

2025 North Carolina Charter Schools Annual Report

*Presented June 8, 2026
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Background

INTRODUCTION TO THE 2025 ANNUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS REPORT



The Annual Charter Schools Report is prepared by the **Office of Charter Schools** and presented to the **Charter Schools Review Board** and the **State Board of Education** prior to its submission to the **General Assembly**.



This 2025 edition summarizes the status of North Carolina charter schools during the **2024–2025** school year and, where available, presents data for the current **2025–2026** academic year.

THIS REPORT:



DETAILS CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZING AND MONITORING

An overview of how charter schools are authorized and the ongoing monitoring that supports quality and accountability.



PROVIDES COMPREHENSIVE DATA ON STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

A detailed look at the students served by charter schools across North Carolina.



EVALUATES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

An assessment of student achievement and progress across the sector.



ANALYZES FUNDING

An examination of financial resources and how funding supports student success and growth.



HIGHLIGHTS BEST PRACTICES AND RECOGNITIONS

Celebrating innovative programs, effective strategies, and outstanding schools and leaders.



ADDRESSES BARRIERS TO ACCESS AND THE CHALLENGES FACING CONTINUED GROWTH

A candid look at opportunities, barriers, and the path forward for North Carolina's charter schools.

THE 1996 CHARTER SCHOOLS ACT

A VISION FOR INNOVATION, CHOICE & EXCELLENCE



The **1996 Charter Schools Act** passed by the NC General Assembly authorized the establishment of “a system of charter schools to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently of existing schools, as a method to accomplish all of the following:”



1

IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

Improve student learning.



2

INCREASE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS

Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as at-risk of academic failure or academically gifted.



3

ENCOURAGE INNOVATIVE TEACHING METHODS

Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.



4

CREATE NEW PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS

Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning at the school site.



5

PROVIDE EXPANDED CHOICES FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.



6

ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESULTS

Hold the schools established under this Part accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.



The Charter Schools Act empowers local **innovation**, expands **opportunity**, and advances **student success** across North Carolina.



Charter Schools by the Numbers

NC CHARTERS BY THE NUMBERS



211

**OPERATING SCHOOLS
IN 64 COUNTIES**



138

**SCHOOLS
REPORTING WAITLISTS**



59,000+

**REPORTED
WAITLISTED STUDENTS**



161,057

**STUDENTS ENROLLED
25-26 SY**

NC Authorizing Work

NC AUTHORIZING



One Authorizer. One Standard. Stronger Schools for Students.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Charter school authorizing is the formal process by which a government-designated entity evaluates, approves, and oversees charter schools to ensure they meet academic, financial, and operational standards.



VARIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Authorizing structures differ widely by state.



MULTIPLE ENTITIES

Some states have many authorizers—districts, universities, municipalities, and more.



QUALITY & RIGOR VARY

The quality, rigor, and consistency of authorizing can vary widely.



SOME STATES CENTRALIZE

Other states place authorizing authority with a single state entity.



IMPACTS STUDENTS

The authorizing process directly impacts school quality and accountability.

NORTH CAROLINA MODEL



In North Carolina, authorizing is unified under a single structure: **The Office of Charters Schools (OCS)** as the authorizing office serving the state authorizing board, the Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB).

OCS LEADS THE ENTIRE AUTHORIZING PROCESS



OCS creates, implements, monitors, and supports the process from start to finish.



Once operating, OCS supports and monitors **over 200 charter schools** across North Carolina, ensuring ongoing compliance, accountability, and success for students and families.



A unified authorizing structure ensures consistency, accountability, and high-quality educational opportunities for all North Carolina students.

CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW BOARD (CSRFB)

RESPONSIBILITIES

1



RULES, POLICIES & STANDARDS

To propose, recommend, and approve rules and policies regarding all aspects of charter school operation, including time lines, processes, standards, and criteria for acceptance and approval of applications, monitoring of charter schools, and grounds for revocation of charters.

2



REVIEW & DECISION ON CHARTER MATTERS

To review and approve or deny charter applications, renewals, and revocations.

3



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE BOARD

To make recommendations to the State Board on actions before the State Board on appeal under G.S. 115C-218.9.

4



ADDITIONAL DUTIES AS ASSIGNED

To undertake any other duties and responsibilities as assigned by the State Board.

5



HEARINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

To conduct hearings and make findings and recommendations pursuant to subdivision (a1)(5) of this section.

6



LEGAL COUNSEL & LITIGATION SERVICES

To contract for and employ legal counsel, including private counsel, to advise, represent, and provide litigation services to the Review Board, without the need to obtain permission or approval pursuant to G.S. 114-2.3 or G.S. 147-17.

CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW BOARD (CSRB)

MEMBERSHIP & TERM REQUIREMENTS

CSRB MEMBERSHIP

The CSRB consists of **eleven voting members**:



4

Appointed by the
North Carolina
Senate



4

Appointed by the
North Carolina
House of
Representatives



2

Appointed by the
State Board of
Education



1

The **Lieutenant
Governor** or the
Lieutenant Governor's
designee

NONVOTING MEMBER



The Superintendent of
Public Instruction or the
Superintendent's designee
serves as the **secretary** of
the board and a
nonvoting member.

TERM REQUIREMENTS



Appointed members
shall serve
four-year terms
of office beginning
on July 1.



No appointed
member shall serve
**more than eight
consecutive years**.



Vacancy appointments
shall be made by the
appointing authority
for the **remainder of
the term** of office.



The CSRB's diverse membership and term requirements ensure balanced representation, continuity, and accountability in the oversight of North Carolina's charter schools.



Appointed By	First Name	Last Name	Start Date of Current Term	End Date of Current Term
State Board of Education	Eric	Guckian	June 5, 2025	June 30, 2027
State Board of Education	Eric	Sanchez	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
Superintendent (Non-Voting)	Jeremy	Wall	March 10, 2025	June 30, 2027
Lt. Governor	Stephen	Gay	January 1, 2025	December 31, 2028
House	Bruce	Friend	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
House	Hilda	Parlér	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2027
House	Lindalyn	Kakadelis	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2027
House	Shelly	Shope	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
Senate	Gerald	McNair	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2027
Senate	John	Eldridge	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
Senate	Rita	Haire	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2029
Senate	Todd	Godbey	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2027

Office of Charter Schools



Office of
CHARTER SCHOOLS
NC Department of Public Instruction

OCS' STATUTORY POWERS & DUTIES



Serve as staff to the Review Board and fulfill any tasks and duties assigned to it by the Review Board.



Provide technical assistance and guidance to charter schools operating within the State.



Provide technical assistance and guidance to nonprofit corporations seeking to operate charter schools within the State.



Provide or arrange for training for charter schools that have received preliminary approval from the Review Board.



Assist approved charter schools and charter schools seeking approval from the Review Board in coordinating services within the Department of Public Instruction.



Assist certain charter schools seeking to participate in the NC prekindergarten program in accordance with G.S. 115C-218.115.



Other duties as assigned by the State Board.

Other necessary duties:

1. Stakeholder assistance
2. Communication conduit
3. Legislative guidance
4. Bond hearing facilitation
5. School closures
6. Relocation requests
7. Public record requests
8. Employee and student record requests
9. Cross-division collaboration and committee work

OFFICE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS STRUCTURE



AUTHORIZING TEAM

- Applications
- Ready to Open
- Amendments
- Reports/Rules
- SBE/CSRB

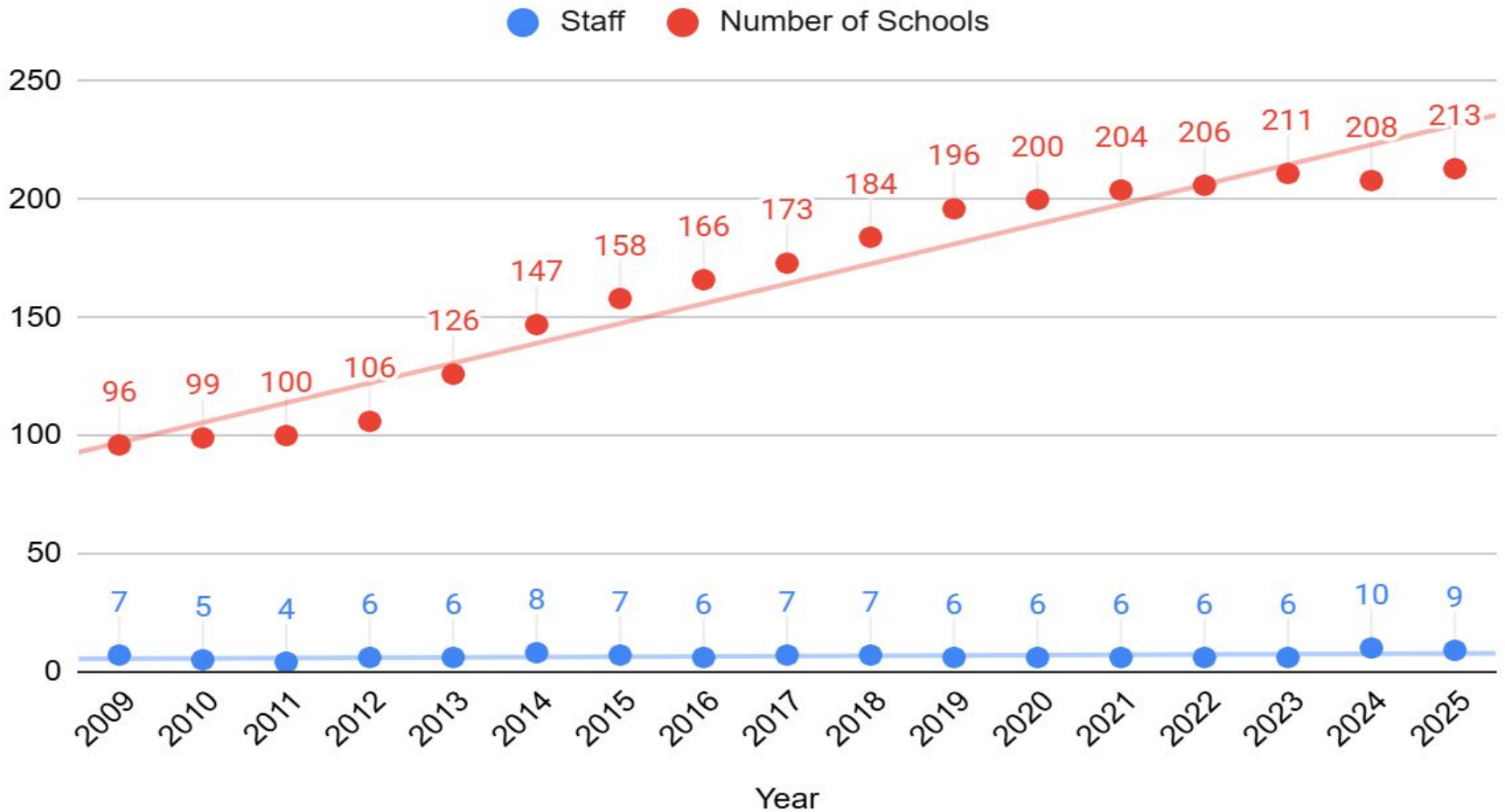
ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM

- Performance Framework
- Renewals
- Risk Assessment
- School Improvement

EXTERNAL SUPPORT TEAM

- Stakeholder Support
- Partnerships/
School Support
- Communications/Data

Office of Charter Schools Staffing v. Charters Schools in Operation, By Year, 2009 - 2025



Charter Accountability

Charter Accountability

 Statute, Rules, Policy

 Charter Agreement

 Academic Monitoring

 Performance Framework

 Renewal Process

 Closure

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 101



A COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE



In **2014**, OCS created the Performance Framework to serve as the standard mechanism for annual reporting on progress toward achievement of the State Board's goal to increase the number of charter schools meeting academic, operational, and financial goals.



