

2026 Charter School Applications

**Melanie Rackley
Education Planning and Development Consultant
Office of Charter Schools
September 8-9, 2026**

Overview

- Statutes, Rules & Policies
- 2025 CSRB Authorization Updates
- 2026 Application Protocol
- 2026 Capacity Interviews
- Questions/Announcements

Charter School Definition

Public Schools of Choice

Operated by independent non-profit boards of directors under a state-authorized charter.

Operational Flexibility

Greater flexibility in curriculum, programming, and staffing than traditional district schools.

Funding & Eligibility

Primary funding from state and local tax dollars. Open to all eligible NC students.

Non-Discriminatory

Cannot discriminate or have religious affiliation. Must use lotteries when demand exceeds capacity.

While charter schools operate with additional flexibility, they are accountable through the state assessment and accountability system.

Statutes, Rules and SBE Policies

CSRB Powers & Duties

G.S. 115C-218(b)(10)

1. Charter Decisions

Approve or deny charter applications, renewals and revocations.

2. Rule Recommendations

The Review Board *shall* make recommendations to the State Board of Education on the adoption of rules.

Statutes, Rules and SBE Policies

Opportunity to Correct & Address Review Board

G.S. 115C-218.2

1. Correct Applications

Applicants must be promptly notified of formatting problems or missing information and given at least **five business days** to correct them.

2. Address the Board

Before acting on charter applications, renewals, nonrenewals, or revocations, the Review Board or its committee must allow an applicant or charter board member an **opportunity to speak**.

Statutes, Rules and SBE Policies

Appeals to the State Board of Education

G.S. 115C-218.9

1. Appeal Timeline

An applicant or charter school may appeal the Review Board's final charter decision within **10 days**.

2. Notice Recipients

Copies of the notice shall be sent to:

- Executive Director of the Office of Charter Schools
- State Superintendent
- Chair of the Review Board
- Applicant or charter school affected

2025 CSRB Approvals

School	Timeline	County	EMO/CMO	CSRB Decision Date
IDYL Wake	Accelerated	Wake	No	9/8/25
Ryze Academy	Accelerated	Guilford*	No	9/9/25
BH2 Academy	Accelerated	Edgecombe	No	9/9/25
Focus Academy Charter	Accelerated	Wake	No	10/7/25
Somerset Preparatory Academy NC	Standard	Union	Yes	12/9/25
Celeste Beauty Academy	Standard	Mecklenburg	No	12/9/25
Cape View Leadership Academy	Standard	Pender	Yes	3/9/26

2026 Charter Application Timeline

- **April 24, 2026**
Applications due to NC Office of Charter Schools
- **June - August 2026**
Evaluators review standard and special request applications.
- **August 2026**
Evaluator summary feedback finalized in preparation of capacity interviews
- **September – December 2026**
CSRB conducts full interviews with applicants
- **January / February 2027**
CSRB concludes second-round interviews, where applicable
- **January 2027**
2026 Application cycle launches for boards seeking to open in 2028-29 (standard) or 2027-28 (accelerated) SY

2026 Special Requests - Key Considerations

Acceleration

Requests must demonstrate compliance with [NC Administrative Rule](#).

- Key Question: Can the applicant meet enrollment numbers on an accelerated schedule?
- Is there an identified facility that is feasible for educational use?

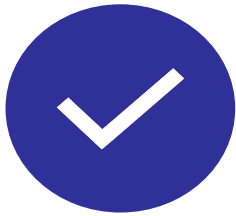
Management Company Partnership (EMO/CMO)

- Applicants must demonstrate that the [EMO/CMO](#) has the capacity to provide academic, financial, and operational support.
- Terms of the management agreement should be transparent and do the provisions allow the applicant to maintain autonomy and oversight of the proposed school?
- Academic and Financial performance of the management organization should include a minimum of three prior years. (FY 2022-23 2023-24; 2024-25)

