



NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR
**PUBLIC
CHARTER
SCHOOLS**

THE CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM

2023 IMPACT REPORT

**A modest federal investment with
strong returns for students**



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The Charter Schools Program (CSP) is the only source of dedicated federal funding to support the creation, expansion, and replication of public charter schools.

At its fiscal year (FY) 2023 funding level of \$440 million, the CSP amounts to less than 1% of federal spending on K-12 education but has a significant impact on the communities that charter schools serve. For more than 25 years, the CSP has provided states with resources to help ensure every child can access a high-quality public education. It forms the backbone of the charter school movement, strengthening efforts to provide more equitable opportunities for all students. Increasing the CSP funding level to \$500 million would be a small but important step towards a public education system in which every student has the opportunity to attend a school that meets their unique needs.

Since the first charter school law was passed in 1991, these innovative and student-centered public schools have grown to serve 3.7 million students—7.5% of America’s public school students—in 7,800 schools across the country.

During the first two full school years of the pandemic, approximately 240,000 additional students enrolled in charter schools, representing 7% growth. Charter schools were the only sector of public education to grow during the pandemic. The CSP is critically important to the continued growth of the charter school community, and more than one million students have access to high-quality public schools that would not have existed without the CSP.

Despite consistent research confirming the impact of charter schools on student outcomes, as well as increased community demand, funding for the CSP has been flat since FY 2019, limiting the charter school community’s ability to grow and serve more students. Flat funding of the CSP is

even more remarkable given the substantial and historic increase in federal funding for nearly every other aspect of K-12 education since 2020.

In addition to Congress maintaining, instead of increasing, funding for the CSP, the Biden administration has made it more difficult for applicants to receive that funding. In 2022, the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) enacted new regulations for the CSP that add requirements and policy priorities not in the statute. Although the Department softened its proposed rules in response to more than 25,000 comments and an outcry from charter school parents and advocates, they still create unnecessary administrative hurdles, especially for culturally affirming charter schools. We remain concerned that these rules will discourage potential applicants from applying and burden charter school leaders and grantees with compliance requirements counter to the mission of charter schools.

This report explores the impact of the CSP on communities around the country and makes the case for increased funding for the program. In these pages, we explain the charter school model, offer a brief history of the CSP, profile inspiring grantees, and address persistent misconceptions. Charter schools are a vital part of the public school ecosystem, and by advocating for the CSP, we can help more students have access to a public school that meets their unique needs.



Nina Rees
President and CEO

Investing in the CSP Helps to Meet the Demand for a High-Quality Public Education

7.5% of the 50 million public school students in the U.S. are served by charter schools.¹

70% of parents and **61%** of adults support charter schools.²

84% [Of parents regardless of enrollment choice] agree that charter schools should be available to the families who would choose them.³

74% of parents would consider sending their child to a public charter school if one were available to them.⁴

~240,000 additional students enrolled in charter schools, representing nearly 7% growth. Charter schools were the only sector of public education to grow during the pandemic.⁵ Additional funds for the CSP are critical to meet this community need.

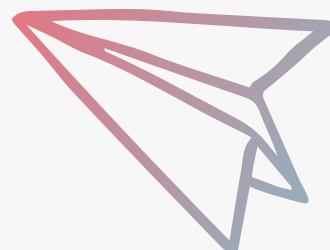


Increased funding for the CSP is critical to support the growth of public charter schools to meet community needs. Additional funds will also help improve schools' ability to access or finance facilities through the CSP facility programs. Accessing an affordable, appropriate facility is one of the biggest challenges facing new and growing charter schools, and increased funding for the two facilities-related programs within the CSP would help address this critical need.

The CSP also supports the opening of successful schools. A 2022 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that within the first five years of operation, schools that did not receive CSP funding were 1.6 times (or 40%) more likely to have closed than those that received CSP funding.⁶ Another GAO report from 2023 also found that new charter schools that received CSP funding to open grew faster than peer schools over time.⁷

As schools and communities continue to grapple with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, our nation needs schools that can accelerate learning gains, and families need educational options now more than ever. In fact, the 2022 Harris Poll survey found that parents agree that quality of instruction, individualized support, teachers' flexibility and adaptability, and academic rigor are absolutely essential to them when it comes to their children's education, and these factors became even more important during the pandemic.⁸

Increasing the CSP funding level to \$500 million would be an important step towards a public education system in which every student has the opportunity to attend a school that meets their unique needs.



Why charter schools?

Charter schools are public schools and are therefore tuition-free and open to all students.

In exchange for greater accountability, public charter schools receive greater flexibility and autonomy to design classrooms that meet students' unique needs. The terms of this accountability and autonomy are laid out under an independent contract, or charter, with an authorizing agency, or authorizer. These authorizers are responsible for approving new charter schools and holding them accountable for meeting the goals, commitments, and responsibilities laid out in their charters or closing them when they do not. Each state decides which entities can become authorizers, which typically include: school districts, higher education institutions, nonprofit groups with a focus on children and families, and statewide departments of education or offices established specifically to oversee charter schools.