The Framework provides a consolidated view of each charter school's performance relative to operational, governance, financial, and academic criteria.

The operational and financial elements of the Framework are all requirements outlined in General Statute, State Board policy, or the Charter Agreement.

THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK REPORTS ON

51 operational, governance, financial, and academic indicators.



OPERATIONAL & GOVERNANCE



FINANCIAL



ACADEMIC



COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE

Some measurements were not applicable to all schools.



NOT MET DOES NOT NECESSARILY INDICATE A LACK OF COMPLIANCE

"Not Met" most often reflects a lack of timely submission rather than a lack of compliance.



FOCUS ON TIMELY SUBMISSIONS

The Framework encourages timely reporting so schools can accurately demonstrate their performance.



THOROUGH REVIEW PROCESS

A small team of OCS staff carefully reviews each submission for accuracy and completeness.



SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT OF TIME

Our team reviews over **2,000** submissions each year to ensure reliable, consistent results.



The Performance Framework drives transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement—helping charter schools thrive and students succeed.



2025 PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK



Two hundred and three (203) of 208 charter schools, or

— **99%** —

achieved at or above 80% in the category of **operational and governance annual monitoring criteria**.



One hundred and twenty-one (121) charter schools,

— **58.2%** —
were compliant in every single applicable measure.



Five schools fell below the 80% threshold, scoring **76.3%** respectively.



All charter schools were measured against a maximum of

— **25** —

OPERATIONAL & GOVERNANCE CRITERIA



Of these 25 criteria, some were **not applicable** to a given school.



GOALS AND PURPOSE OF PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK



— *Measuring What Matters. Supporting Schools. Advancing Student Success.* —

The Performance Framework monitors charter school performance by providing:



A CLEAR & CONSISTENT MEASURE
of operational, governance, financial, and academic performance



FEEDBACK
for school leaders and boards



TRANSPARENCY
for schools, parents, students, and the public



TRACKING INFORMATION
regarding school performance over time



The Performance Framework creates **clarity, transparency, and accountability**—helping charter schools improve and students thrive.

SUPPORTING SCHOOL LEADERS & BOARDS



OCS provides **tools** and **training** to help leaders and boards understand performance measures and comply with laws and policies.



ALIGNMENT TO LAWS & POLICIES



RESOURCES & REFERENCES



TRAINING MODULES



REQUIRED VS. BEST PRACTICE MEASURES



Charter Closure/Termination

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

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



Charter Closure/Termination

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

Since 1998, there have been a total of 96 charter closures. This includes schools that were in operation and those that may have been in the planning year program prior to opening the school to students.

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

Charter Closure Stats

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



CHARTER SCHOOL CLOSURES: COMPLEX, COSTLY, AND FAR-REACHING



Accountability in Action. Impact in Every Direction.



Charter schools operate under a charter agreement with the state. Nonrenewal or revocation are possible outcomes when standards are not met.



Since 1998, nearly
100
charter schools have closed for a variety of reasons.

In 2025,
2
charter schools closed.



Each closure carries significant complexity and human cost—requiring dedicated state capacity to manage well.

THE WIDE-RANGING IMPACTS OF CHARTER SCHOOL CLOSURES



**EMPLOYMENT
IMPACT**



**STUDENT RECORDS
MANAGEMENT**



**STATE
ADMINISTRATIVE
BURDEN**



**FINANCIAL
CONSEQUENCES**



**COMMUNITY
IMPACT**



**REGULATORY AND
LEGAL IMPACT**



Closure is never simply an administrative event. Its effects ripple outward—impacting students, families, educators, and communities—while placing a substantial administrative burden on state agencies.



PREVENTING CHARTER CLOSURES



Strong Schools. Strong Support. Stronger Outcomes.

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



RIGOROUS AUTHORIZING & ADEQUATE PLANNING

with sufficient support and training are critical safeguards against charter school closures.



EARLY YEARS MATTER

Operational, governance, and financial support is especially important during the first five years. Thorough vetting before approval is essential.



ACADEMIC SUPPORT IS CRITICAL

for low-performing schools, especially during the three years preceding renewal.



FACILITIES MATTER

Facility acquisition remains a continued challenge and must be carefully considered by boards.



ENROLLMENT IS KEY

Low enrollment is a leading cause of closures. Authorizing should include a thorough review of enrollment demand and market conditions.



CAPACITY TO MANAGE IS ESSENTIAL

Sufficient staffing is needed to manage the complex administrative burden of closures.

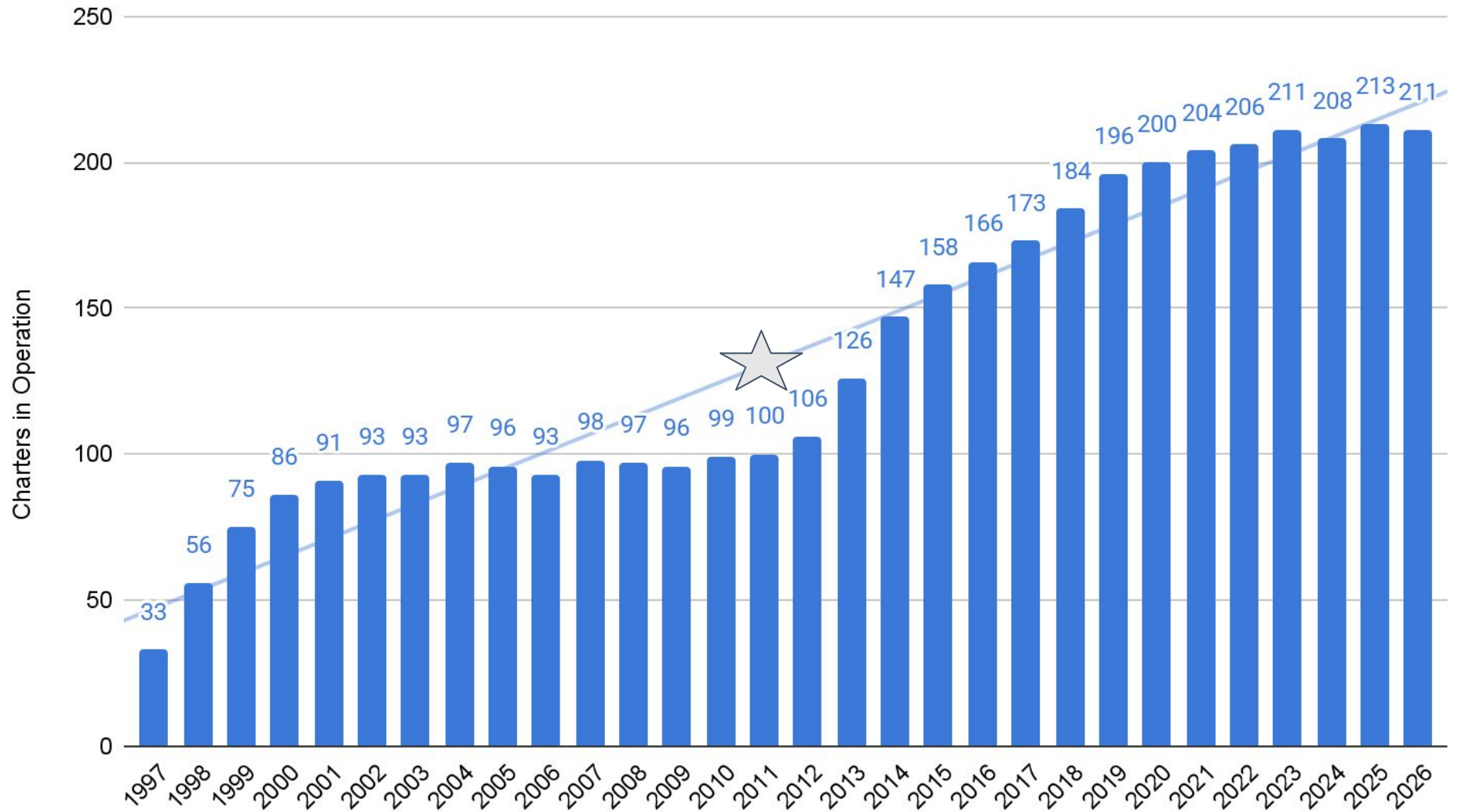


To protect students, families, and communities, we must build **strong front-end authorization processes** and **back-end closure management capacity** at the state level.



Charter School Growth

1997 - 2026 Historical Charter Growth



2025 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

Strong Interest. Rigorous Review. Focused Outcomes.



Seventeen non-profit boards submitted applications to open public charter schools by the **April 25, 2025**, application deadline.



Of these, **seven** applicants sought approval for Acceleration to open in the 2026-2027 school year with another **ten** applying under the regular timeline to open in 2027.



Five applicants withdrew before Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB) interviews took place.

DISPOSITIONS OF THE SEVENTEEN APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE APPLICATION DEADLINE:



5

applicants
withdrew



6

applicants recommended
for **approval** to enter
Ready to Open



6

applicants **not**
recommended



1

applicant was **not**
recommended, appealed,
and **approved** on remand

Remote Charter Academies

Remote Charter Academies (RCAs) can now be approved by the Charter Schools Review Board pursuant to legislation (HB259) passed in 2023.

