Advanced Placement (AP) courses, college-level courses that enable high schoolers to earn college credit by passing a nationwide exam, have become an important component of college readiness in United States schools. Because AP exams are standardized and scored externally, they provide high schools with an objective measure of how well their students have mastered a challenging curriculum. Furthermore, they provide a measurement of how effectively teachers have prepared students for the exams.

[1040] Charter Schools—Some School Districts Improperly Authorized and Inadequately Monitored Out-of-District Charter Schools. n.d.

[1041] Charter Schools—Some School Districts Improperly Authorized and Inadequately Monitored Out-of-District Charter Schools. n.d.

[1042] Network for Public Education, Are Charter Schools Truly Public Schools? (Washington, DC: Network for Public Education, April 2021), https://networkforpubliceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Are-charter-schools-truly-public-schools.pdf

A long-running discussion in education policy scholarship debates whether teacher incentive structures that are tied to test outcomes encourage teachers to "teach to the test."[1043] Critics argue that connecting compensation to standardized test results risks limiting teaching materials to only those that appear on the exam, potentially limiting creativity and opportunities for deeper exploration.[1044] Supporters argue that high-quality instruction and test performance are not mutually exclusive.[1045]

As scholars have argued, when teachers determine grades of students, this results in students and teachers having different goals, as teachers can artificially jack up grades in order to get a pay raise.[1046] AP exams, on the other hand, are standardized and objective, and therefore their scores do not vary teacher to teacher despite the AP curriculum being consistent.[1047] In this case, students and their parents are motivated to pressure teachers to lower standards, and teachers often do.[1048] However, when students are evaluated using an external measure, such as an AP exam, teachers and students are naturally working towards the same objective.[1049] When teacher and student goals are aligned, education becomes smoother, more coherent, and more successful.[1050]

B) Recommendation

Schools should consider implementing a structured teacher incentive program that awards monetary bonuses for each student who earns a 4 or 5 on an Advanced Placement (AP) exam. Although there should be some increase in the monetary bonus for a student receiving multiples 4s and 5s, there ought to be diminishing marginal returns such that teachers are not incentivized to focus all of their energy on a small number of high performing students and encourage them to take as many AP exams as possible. The exact calculation for the diminishing marginal return and the amount of the bonus should be decided together by the school, district, and state based on their demographics.

C) Evidence

1. BASIS Schools, a charter school system with many locations in the United States, provides performance-based bonuses to teachers based on their students' success on AP exams.[1051] BASIS teachers are given bonuses of $200 for each student who scores a 5 on

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[1043] Holmstrom, Bengt, and Paul Milgrom. "Multitask PrincipalAgent Analyses: Incentive Contracts, Asset Ownership, and Job Design." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, vol. 7, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 24–52, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x9-y9UQJTnJMpU1tdCJwm1tEeyQe8Wta/view?usp=sharing.

[1044] Holmstrom and Milgrom. "Multitask PrincipalAgent Analyses: Incentive Contracts, Asset Ownership, and Job Design."

[1045] Holmstrom and Milgrom. "Multitask PrincipalAgent Analyses: Incentive Contracts, Asset Ownership, and Job Design."

[1046] Maranto, Robert, Jamison White, and Sean Woytek. 2025. "An Exploratory Analysis of U.S. Academically Intensive Charter Schools (AICS)." Education Sciences 15, no. 933 (July): 1-14. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oVP6tOl8iRiyzcH9NBgZVbwgx2KE_JpQ/view?usp=sharing.

[1047] Carnegie Prep. "The Importance of AP Exams - Carnegie Prep." *Carnegie Prep*, 3 Feb. 2021, www.carnegieprep.com/test-prep/importance-ap-exams/. Accessed 21 Dec. 2025.

[1048] Maranto, White, and Woytek. "An Exploratory Analysis of U.S. Academically Intensive Charter Schools (AICS).".

[1049] Maranto, White, and Woytek. "An Exploratory Analysis of U.S. Academically Intensive Charter Schools (AICS)."