Charter schools are a critical part of a healthy public school ecosystem that gives parents and other caregivers a choice about where to send their child to school.

Ultimately, charter schools are accountable to parents who must choose to enroll their children. Unlike district-operated schools, charter schools are also accountable to their authorizers, who determine whether the schools are serving students well and can remain open.

Charter schools offer a wide variety of school models, such as STEM-focused, arts education, environment-focused, Montessori, classical, culturally affirming, and college- or career-prep schools. By operating independently of school districts, charter schools can set their own curriculum, hire their own teachers, determine their own school calendar, and adapt to the needs of their students without having to run every decision through a school district bureaucracy. Nevertheless, charter schools are also required to meet the same academic testing requirements as other public schools and adhere to all civil rights laws.

There is a growing body of evidence that high-quality charter schools can deliver life-changing results, especially for students from low-income backgrounds and students of color.

A 2021 analysis of research on charter school effects and competitive influence by the National Bureau of Economic Research, for example, highlighted trends from three decades of research on charter schools.

The report found that:

- Charter schools located in urban areas boost student test scores, particularly for Black, Hispanic, and low-income students.
- Attending some urban charter schools increases college enrollment and voting.
- The competitive impact of charter schools on district public schools suggests a beneficial influence on neighboring schools' student achievement.⁹

A 2022 study from the National Center for Research on Education Access and Choice (REACH) at Tulane University assessed the impact of charter schools on student outcomes, for both students attending charter schools and for students in nearby district schools

In districts where at least 10% of students attend charter schools...

- ☆ 2 to 4 percentage point increase in high school graduation rates
- ☆ 2 to 4 percentage point increase in high school graduation rates
- ☆ 3 percentile increase in reading scores¹⁰

Lower-income students and students of color made greater learning gains in charter schools.

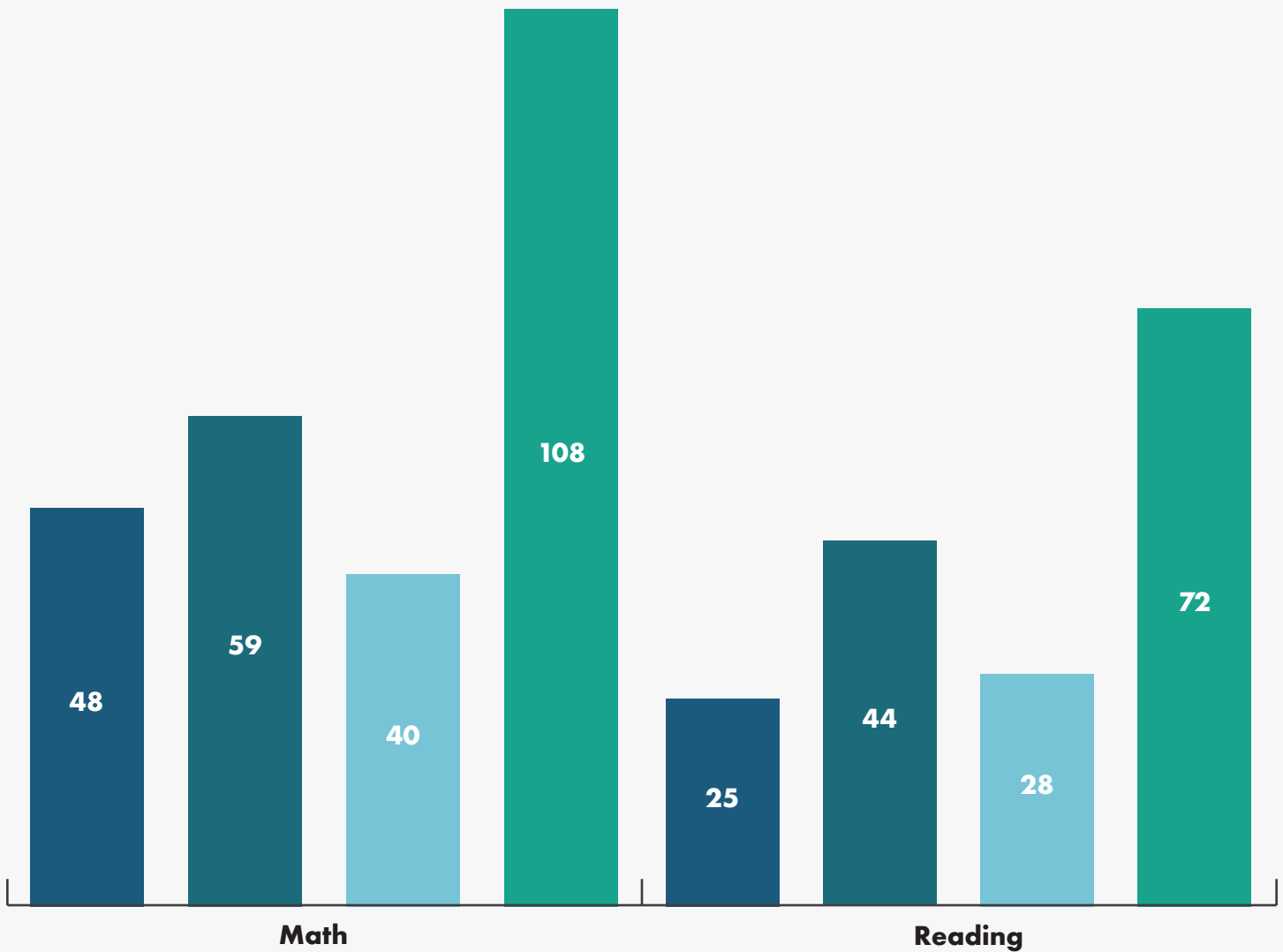
A 2020 study from the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University also found greater academic gains for students in charter schools than students in district-operated schools, with the difference amounting to almost an additional half year of learning for charter school students over the course of the study.