As an amendment to an existing charter

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

As a standalone remote charter school

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

Practical Impact of Authorizing and Monitoring Remote Academies



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

TO MEET LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS, OCS HAS ESTABLISHED:



EVALUATES

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



PREPARES & SUPPORTS

materials for CSRB, coordinates school presentations, and supports CSRB during the interview and voting process.



PROVIDES

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

related to RCA-specific requirements, including lottery and admissions guidance, amendments, and reporting.



ONGOING COLLABORATION & CAPACITY

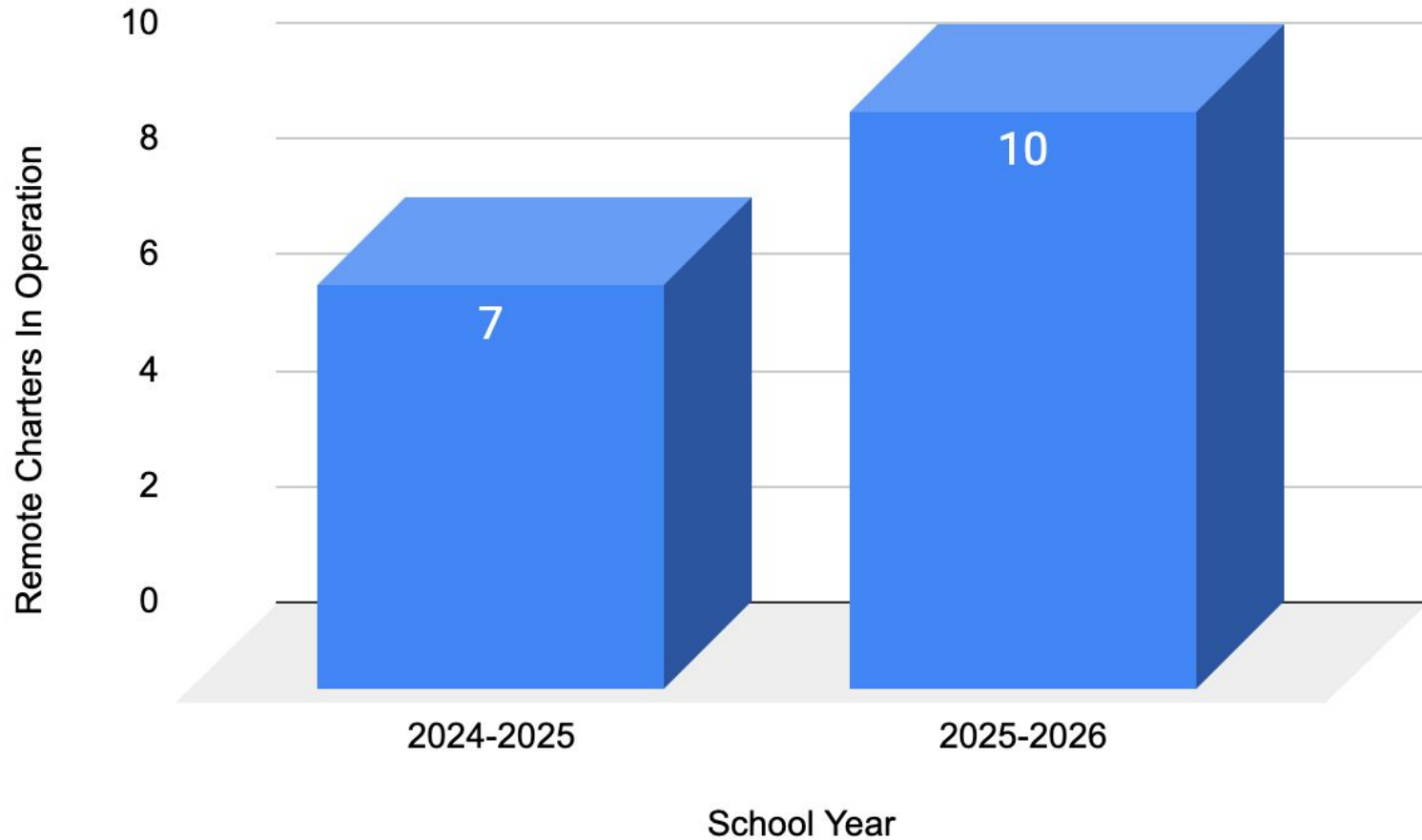
RCAs require ongoing DPI cross-division collaboration and OCS staff capacity to ensure compliance, transparency, and accountability. OCS coordinates with multiple DPI divisions to address enrollment reporting, accountability, testing, data systems, and funding considerations unique to RCAs.



5-YEAR AUTHORIZATION & RENEWAL

Approved RCAs are authorized for a five-year term. After operating for five years, schools may apply for renewal for an additional five-year term. The two virtual pilot schools are eligible to apply for renewal as RCAs beginning in 2026. The renewal process mirrors that of brick-and-mortar schools, with a modified self-study addressing RCA-specific statutory requirements.

North Carolina Remote Charter Academies

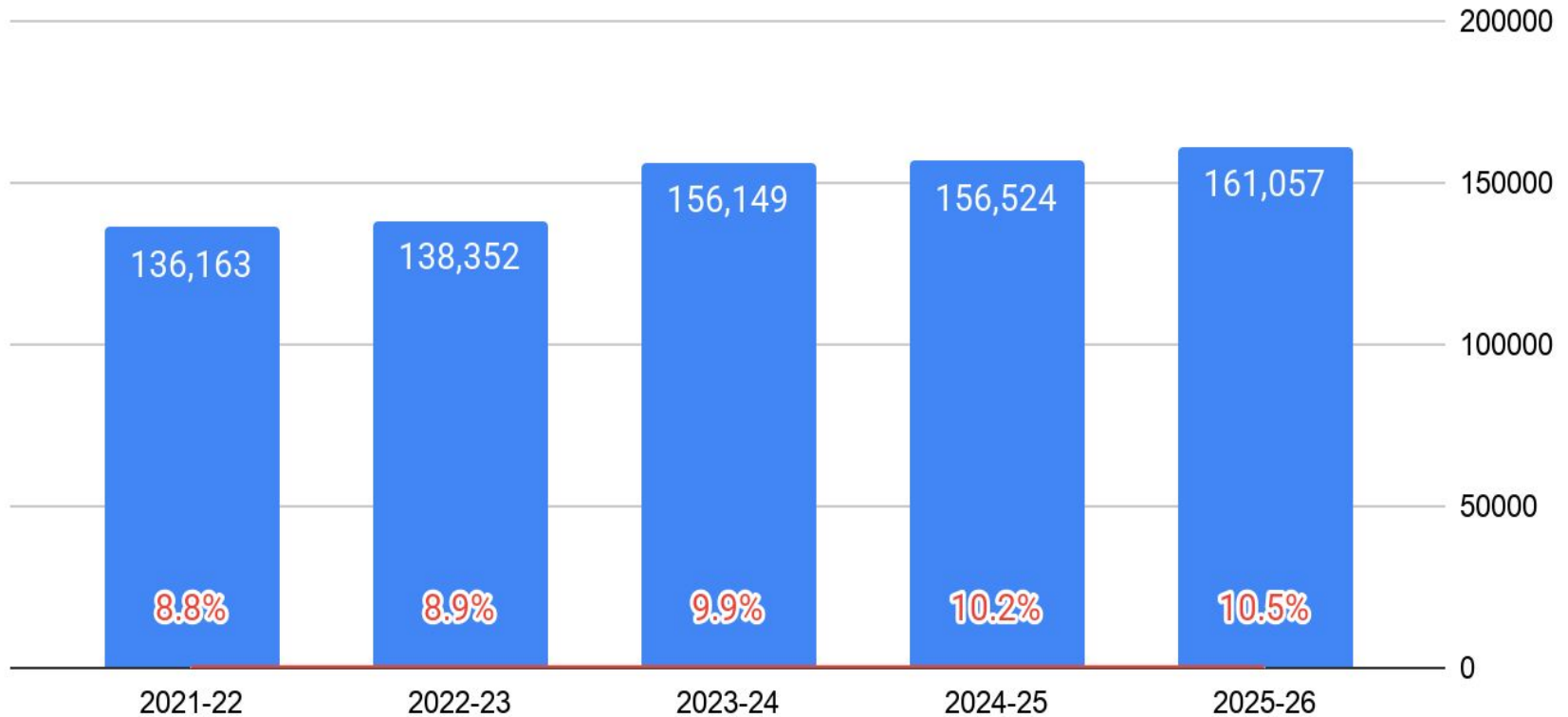


Charter School Enrollment

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

Average Daily Membership (ADM) and % of Total ADM

■ ADM ■ % of Total ADM



NATIONAL TRENDS



A recent study of 27 states with detailed demographic data shows that over the past six years, national charter enrollment has climbed by **15 percent** nationally, representing an addition of **half a million students**, even as the overall K-12 population in the United States has decreased.

CHARTER ENROLLMENT IS GROWING NATIONWIDE

(27 STATES WITH DETAILED DEMOGRAPHIC DATA)



This momentum is reflected across diverse demographics, with significant enrollment increases among **Hispanic and Black student enrollment**, signaling a broad and growing demand for alternative public education models across nearly every state with a charter sector.



NORTH CAROLINA WAS THE FOURTH FASTEST-GROWING STATE FOR CHARTER ENROLLMENT IN THE NATION OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS.

Trailing only Texas, Florida, and California.