Remote Academy: Key Personnel Look Fors in School Budget

- Instructional Technology Facilitator
- School Library Media Coordinator
- Data manager(s)
- Remote technician(s)

Quality Application Indicators



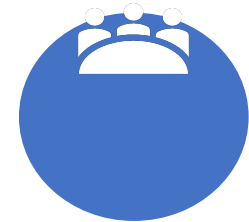
SUFFICIENT
DETAIL IN *ALL*
SECTIONS



COHESION
ACROSS ALL
ELEMENTS OF
THE APPLICATION
AND ALIGNMENT
OF MISSION,
VISION AND
GOALS WITH THE
PROVIDED
EDUCATION,
OPERATIONAL
AND FINANCIAL
PLANS



EVIDENCE-BASED
WITH SIGNIFICANT
DETAIL



INDIVIDUALS ON
GOVERNING
BOARD HAVE
CAPACITY AND
DIVERSITY OF
SKILL SET TO
IMPLEMENT
PROPOSED PLANS

Application Summary Feedback



Evaluator Team

OCS assigned each application 3 evaluators to ensure balanced, multi-perspective reviews:

- **2 External Evaluators**
- **1 OCS Evaluator**



Exceptional Children

Dedicated NCDPI Exceptional Children evaluation to confirm robust support structures and compliance with specialized education standards.



Multilingual Learners

Focused NCDPI Multilingual Learner evaluation to ensure proper language acquisition resources and equitable learning opportunities.

Application Summary Feedback

- Summary feedback is compiled and distributed to applicant boards ahead of capacity interview.
- Each application section is rated, commentary provided with observed strengths/weaknesses.
- Highlight areas that require clarification and any outstanding questions.
- Highlight areas that may have the appearance of conflict of interest.

CSRB Duties



1. Opportunity

Provide an interview opportunity for each applicant with a complete application & submitted application fee.



2. Interview

Conduct Round #1 Interview with qualified applicants.



3. Cast Vote

Make 1 of 3 potential votes:

✓ **Approval**

✗ **Denial**

↺ **Round #2 Interview**

2026 CSRB

Committee Assignments

Performance	Policy
Rita Haire (Committee Chair)	John Eldridge (Committee Chair)
Todd Godbey	Stephen Gay
Eric Sanchez	Hilda Parlér
Jeremy Wall	Lindalyn Kakadelis
Shelly Shope	Bruce Friend
Eric Guckian	Gerald McNair

Round One Interviews

Procedure	Time
OCS Introduction	5 minutes
Applicant Board Intro/Opening Statement	10 minutes
Full CSRB Discussion/Questions	25 <i>or</i> *55 minutes
Applicant Closing Statement	10 minutes
Full CSRB deliberates, motions and vote	10 minutes

Total Time = approx. 60-90 mins

reserved for CMO/EMO applicants

**Interview time is approximate. CSRB reserves the right to adjust interview segments as needed.*

Round Two Interviews



1. Submission

If second round is granted, applicants may only submit items specifically requested by a CSRB member.



2. Questions

Committee Lead is responsible for generating and/or collecting 2nd round questions from fellow committee members.



3. Delivery

OCS will provide the line of questioning to the respective applicant boards.



4. Timeline

Applicants have **10 calendar days** to provide requested documentation.

Round Two Interviews

Procedure	Time
OCS Introduction	5 minutes
Applicant Board Opening Statement	5 minutes
Full CSRB Discussion/Questions	25 minutes
Applicant Closing Statement	5 minutes
Full CSRB deliberates, motions and vote	10 minutes

Total Time = approx. 50 mins

**Interview time is approximate. CSRB reserves the right to adjust interview segments as needed.*



2026 Charter Applications

2026 Applications

County Distribution

1. Gaston – 1	6. Statewide Remote– 1
2. Guilford – 3	7. Stokes– 1
3. Harnett– 1	8. Wake– 1
4. Mecklenburg– 1	
5. New Hanover– 2	