- Black students from low-income background made the greatest gains.
- 8th graders attending charter schools showed learning gains that were 3 months ahead of their district school peers from 2005 to 2017.
- Black students, in particular, were an additional six months ahead.¹¹ Given that one in three charter school students is Black, this is especially noteworthy.¹²
- Children from the bottom 25% of the socioeconomic distribution demonstrated nearly twice as much growth as their peers in district schools.¹³



Average additional learning days gained by urban charter school students

[when compared to their public district school peers].



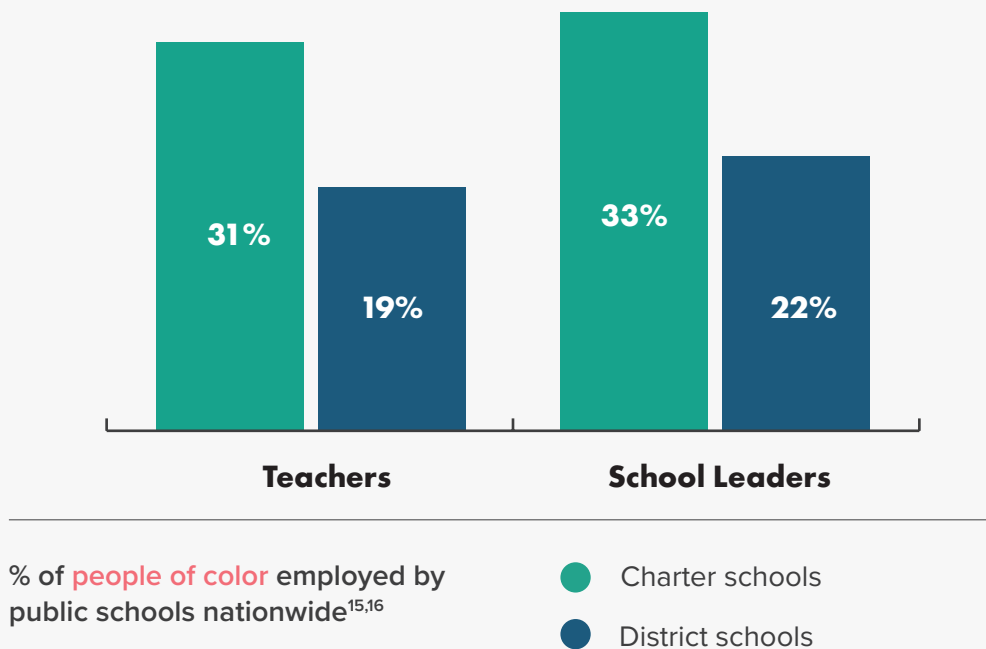
● Days gained by low-income Hispanic students

● Days gained by low-income Black students¹⁴

● Days gained by students in urban charter schools

● Equivalent number of days gained over 4 or more years [per year]

The autonomy of the charter school model can also mean charter schools have more *flexibility* to cultivate a diverse workforce that reflects the students they serve.