TEXAS



FLORIDA



CALIFORNIA



NORTH CAROLINA

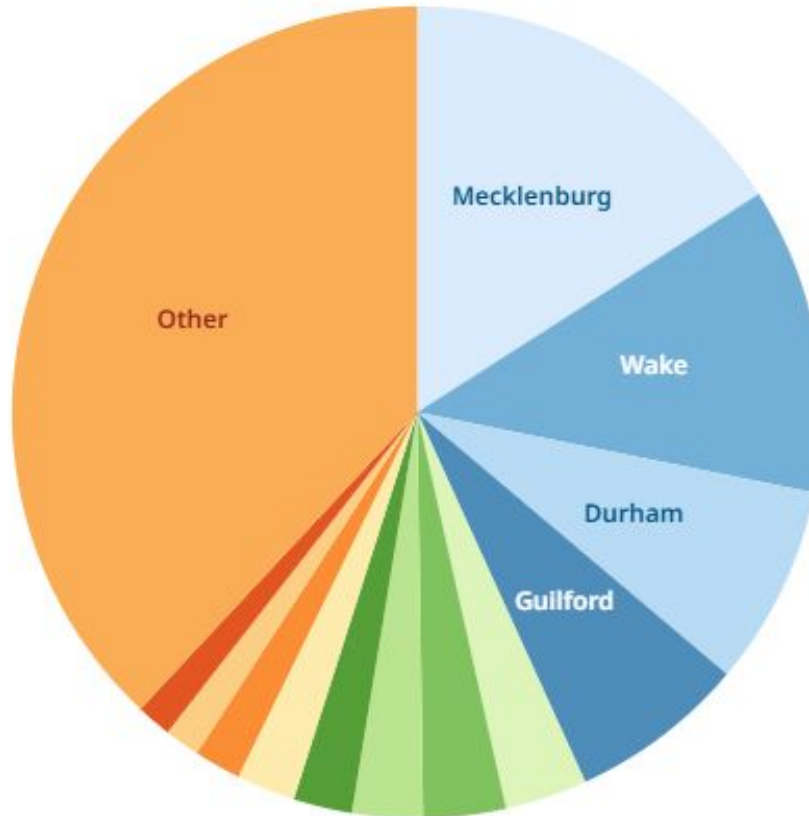
BETWEEN THE 2019-20 AND 2024-25 ACADEMIC YEARS:



MORE THAN 161,000 STUDENTS ATTEND CHARTER SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE, ACCOUNTING FOR MORE THAN 10% OF NORTH CAROLINA'S TOTAL PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT.

Charter Schools, by County, as of August 1, 2025

Mecklenburg	34
Wake	26
Durham	17
Guilford	15
New Hanover	7
Buncombe	7
Forsyth	6
Union	5
Iredell	5
Alamance	4
Wayne	3
Vance	3
Other	81



Total
213

LOOKING AHEAD

Growth brings opportunity—and important questions.



FUNDING & RESOURCE ALLOCATION

- ❓ How do states ensure **per-pupil funding follows the student equitably** while managing financial stability in regions with a large variety of educational options?
- ❓ Will greater educational options within the state, whether public or private, lead to greater **student movement** between schools, districts, or even regions?



EQUITABLE ACCESS

- ❓ Scaling demands an intentional look at whether **growth is inclusive**. Barriers such as a lack of regional transportation or localized school meal programs might prevent economically disadvantaged and rural students from participating in educational choice.



STATE AUTHORIZING & OVERSIGHT

- ❓ What frameworks and staff capacity must be in place to provide **rigorous oversight**, ensuring that rapid expansion does not dilute academic or operational standards?













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

Charter School Demographics

STUDENT DIVERSITY IN 2025-2026



Charter schools enroll students across all racial and ethnic groups, as do local districts, although there are some notable differences.

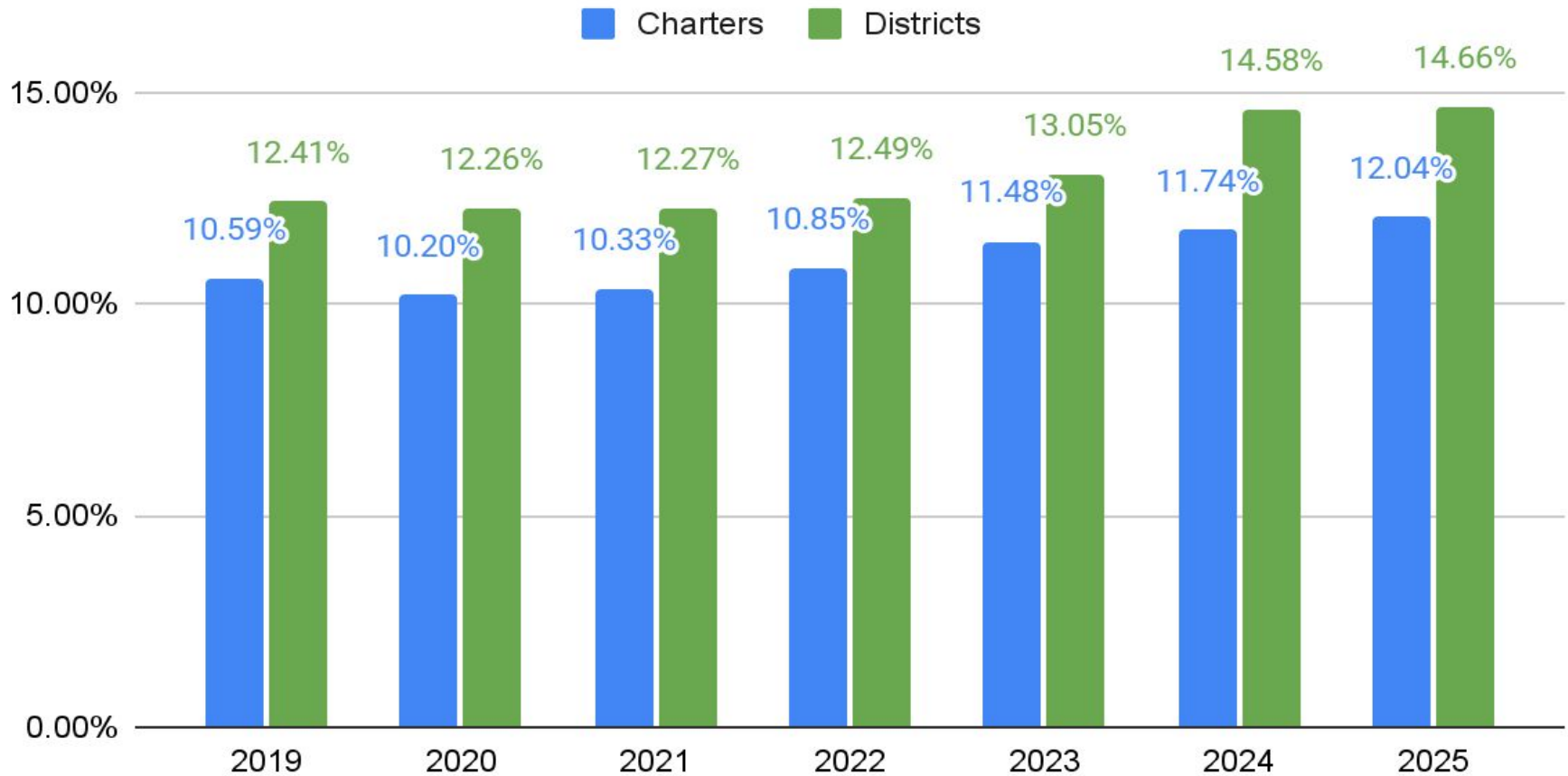
	 CHARTER SCHOOLS		 TRADITIONAL DISTRICTS
 WHITE	44.5%	 Higher share in charter schools	41.1%
 BLACK / AFRICAN AMERICAN	26.8%	 More represented in charter schools	24.4%
 HISPANIC	15.5%	 More prevalent in traditional districts	22.9%
 AMERICAN INDIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER	<1%	 Similarly low in both	<1%



Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Students with Disabilities, Charters and Districts

Students With Disabilities, 2019-2025



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (SWD) ENROLLMENT



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

IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS



EQUITABLE ACCESS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Current enrollment patterns continue to highlight pressing concerns around educational equity and resource allocation across both charter schools and traditional districts.



FUNDING MUST KEEP PACE WITH GROWTH

Since 2022, both sectors have experienced a notable and sustained rise in students with disabilities (SWD) populations. Ensuring that funding models keep pace with this growth is essential, and both charter schools and traditional districts must receive resources that genuinely reflect the complexity and range of services their enrolled students require.



ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL FUNDING FALLS SHORT

A one-size-fits-all approach to funding fails to capture the varied realities of SWD enrollment and risks leaving students without the support they need, regardless of the school setting they attend.



MONITOR, STRATEGIZE, AND INVEST

Continued monitoring of special education enrollment trends remains critical, as does the development of targeted strategies to ensure equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities for all students with disabilities, irrespective of institutional setting.

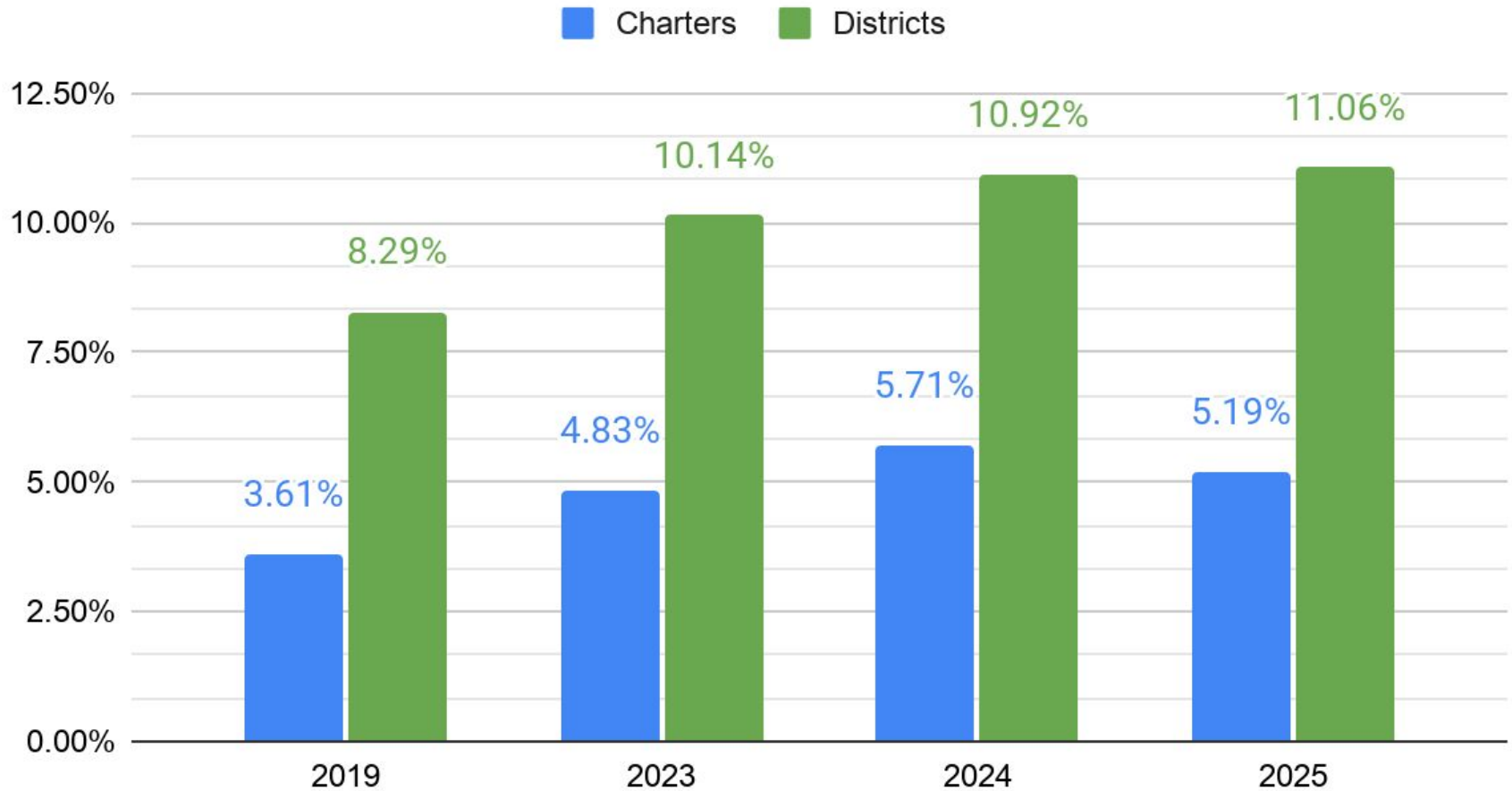


Meaningful progress in this area will also require deeper investment in research focused on equitable funding structures, the true costs of service delivery, and ongoing workforce challenges within the special education and exceptional children sector.