2026 Applicant Cohort

School Name	County	Y1 Grade Span	Y5 Grade Span	Y1 Student Enroll	Y5 Student Enroll
American Leadership Academy Capeton (EMO)	Harnett	K-8	K-8	900	900
Darden-Perry Academy (Accelerated)	New Hanover	K-8	K-12	200	500
Encompass Montessori Charter School (repeat)	Wake	K-1	K-5	144	528
Hawkins Charter	Guilford	K-2; 6	K-8	260	715
Lovira Academy	Stokes	8-12	6-12	100	206
Myrtis Simpson Walker Academy (repeat)	Mecklenburg	K-5	K-8	270	472
New H.O.P.E. Technology Preparatory Academy	New Hanover	9	9-12	95	380
Preparatory Leadership Academy (repeat)	Gaston	K-5	K-5	250	350
Solace Rose Innovation Academy	Guilford	K-1;6	K-8	120	360
Virtual Active Learning Academy of North Carolina	Statewide Remote	K-5	K-12	330	905
Virtus Academy	Guilford	K-3	K-7	300	425
			TOTAL	2,969	5,741

Acceleration

16 NCAC 06G .0509 · Planning Year for New Preliminary Charter Schools

Requirements

The Board *may* accelerate the mandatory planning year for a charter applicant that meets both requirements:

01 Agreement to Participate

Agrees to participate in the planning year during charter application review, without any guarantee of a charter award.

02 Feasible Facility

Demonstrates that there is a facility identified by the applicant that is feasible for opening on an accelerated schedule.

Additional Evaluation Factors

Once the mandatory requirements are verified, the presence or absence of these factors will also be considered:

- ✓ Unique mission and program
- ✓ Committed nonprofit partners
- ✓ Regional economic & educational impact
- ✓ Experienced school-development mentors
- ✓ Barriers to other reform options
- ✓ Charter board mentorship
- ✓ Nonprofit's operating history
- ✓ Board's experience & success

Proposed, New and RTO Schools (Serving New Hanover)

PROJECTED ENROLLMENT	Darden Perry*	New H.O.P.E. Tech*
Year 1	200	95
Year 5	500	380

Statewide Virtual Considerations

(NCCA) Y1 Projected	(PSPVA) Actual 25-26 Best 1 of 2 ADM	(*VALA NC)
1,250 Statewide	3,913 Statewide	330 Statewide

Darden-Perry Academy

Proposed Charter School Overview • Proposed Timeline: Accelerated (July 2027) - New Hanover County

Mission & Details

"Darden-Perry Academy prepares students to thrive academically, socially, and civically through a rigorous, inclusive ASL-English bilingual-bimodal dual-language educational framework..."