A Fordham Institute study of schools in North Carolina found that Black students in charter schools were about 50% more likely to have a Black teacher and, proportionally, charter schools employ about 35% more Black teachers than district-operated schools.¹⁷

Research shows that having teachers that reflect students' diversity benefits students, including by reducing the probability of dropping out of high school.¹⁸

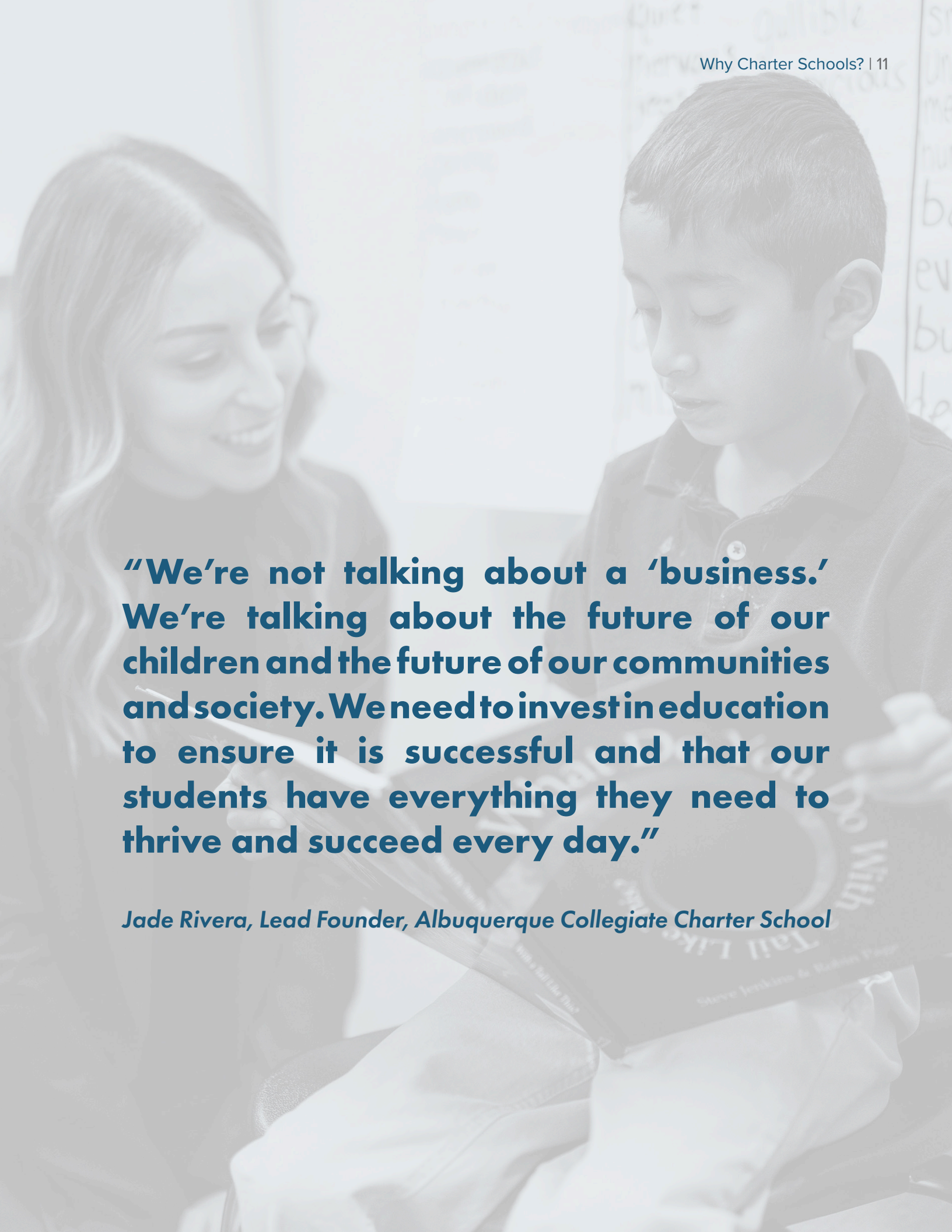


Many charter schools also give teachers the opportunity to work in a school environment that values their contributions and invests in their development. For example, a 2020 study from the Fordham Institute on teachers in Pennsylvania found that, on average, teachers in a charter school network improve their performance more rapidly than teachers in other public schools.¹⁹ Schools associated with a charter school network are also more likely to promote their most effective teachers to leadership roles.²⁰

Charter schools often deliver these results despite having fewer resources than district-operated schools. Research published in 2020 by the University of Arkansas highlights these funding inequities. The study shows that in 18 urban school districts around the country, students attending district-operated schools receive about 33% more per-pupil funding than students in charter schools.²¹ Lack of access to local funding was the greatest cause of this gap.

These clear results explain why the CSP has earned broad bipartisan support since its inception. In the following pages, you will learn more about the structure of the program and its impact on students around the country.



A faded background image of a teacher and a student. The teacher, a woman with long dark hair, is smiling and looking at a book held by the student. The student, a young boy, is looking down at the book. The book cover has the text "Tail Like a Lion" and "Steve Jenkins & Robin Page".

“We’re not talking about a ‘business.’ We’re talking about the future of our children and the future of our communities and society. We need to invest in education to ensure it is successful and that our students have everything they need to thrive and succeed every day.”