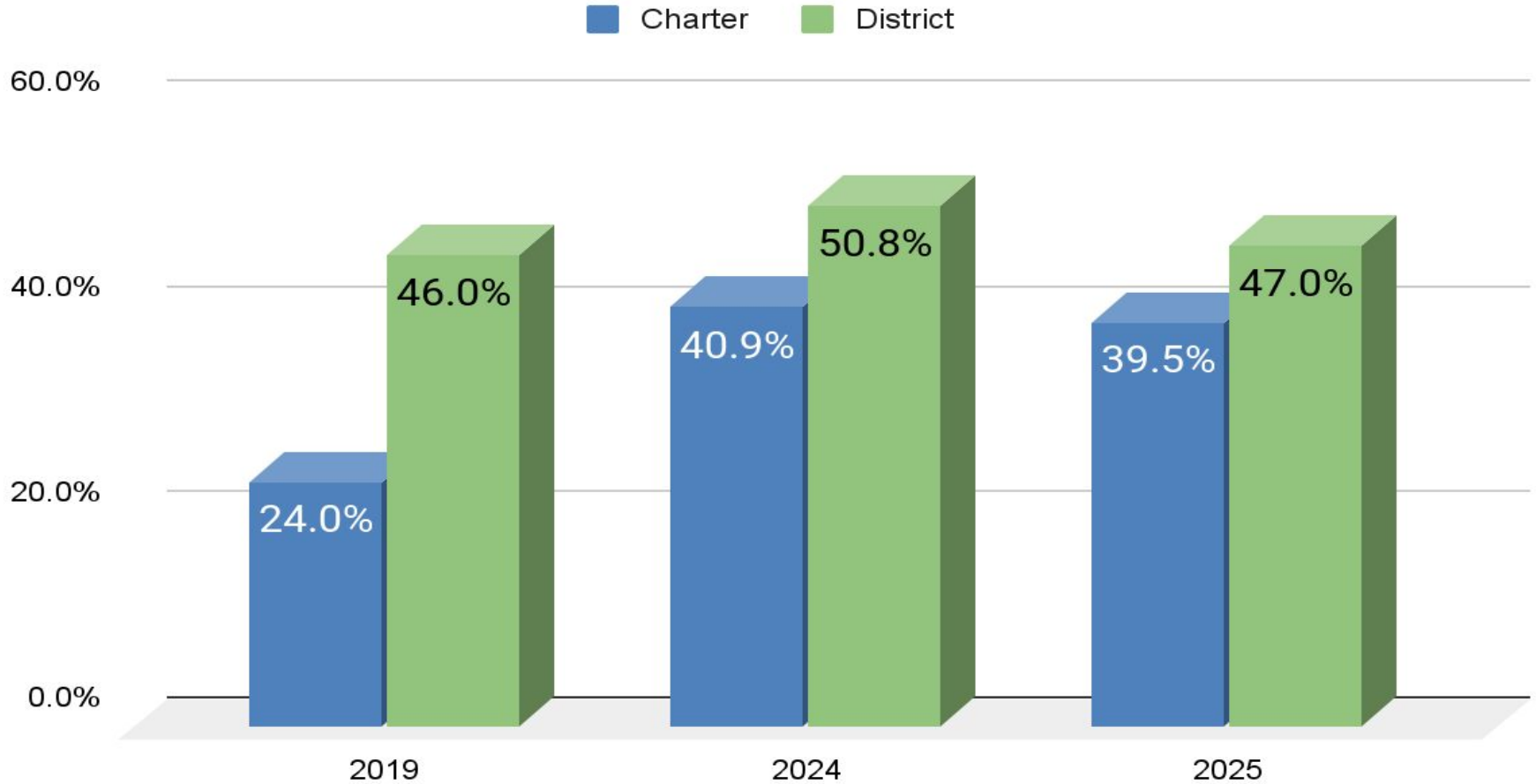


English Learners, Charters and Districts

English Learners, Charters and Districts



Economically Disadvantaged Charters and Districts



Charter School Access

BREAKING BARRIERS. BUILDING ACCESS. ADVANCING EQUITY.



The promise of charter schools is innovation and family choice—and it depends on ensuring high-quality options are accessible to all.



INFORMATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE HURDLES

- Complex admissions and applications impede enrollment.
- Lack of transparency, language barriers, and misinformation exclude families.
- Clear, accessible communication and policies remove barriers and expand access.



GEOGRAPHIC & LOGISTICAL CONSTRAINTS

- Charter schools are concentrated in urban areas; rural options remain limited.
- Geographic barriers are compounded by waitlists and inconsistent transportation infrastructure.



ESSENTIAL SUPPORT SERVICES: TRANSPORTATION & NUTRITION

- Many families rely on schools for transportation and meals.
- Lack of these services can determine school choice.
- Strong plans, guidance, and resources help schools deliver these critical supports.



SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABILITY

- New schools face a critical first five years.
- Leaders must build programs, earn trust, and achieve financial viability.
- Limited funding for meals, transportation, and other services adds pressure.



Removing barriers and strengthening support systems ensures every family—regardless of background or zip code—can access **high-quality** public charter school options.

NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER SCHOOLS: GROWING PARTNERS IN HEALTHY STUDENT SUCCESS



North Carolina has seen a consistent **upward trend** in charter school participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

This growth is driven by the NCDPI School Nutrition team, which provides the technical and compliance support necessary for these unique school models to navigate federal requirements.



NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER SCHOOLS ACHIEVED THE FOLLOWING:



TOTAL PARTICIPATION

91

charter schools implemented the NSLP,

up from **88** the previous year.

MEALS SERVED

During the 2024–2025 school year, charter schools provided:



4,920,132
SCHOOL LUNCHES



2,651,203
BREAKFASTS
to students.



Ensuring access to nutritious meals supports student health, boosts learning, and strengthens the foundation for lifelong success.



TRANSPORTATION IN NC CHARTER SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS



NC law requires access; charter schools pursue solutions.



NC LAW REQUIREMENTS

Under G.S. §115C-218.40, charter schools must develop a transportation plan ensuring transit is not a barrier for students within the local school administrative unit.

- Exempt from providing service to students living within 1.5 miles of the campus.
- Schools must use a formal plan to meet this mandate.



FLEXIBLE SOLUTIONS

Charter schools use a variety of transportation options to meet student needs:



Traditional Busing



Cluster Stops



Public Transit



Carpooling Systems



Many schools are modernizing fleets—transitioning to electric buses with grant support.



SYSTEMIC PRESSURES AND IMPACTS

- Transportation needs are rising, but funding has not kept pace and staffing shortages persist.
- Students miss meals, counseling, and tutoring due to transit issues.
- Transportation instability is linked to chronic absenteeism and students being late to school.



BARRIERS FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

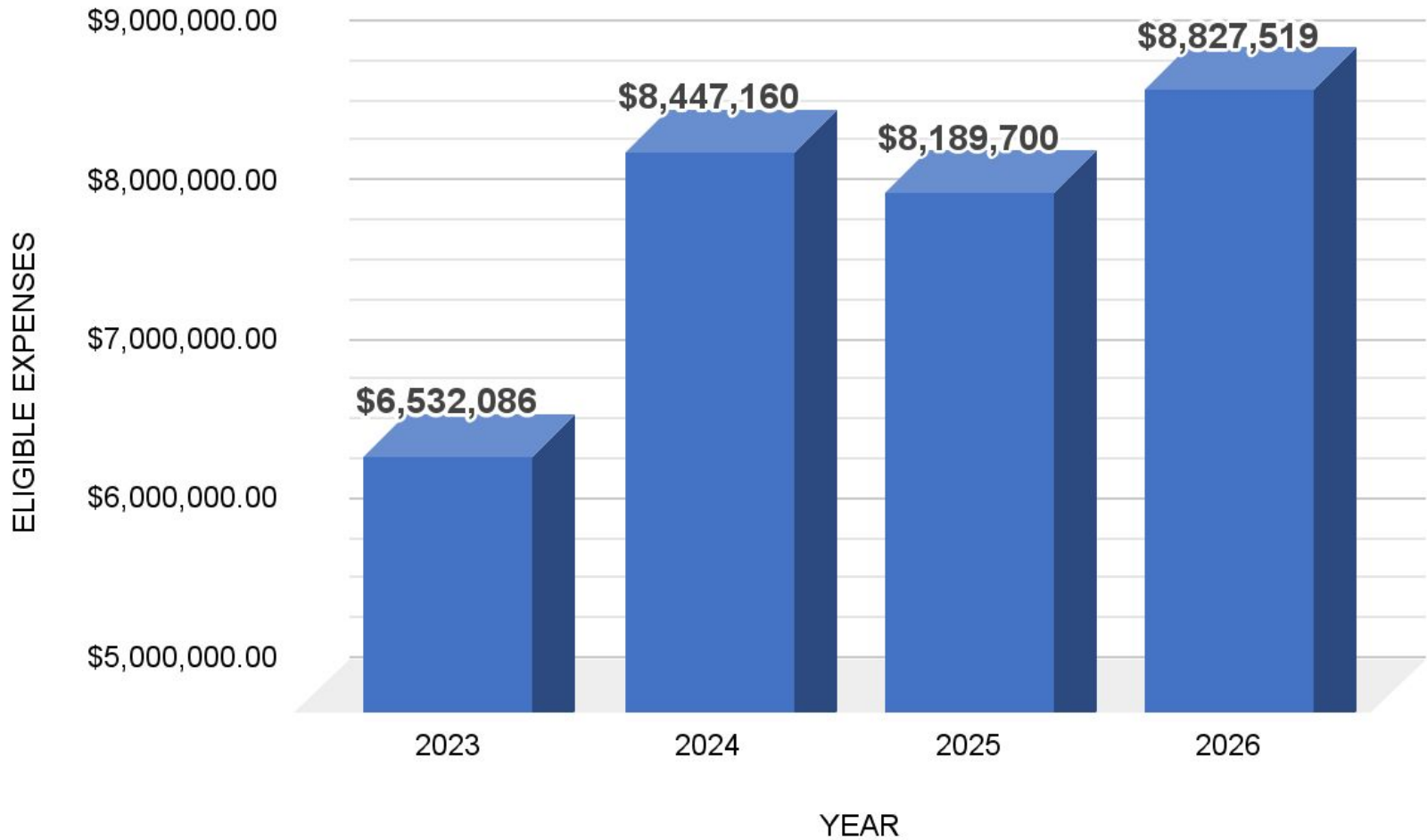
- Schools not providing traditional busing cite cost and staffing as top barriers.
- Driver shortages and budget shortfalls lead to cut or shortened routes, shifting transit responsibility to families.
- Staff and teachers often spend time on transportation logistics instead of instruction.