Facility: Yes; 5000 Market Street Wilmington, NC

Transportation: Family transportation and carpooling

Food Service: Will not participate in NSLP during initial phase

Weighted Lottery: No

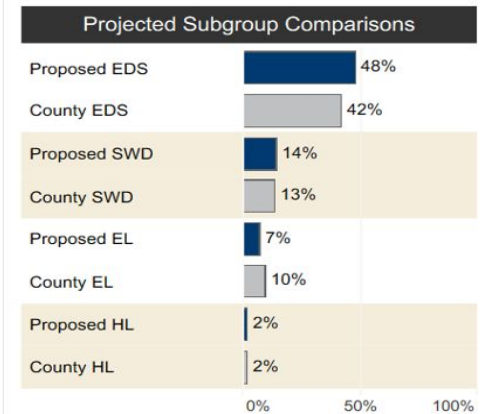
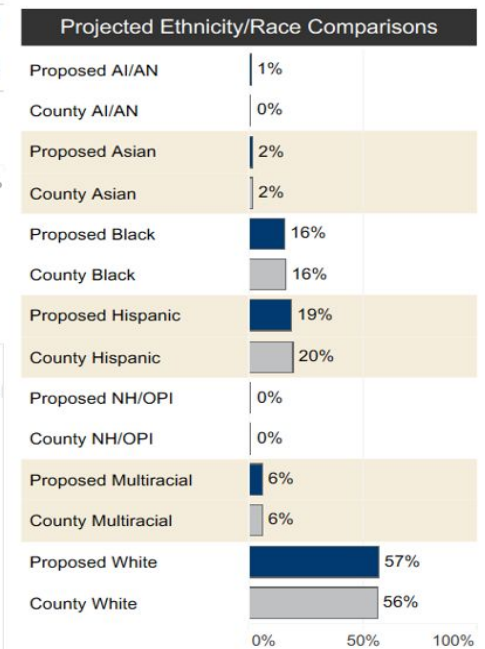
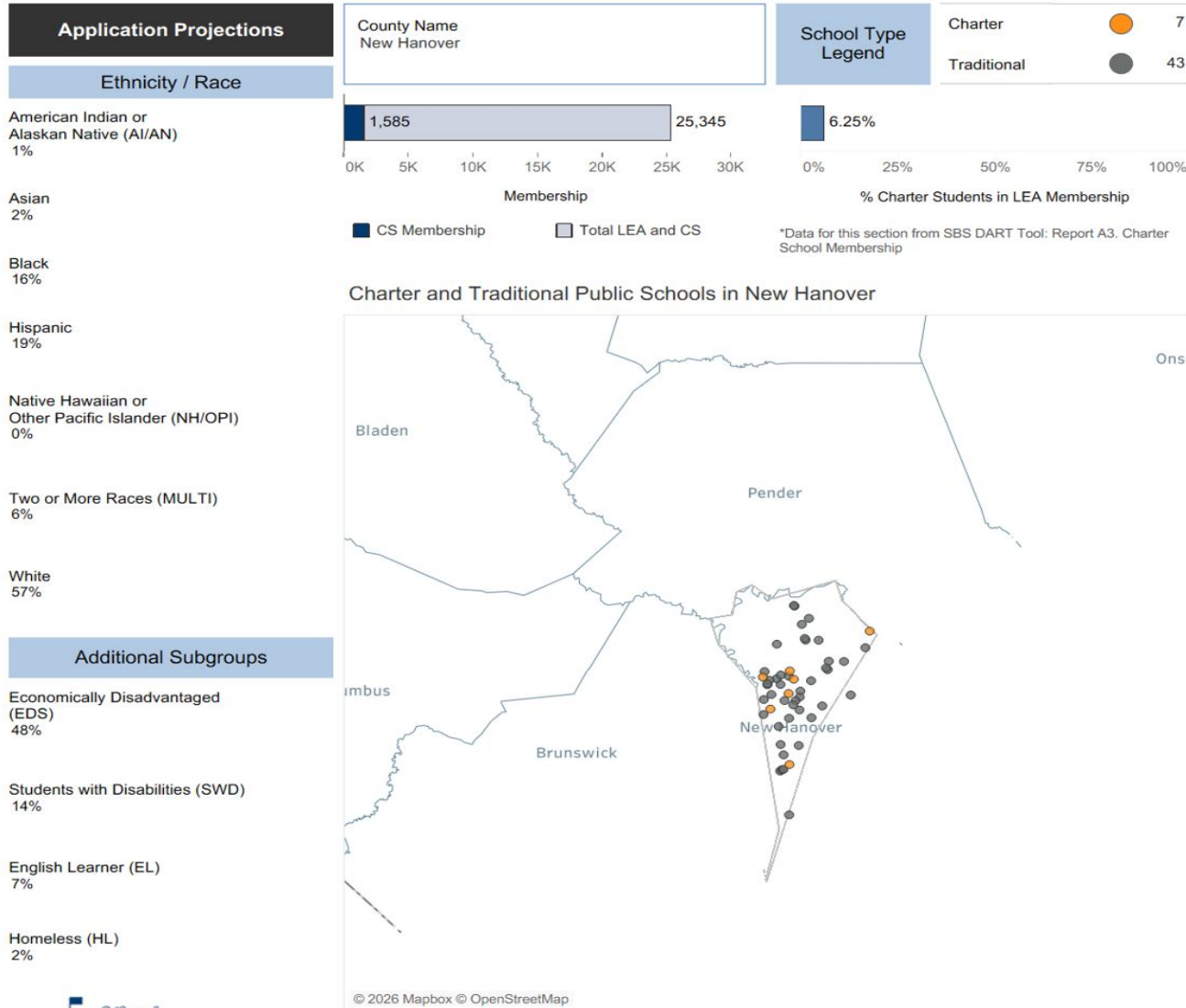
Repeat Applicant: No