[1050] Maranto, White, and Woytek. "An Exploratory Analysis of U.S. Academically Intensive Charter Schools (AICS)."

[1051] Maranto, White, and Woytek. "An Exploratory Analysis of U.S. Academically Intensive Charter Schools (AICS)."

the AP exam and bonuses of $100 for each student who scores a 4 on the AP exam.[1052] BASIS schools fund this incentive program, the "Annual Teacher Fund," by fundraising.[1053] BASIS students are highly successful on AP exams. BASIS students are required to take at least six AP exams, but average ten AP exams per student, far above the national average of less than 3.[1054] Furthermore, in 2013, BASIS students averaged an AP exam score of 3.9 out of 5, much higher than the U.S. average of 2.83.[1055]

2. In a National Bureau of Economic Research paper, researchers investigated the impacts of teacher performance pay on long-term student outcomes.[1056] They examined South Carolina's Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), which offers teachers higher pay for performance as measured by test scores and classroom observations, between 2007 and 2012.[1057] The study found that students who were taught by teachers in the TAP program had higher on-time graduation rates, experienced less arrests in early adulthood, and used less social welfare programs in early adulthood.[1058]
3. Researcher Matthew Hendricks used panel data from Texas to investigate the relationship between teacher pay and turnover rates.[1059] He found that increasing teacher pay reduces teacher turnover.[1060] This phenomenon is most significant among inexperienced teachers, and the effect wears off at around 19 years of experience.[1061] Moreover, he found that by increasing pay and reducing turnover, student academic performance increases.[1062]

D) Considerations for Implementation

It is important that teachers and administrators do not abuse this pay scheme by trying to attract the highest performing students to take their classes such that the bonus is only reflective of self-selection rather than performance. There needs to be some degree of separation between those that are creating class rosters and the teachers who are receiving bonuses.

AP exams can often differ greatly depending on the subject, with the curves for each exam not being standardized. Therefore, schools should consider class rosters and the subject

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[1052] Harris, Craig. "At Basis Charter Schools, Another Way to Boost Teacher Pay: Parent Donations." *Arizona Republic*. May 7, 2018. https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-education/2018/05/07/basis-charter-schools-seek-big-donations-parents-subsidize-low-teacher-pay/473963002/?gnt-cfr=1&gca-cat=p&gca-uir=true&gca-epti=z114540d00----v114540b0051xxd005165&gca-ft=138&gca-ds=sophi.

[1053] Licht, Amy. "What Is the Annual Teacher Fund?" Enrollbasis.com, March 11, 2024. https://enrollbasis.com/what-is-the-annual-teacher-fund/.

[1054] Kronholz, June. , 2014. "High Scores at BASIS Charter Schools," Education Next 14 (1). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1grH2DgE3OmLprQgJBg4boROXOtUAK4n-/view?usp=sharing

[1055] Kronholz, 2014. "High Scores."

[1056] Cohodes, Sarah, Ozkan Eren, and Orgul Ozturk. "The Long Run Effects of a Comprehensive Teacher Performance Pay Program on Student Outcomes." Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2023 .https://www.nber.org/papers/w31056.

[1057] Cohodes, Eren, and Ozturk. "The Long Run Effects of a Comprehensive Teacher Performance Pay Program on Student Outcomes."

[1058] Cohodes, Eren, and Ozturk. "The Long Run Effects of a Comprehensive Teacher Performance Pay Program on Student Outcomes."

[1059] Hendricks, Matthew D. "Does It Pay to Pay Teachers More? Evidence from Texas." *Journal of Public Economics* 109 (2014): 50–63. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Jo-xnxCccKWK8X_-TIbypeaRfCwSzezS/view?usp=sharing.

[1060] Hendricks. "Does It Pay to Pay Teachers More? Evidence from Texas."

[1061] Hendricks. "Does It Pay to Pay Teachers More? Evidence from Texas."

[1062] Hendricks. "Does It Pay to Pay Teachers More? Evidence from Texas."

matter when deciding on a bonus that is fair for each individual teacher, and motivates them to provide the highest quality education for their students.

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