Transportation is more than a logistical challenge—
it is central to educational equity and staff productivity.

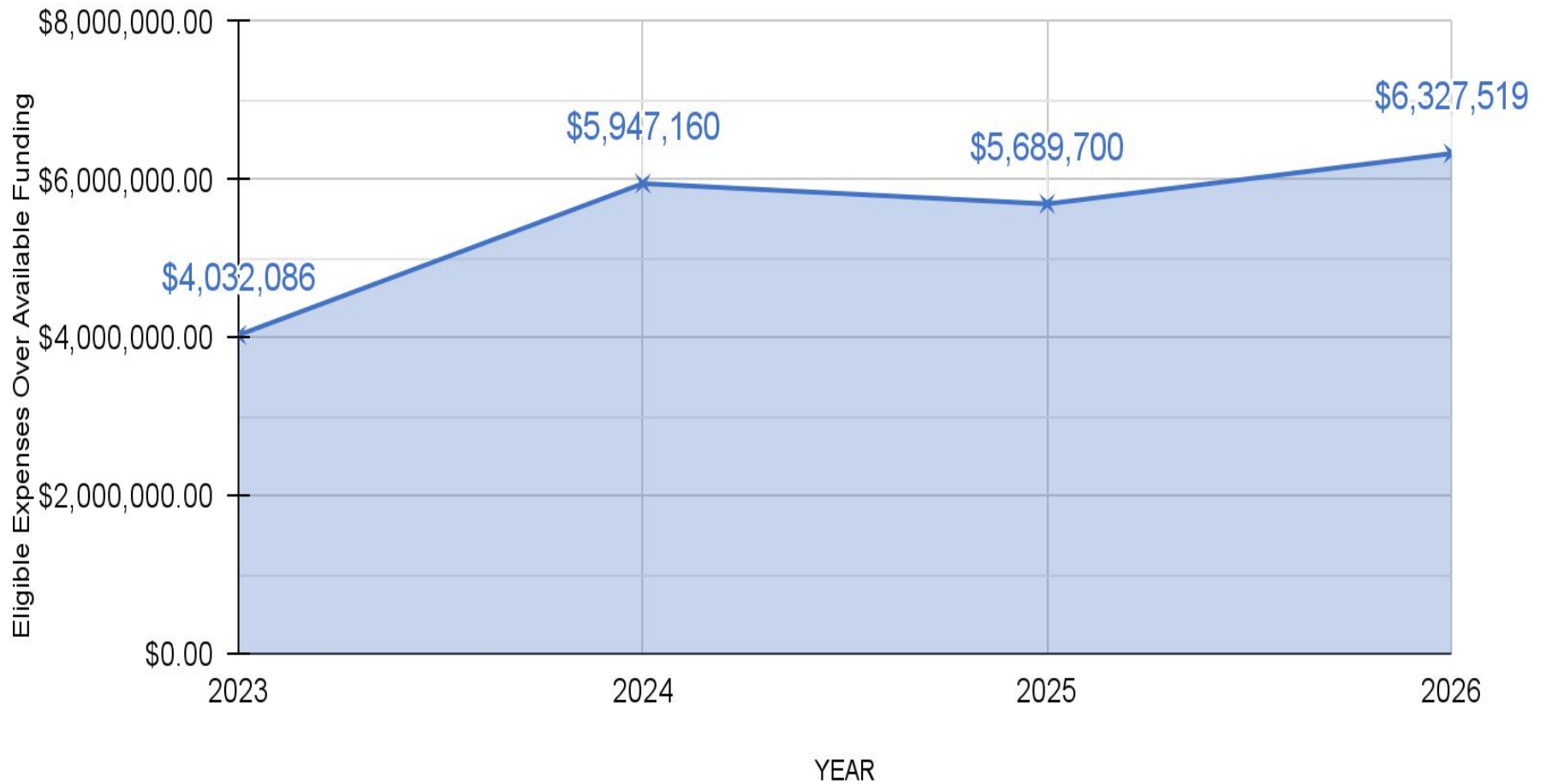


Charter School Transportation Grant Program 2023 to 2026 - Eligible Expenses



Charter School Transportation Grant Program

2023 to 2026 - Eligible Expenses Over Available Funding



Charter School Academic Performance

Introduction

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

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

Key Findings

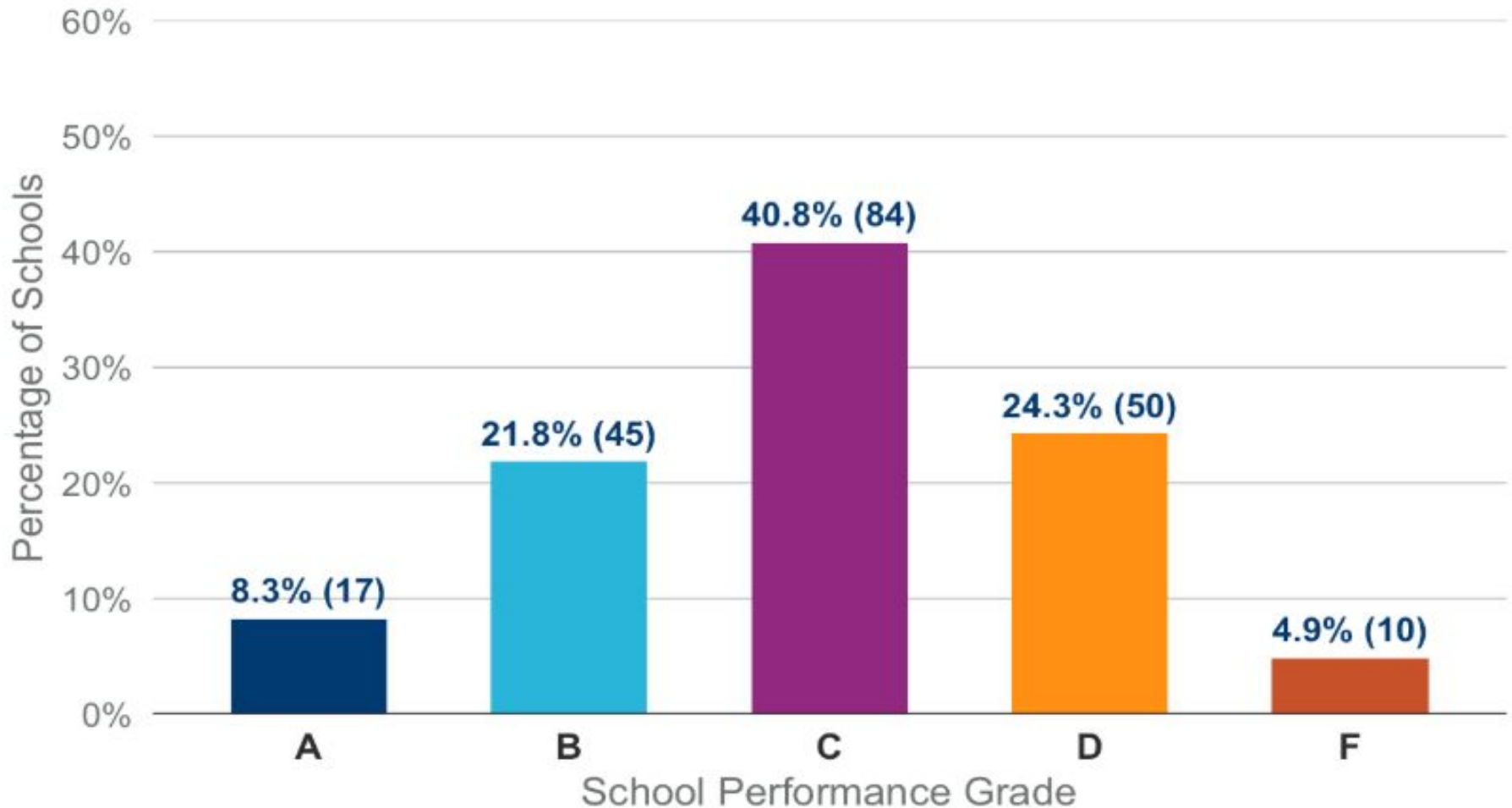
- **School Performance Grades improved modestly from the prior school year.** In 2024-25, the share of charter schools earning an A or B increased from 26.6% to 30.1%, while the share earning a D or F declined from 31.5% to 29.1%. C remained the largest category, decreasing slightly from 41.9% to 40.8% of schools.
- **Academic growth also improved, providing important context for interpreting proficiency results.** In 2024-25, 72.3% of charter schools met or exceeded expected academic growth, up 2 percentage points from 70.3% in 2023-24, indicating that schools are moving students forward at expected or better rates.