EMO/CMO Partnering: No

Year	Grade Levels	Enrollment
Year 1	K-8	200 students
Year 2	K-9	275 students
Year 3	K-10	350 students
Year 4	K-11	425 students
Year 5	K-12	500 students

Darden-Perry Academy

LEA Demographic Comparison



Data Source(s): NCES ELSI, EDDIE, CEDARS, SBS DART Tool (A3)

Last Update: 8/26/2026

Proposed, New and RTO Schools (Serving Wake)

	Encompass Montessori*	IDYL Wake Y1 Projected	Bettis Academy (RTO)	Focus Academy (RTO)	ALA Capeton*
Year 1	144	280	100	200	180
Year 5	528	360	365	390	180

Statewide Virtual Considerations

(NCCA) Y1 Projected	(PSPVA) Actual 25-26 Best 1 of 2 ADM	(*VALA NC)
1,250 Statewide	3,912 Statewide	330 Statewide

Encompass Montessori

Proposed Charter School Overview • Proposed Timeline: Standard (August 2028) - Wake County

Mission & Details

"To provide Wake County families with an effective, proven, child-centered K-8 public Montessori education in a safe and supportive environment, so students can flourish and become community-centered leaders."

Facility: Prospective zip codes 27545/27610; Epic Change Ed (Owner's Rep), 22Beacon (Dev), Hubrich (GC).

Transportation: Phased (Y1 carpool, Ph2 contract, Ph3 in-house)

Food Service: NSLP and CEP

Weighted Lottery: Yes

Repeat Applicant: Yes

EMO/CMO Partnering: Assistance from National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector(NCMPS) & Epic Change Education

Year	Grade Levels	Enrollment
Year 1	K-1	144 students
Year 2	K-2	240 students
Year 3	K-3	336 students
Year 4	K-4	432 students
Year 5	K-5	528 students
At Capacity: 864 students (SY 37-38)		