Jade Rivera, Lead Founder, Albuquerque Collegiate Charter School

Centering Community Needs: Charter Schools and Community Engagement

As schools of choice, charter schools are uniquely accountable for meeting the needs of the communities they serve: for a charter school to stay open, families must choose to send their children there. This unique accountability to families means charter schools around the country must understand the communities they serve and actively respond to their needs. Jade Rivera, Lead Founder of Albuquerque Collegiate Charter School, explained, “[The flexibility of the charter school model] is everything. It allows us to turn on a dime and really be responsive to the wants and needs of our families.”

In addition to the family and community accountability inherent in the charter school model, CSP statutory and regulatory language places considerable emphasis on family and community involvement. When applying for a subgrant from a state entity, for example, applicants must include descriptions of how they will solicit and consider input from parents and members of the community on the operation of the school and how they will use effective parent, family,



and community engagement strategies during ongoing operations. State entity subgrantees can also use CSP funds to carry out direct community engagement activities. The charter management organization (CMO) competition similarly requires applicants to describe how they will gather and consider parent and community impact on each proposed new school, including in the area of school governance.

Albuquerque Collegiate Charter School offers an exceptional example of what it means to actively engage the community. Founded in 2018, Albuquerque Collegiate was designed to give students in one of the lowest-income neighborhoods in Albuquerque access to a high-quality education without having to drive across town. Early learners in kindergarten through second grade at Albuquerque Collegiate also boast some of the highest early literacy scores in the state. Without access to a school like Albuquerque Collegiate, parents would have no other option but to send their children to local schools with significantly lower test scores.





But Albuquerque Collegiate isn't just about testing. The school is deeply committed to building a stronger, more resilient community by connecting families and community members to the services they need to support student success and well-being. Building on what they learned from the pandemic, Albuquerque Collegiate plans to create a "community campus" where families will have access to supports for "cradle to career and beyond." Their planned future campus would include satellite offices for vital services, such as a food bank and a behavioral health agency, a daycare center, and even something as simple as a laundry room. All of these services will help eliminate barriers to success for students and families.

In addition to wraparound services, Albuquerque Collegiate makes itself accessible through language. Eighty-two percent of Albuquerque

Collegiate students identify as Hispanic and the school is located in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. So, school leader Jade Rivera has leveraged CSP funds to invest heavily in advertisements, recruitment, and other efforts in the Spanish language. These efforts ensure language isn't a barrier to enrollment for Spanish-speaking families.

All this community engagement is paying off for Albuquerque Collegiate: the school is at full enrollment capacity with many more students who want to attend. Growth is limited only by the size of its current school facility. Albuquerque Collegiate is seeking a permanent building that will allow the school to grow to serve the many families waiting for the opportunity to send their children. For Albuquerque Collegiate and charter schools around the country, centering community and family needs is crucial to their success.

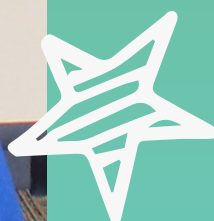


The Charter School Promise: Accountability



Some criticize the CSP because in a small number of cases, funds have been awarded to schools that close or fail to open. It is true that the nature of making grants to schools after they have applied for a charter, but before they open, means funds will sometimes go to schools that do not ultimately succeed. Improving school performance and educational outcomes for students, however, is central to the mission of the charter school movement, and effective accountability is vital to school improvement across the sector. School closures indicate that state charter school laws are working, and authorizers are doing their job by closing schools that don't meet their accountability agreements.

In reality, school closures are a feature of the charter school model, not a flaw. Closing low-performing schools distinguishes charter schools from district-run schools, which can continue to spend taxpayer dollars and systematically underserve students for years. From 2010 to 2017, nearly \$7 billion was spent on 1,250 public schools, each of which





was eligible based on their performance to receive up to \$2 million, in the federal School Improvement Grant program. Results were mixed at best, but none of those schools plans to return its funding, and none of the students at those schools can recoup those years of learning.²² Further, our review of publicly available data finds that, on average, only 4% of charter schools close each year.²³

Moreover, while any school closure can be disruptive to students, CSP funds awarded to schools that ultimately closed did not simply go to waste. Teachers and staff carry their professional learning and experience with them to other jobs, just as they would leaving a district-run school, and hard assets can be transferred to other schools. It is also important to note that schools do not receive their full grant funding upfront, meaning a school that never opens, or that closes before the end of its grant period, doesn't receive its full CSP award. According to the U.S. Department of Education's analysis, only 1.7% of grantees closed before their second year of operation.



About The Charter Schools Program

The only federal program dedicated to supporting charter schools—public schools that are free to attend, open to all students, and operate independently of school districts.



The first charter school opened in 1991 in Minnesota, with additional charter schools opening the following year in California. Because charter schools cannot access per-pupil funding until students enroll, the U.S. Congress and President Bill Clinton worked together to enact the Charter Schools Program in 1994 to provide potential schools with short-term funding to cover school startup costs. The CSP underwrites only non-sustained costs, such as purchasing desks and hiring staff, and cannot be used for construction or significant renovations.