Key Findings

- **Grade Level Proficiency improved slightly but remains below pre-pandemic levels.** Charter grade level proficiency was 61.2% in 2024-25, 6 percentage points below 2019.
- **College and Career Readiness declined and remains the clearest academic concern.** Charter school college and career readiness was 38.9% in 2024-25, down 2.1 percentage points from 2024 and 13.1 points below 2019.
- **Subgroup patterns remain uneven.** English Language Learners are 1.4 percentage points below their 2019 baseline, a smaller long-term decline than most subgroups, while Students with Disabilities have the largest long-run grade level proficiency decline and the lowest college and career readiness rate among the reported subgroups.

2024–2025 Charter School Performance Grades

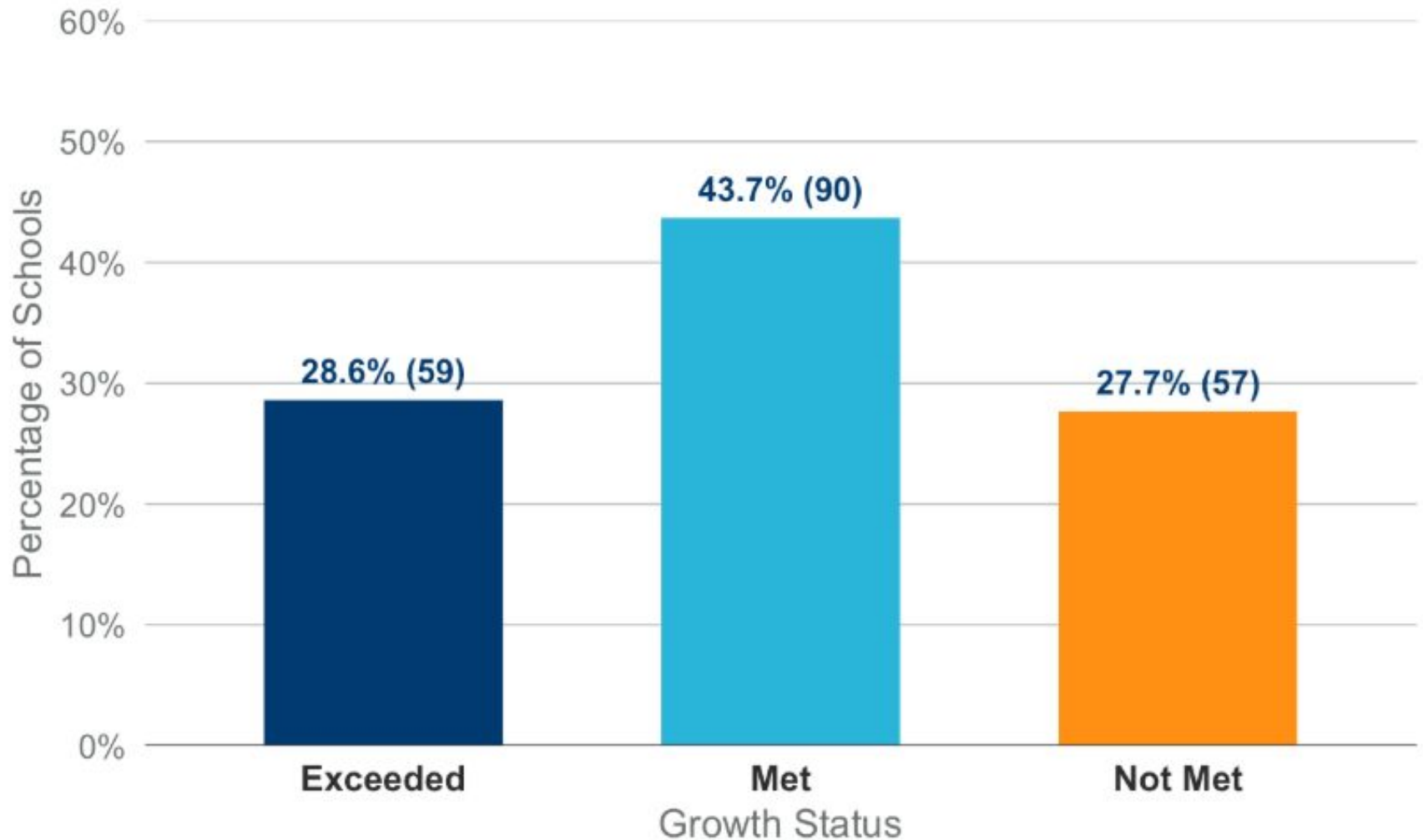
A total of 30.1% earned an A or B, compared with 26.6% in 2023–24



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

2024–2025 Expected Academic Growth

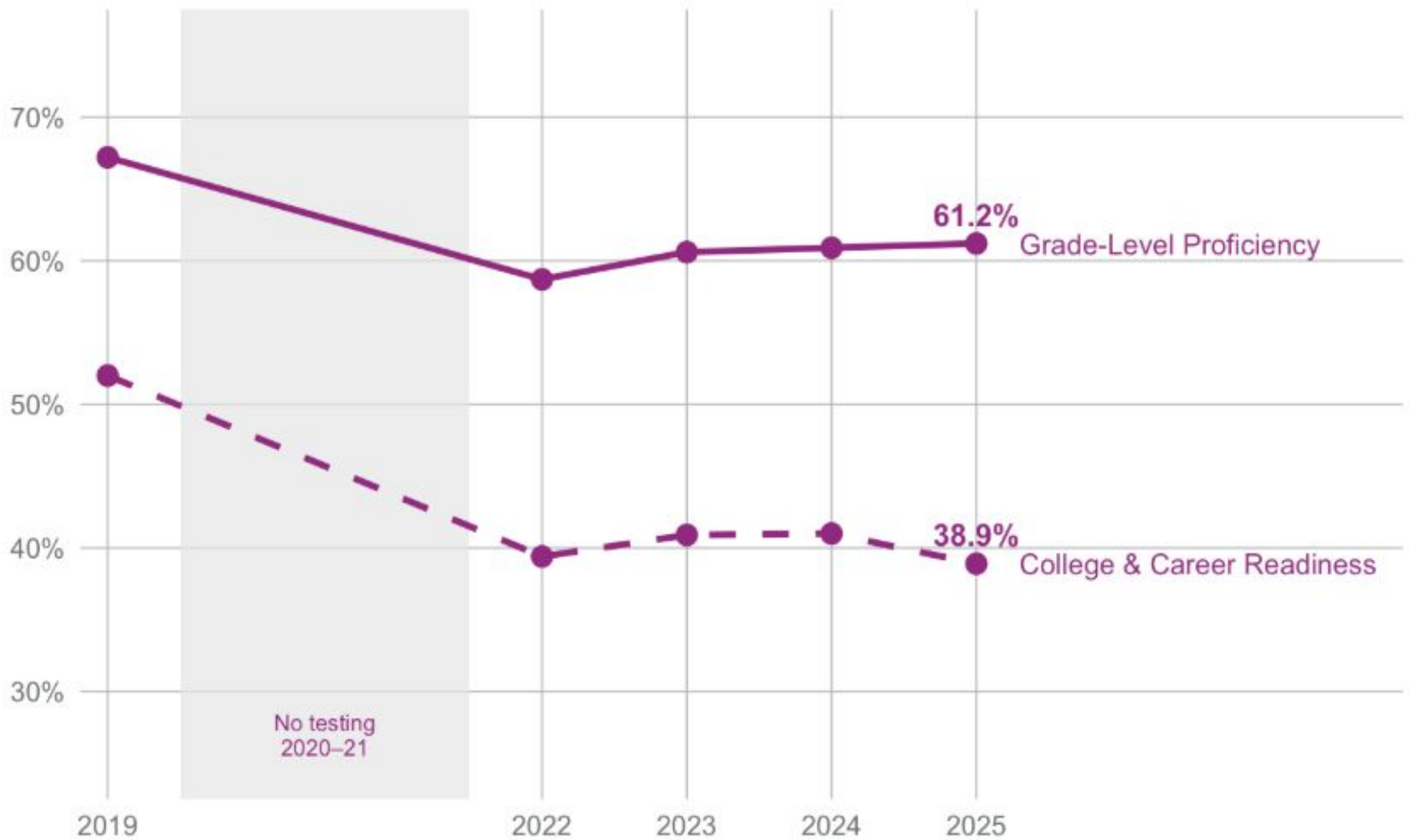
72.3% of charters met or exceeded growth, up from 70.3% in 2023–24 (+2 pp)



Includes 206 charter schools with 30+ tested students and a valid growth status.

Proficiency and Readiness Trends: Charter Schools, 2019–2025

Modest GLP recovery since 2022, but college and career readiness has continued to decline



Solid line shows Grade-Level Proficiency; dashed line shows College & Career Readiness. No statewide assessments