Encompass Montessori

LEA Demographic Comparison

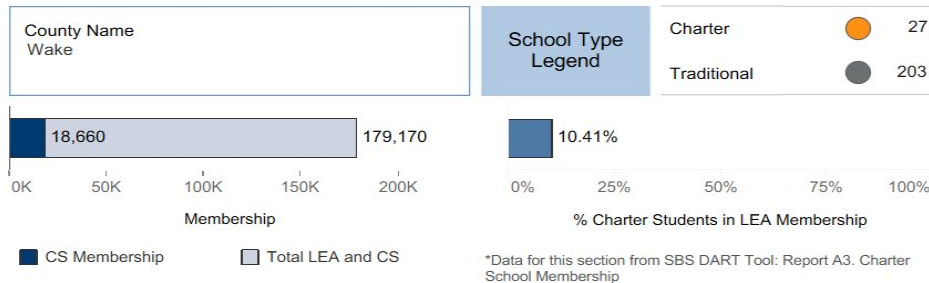
Application Projections

Ethnicity / Race

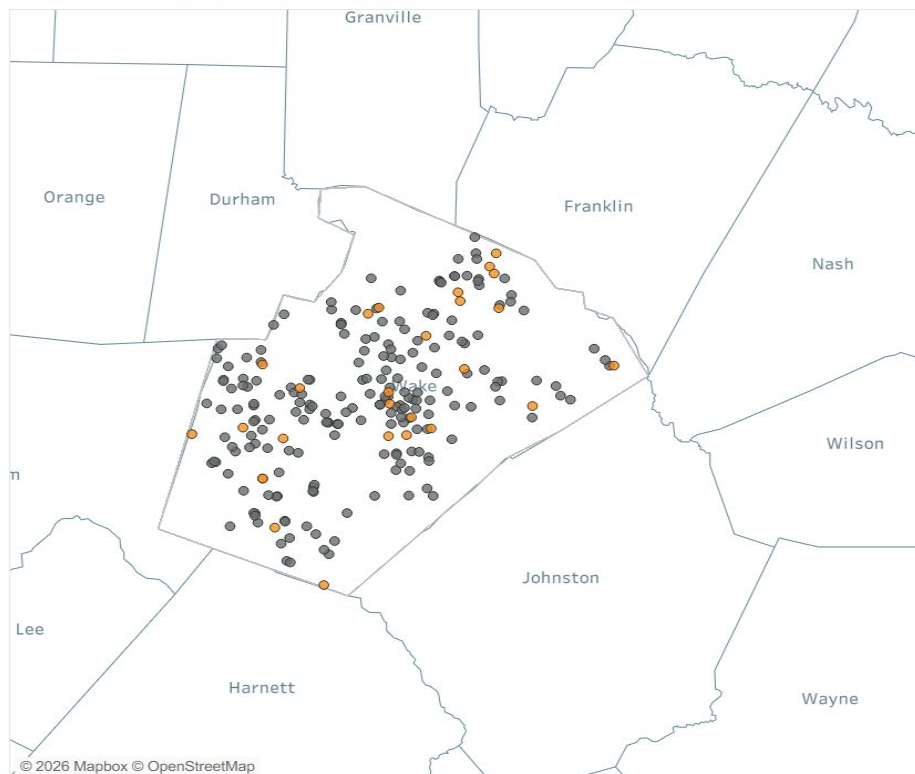
American Indian or Alaskan Native (AI/AN)	0%
Asian	4%
Black	37%
Hispanic	18%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NH/OPI)	0%
Two or More Races (MULTI)	4%
White	37%

Additional Subgroups

Economically Disadvantaged (EDS)	42%
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	13%
English Learner (EL)	17%
Homeless (HL)	4%



Charter and Traditional Public Schools in Wake



Projected Ethnicity/Race Comparisons

Proposed AI/AN	0%
County AI/AN	0%
Proposed Asian	4%
County Asian	14%
Proposed Black	37%
County Black	22%
Proposed Hispanic	18%
County Hispanic	20%
Proposed NH/OPI	0%
County NH/OPI	0%
Proposed Multiracial	4%
County Multiracial	5%
Proposed White	37%
County White	40%

Projected Subgroup Comparisons

Proposed EDS	42%
County EDS	34%
Proposed SWD	13%
County SWD	12%
Proposed EL	17%
County EL	11%
Proposed HL	4%
County HL	3%

Data Source(s): NCES ELSI, EDDIE, CEDARS, SBS DART Tool (A3)

Last Update: 8/26/2026

October 2026: Round One Interviews

Performance Committee

- American Leadership Academy Capeton (Harnett)

Policy Committee

- New H.O.P.E. Tech (New Hanover)
- VALA NC (Statewide Remote)
- TBD – 2nd round accelerated applicants, if applicable

Office of Charter Schools Contact Info



Email

Melanie Rackley
melanie.rackley@dpi.nc.gov



Phone

Direct Line
(984) 236-2712



Web

North Carolina Department of
Public Instruction
[Visit Charter Schools Page](#)