In later years, additional funding streams were added to meet the changing needs of the movement. Today, the CSP also includes two funding streams that were created in 2001 to assist with the cost of facilities, which most charter schools—unlike other public schools—are forced to pay for on their own. Congress also added a separate program to support the expansion and replication of high-performing charter schools that had already begun to replicate their results in new communities, especially in those with poor educational outcomes.

Since the inception of the CSP, Congress has appropriated some \$6.7 billion for the program - less than 2% of the federal investment in the Title I program, which provides financial assistance to schools that serve children from low-income backgrounds, over the same time period.²⁴ Charter schools are more likely than district-run schools to be located in urban areas, and charter schools, on average, serve higher proportions of students who are Black, Hispanic, and from low-income backgrounds.

A 2020 report from Bellwether Education Partners, “Clearing the Air: An Analysis of the Federal Charter Schools Program,” provides a deeper look at how the program has evolved over the years and its impact on families and communities.²⁵

>60% of charter school students come from low-income families.

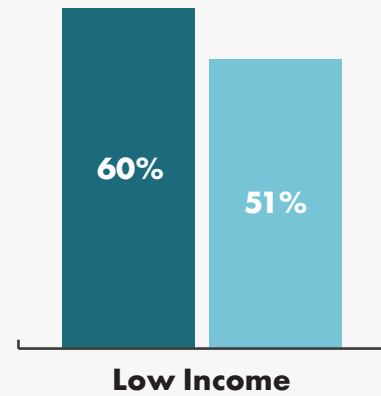
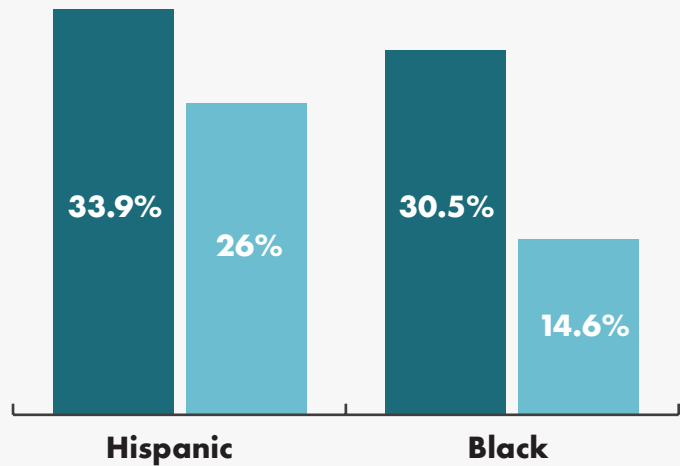
~45% of operational public charter schools that collectively serve 1.3 million students, were funded by the CSP. [Between school year 2006-2007 and school year 2016-2017].²⁶

CSP Funding Impact on Students

● CSP-funded schools
 ● District schools
 ● Charter sector overall

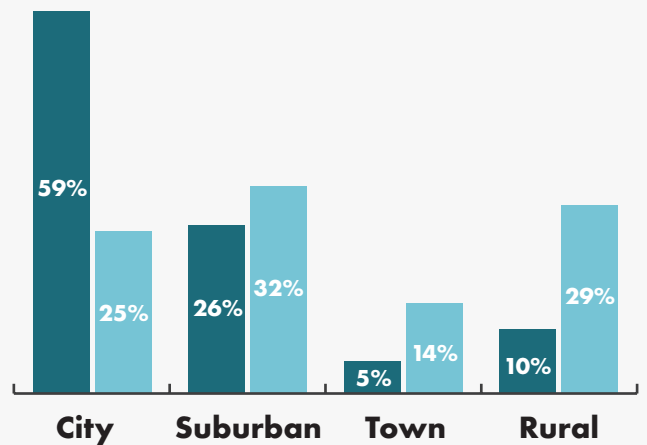
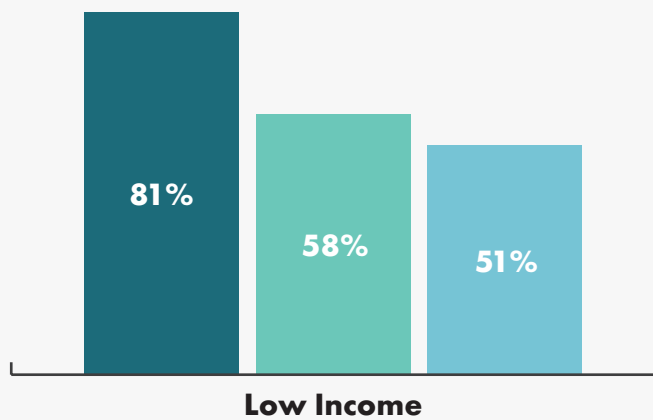
Most recent available data shows that CSP-funded schools served higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students than district operated schools.²⁷

Most recent available data shows that CSP-funded schools higher percentages of low-income students than district-operated schools.²⁸