Grade Level Proficiency, Trends

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

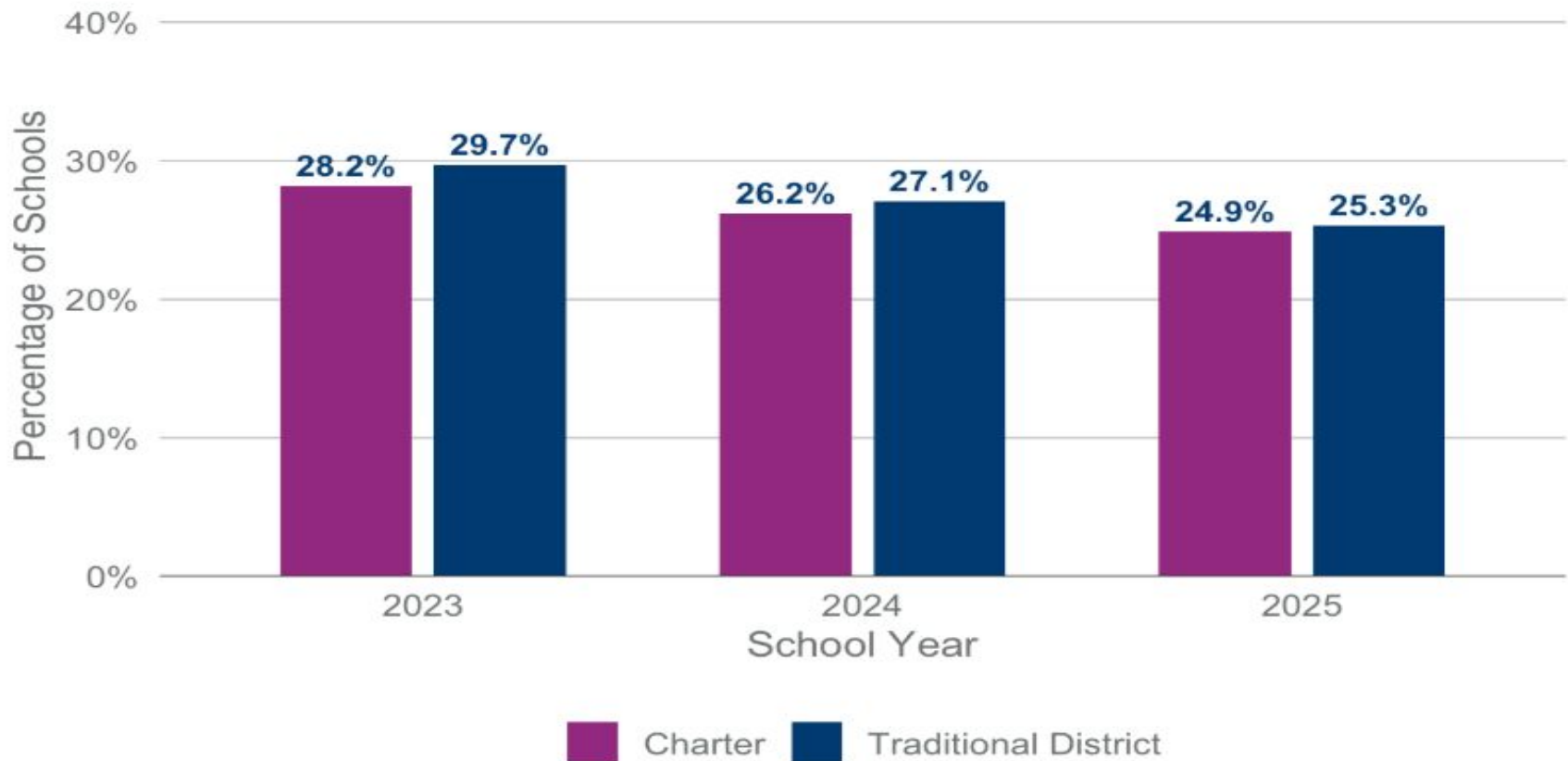
College & Career Readiness, Trends

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

Low-Performing Schools

Percentages of Low-Performing Schools

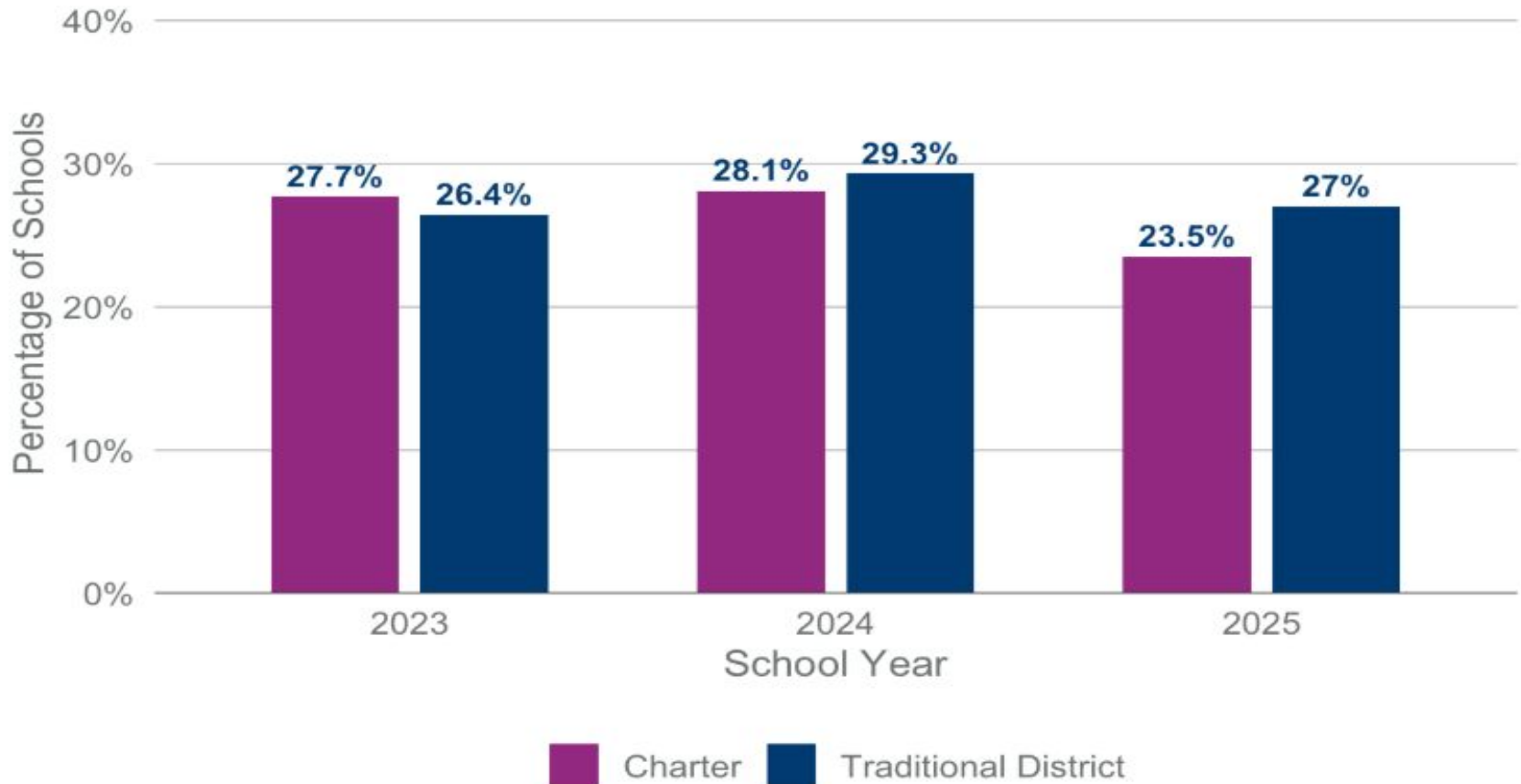
Charter and traditional district schools, 2022–23 through 2024–25



Continually Low-Performing Schools

Percentages of Continually Low-Performing Schools

Charter and traditional district schools, 2022–23 through 2024–25



Challenges and Celebrations

TOP CHALLENGES FACING CHARTER SCHOOL LEADERS

Based on frequency of mentions from charter school leaders.



1

FACILITY MAINTENANCE/ACQUISITION COSTS (55 MENTIONS)

The most frequently cited challenge, often paired with concerns about limited funding to address aging infrastructure.



2

LACK OF STATE BUDGET & FEDERAL UNCERTAINTY (54 MENTIONS)

Extremely close to #1. Many leaders noted that the absence of a state budget directly compounds nearly every other challenge, especially salaries and staffing.



3

TEACHER RECRUITMENT/RETENTION (53 MENTIONS)

Also nearly tied for the top, with leaders frequently noting that low NC teacher salaries make it hard to compete with other states and the private sector.



4

EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN STAFFING/FUNDING (46 MENTIONS)

EC concerns appeared consistently across school sizes and regions, with many leaders pointing to both insufficient funding and difficulty finding qualified staff.



5

GENERAL BUDGET CONCERNS (44 MENTIONS)

A broad category that is often tied into the other four – tight budgets limit competitive salaries, facility upkeep, EC services, and technology.

SPOTLIGHTS

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

SCHOOL TURNAROUND AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy — Bladen County

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

Achievement: In 2022, the N.C. Charter Schools Review Board nearly closed the school after a failing state grade and 15% math proficiency. Under new leadership, the school transformed.

- Math proficiency increased to 35% by 2024–25
- State grade improved to a C
- Enrollment more than doubled from 115 to 281 students
- Received maximum 10-year charter renewal in 2025

Central Wake High School — Wake County

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

Achievement: Consistently rated "highly effective" under NC's alternative accountability framework with 96% student satisfaction. Expanded programming in 2024–25.

- 95 CTE credits and 24 industry-based certifications earned (up from 74 CTE credits and no certifications)
- 81% of seniors plan to pursue college or technical training; 68% confirmed enrollment in a postsecondary program

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE

Pine Springs Preparatory Academy (PSPA) — Holly Springs

Achievement: A team of 12 teachers and staff traveled to Arusha, Tanzania for a 13-day mission to support four pre- and primary schools.

- Raised \$21,000 and delivered 12 suitcases of school supplies
- Provided instructional coaching, first aid training, and donated technology, sports equipment, and manipulatives
- Established ongoing digital partnerships and plans for a follow-up trip in June 2026
- Deepened global perspectives and student learning

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND CRISIS RESPONSE

FernLeaf Community Charter School — Western North Carolina

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

Achievement: Hurricane Helene destroyed the Creek Campus in fall 2024. Leadership consolidated all students on the Wilderness Campus within three weeks.

- All 750 students back in school under one roof
- Staff showed remarkable resilience despite personal hardship
- Creek Campus rebuilt for K–4 students
- First senior class to graduate in May 2026

NATIONAL RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

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

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

Achievement: Ranked first nationally among charter schools in the Student Empowerment category. All four national IMPACT Award winners were North Carolina charter schools — the first time in the four-year history of the program that a single state has swept all four categories.

TMSA Apex — Math and Science Academy of Apex

Award: Leader in Me Lighthouse School Certification — Franklin Covey Education.

Achievement: One of the highest recognitions for schools using the Leader in Me framework. Recognized for gains in student confidence, attendance, family engagement, and a significant reduction in discipline referrals. Designation held for two years.

Purple Star Award Recipients — 2025–26

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

Achievement: Fifteen charter schools earned the 2025–26 award. Alpha Academy and Anderson Creek Academy received legacy plaques for seven consecutive years; NEAAAT for six years.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Brevard Academy — Amazing Shake Competition

Achievement: Hosted inaugural Amazing Shake Competition for middle school students, modeled after the program from the Ron Clark Academy.

- 150+ students competed across multiple rounds
- Engaged with community professionals to demonstrate professionalism, interview skills, composure, and public speaking

Moram Hamed — TMSA Triad (Guilford County)

Achievement: Selected as one of only 20 statewide nominees in the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program.

- Top 10 in her senior class
- Founder of HOSA chapter; led to TMSA Triad earning the 2025 National Gold Council of Excellence Award
- Volunteers at Novant Health Hospital, Sudan Young Leader, and founder of Mendhi by Moram

Roshan Naik — Pine Lake Preparatory

Achievement: Winner of the 2025 Congressional App Challenge for NC's 10th Congressional District.

- Developed Nation Vitals, a web app for exploring county-level data trends across the U.S.

MILITARY COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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

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