The Replication and Expansion (R&E) Program supports CMOs serving students from low-income families

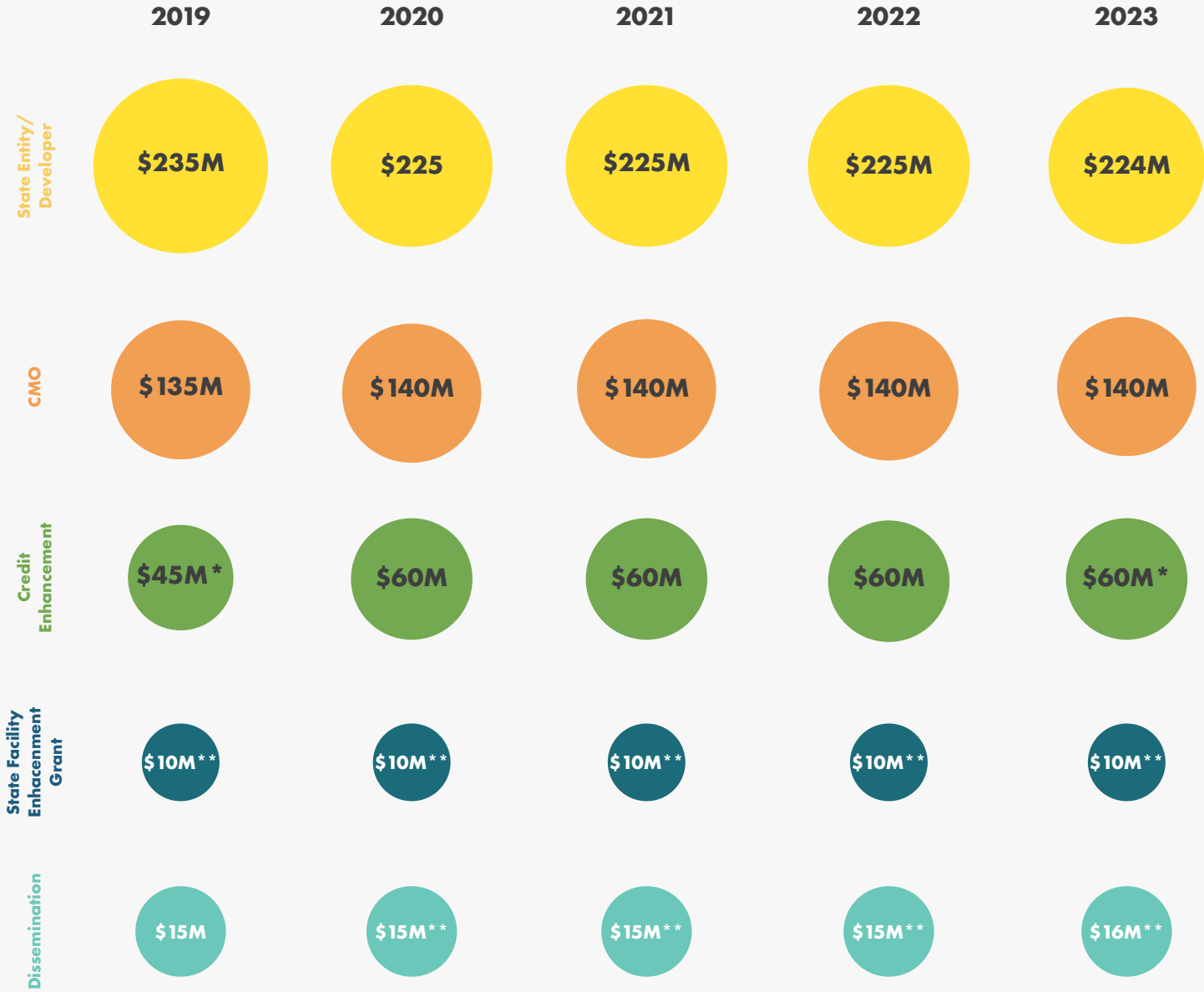
A higher percentage of CSP-funded schools are in cities than are district schools.²⁹



Source: WestEd. ²⁰¹⁹. The U.S. Department of Education's Charter Schools Program Overview. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education. Slides 11, 12, 14, 24.

Five Years of Charter Schools Program Funding

*Not less than | **Not more than



2019-2023
FLAT FUNDING

\$440M

Even as overall federal investment in education has risen in recent years, funding for the CSP has remained flat, limiting the charter school community's ability to grow and serve more students.



Program Structure

The CSP has five key grant competitions. Each supports activities important to the success of charter schools.



Grants to state entities (SE grants) make up the largest CSP grant component. These grants can be awarded to state education agencies (SEAs), governors, state charter school boards, or state charter school support organizations (CSOs) which, in turn, award subgrants for the planning and initial operation of new charter schools.

Grants for replication and expansion of high-quality schools (CMO grants) are awarded to CMOs that have shown evidence of success to help them open new schools or expand existing schools to serve more students.

Facilities financing assistance includes the **Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program (CE)**, which provides support for charter schools to acquire or renovate facilities, and the **State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant**, which provides matching funds for states that provide funding for charter school facilities on a per-pupil basis.

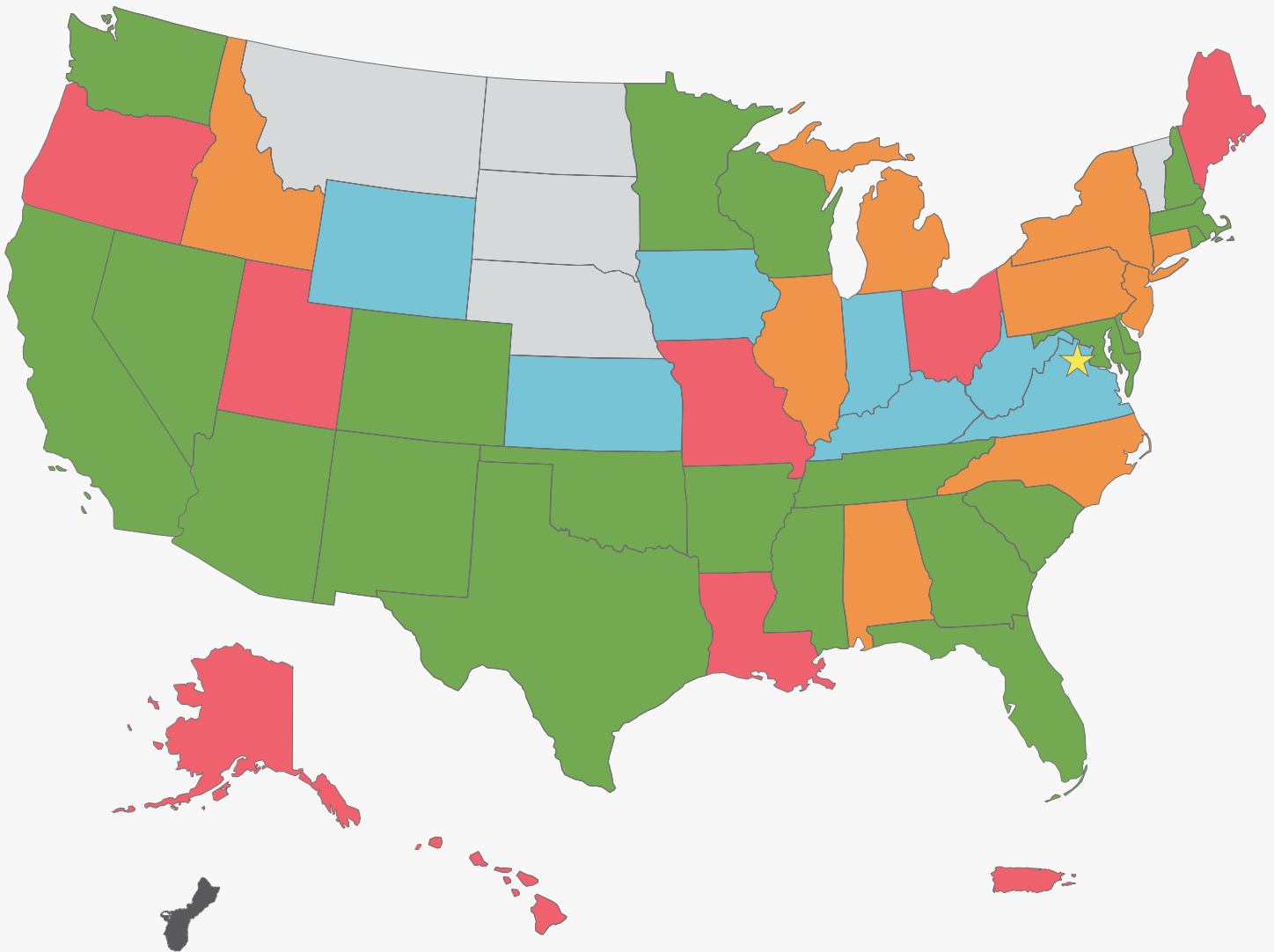
Grants to developers: In states where no state entity has an active CSP grant, individual schools and CMOs may apply directly to the U.S. Department of Education for funds to support opening a new school or to replicate or expand a high-quality school.

National dissemination grants: The key purpose of these grants is to increase quality throughout the sector by disseminating best practices related to charter school operations and management.



Current Reach of CSP Grants (2023)

- State Entity
- Developer
- Both State Entity and Developer
- No Funding
- No Charter School Law



32 states have active State Entity grants.

9 states have State Entity and developer grants.³¹

9 states, including Puerto Rico, have only a developer grant.³⁰

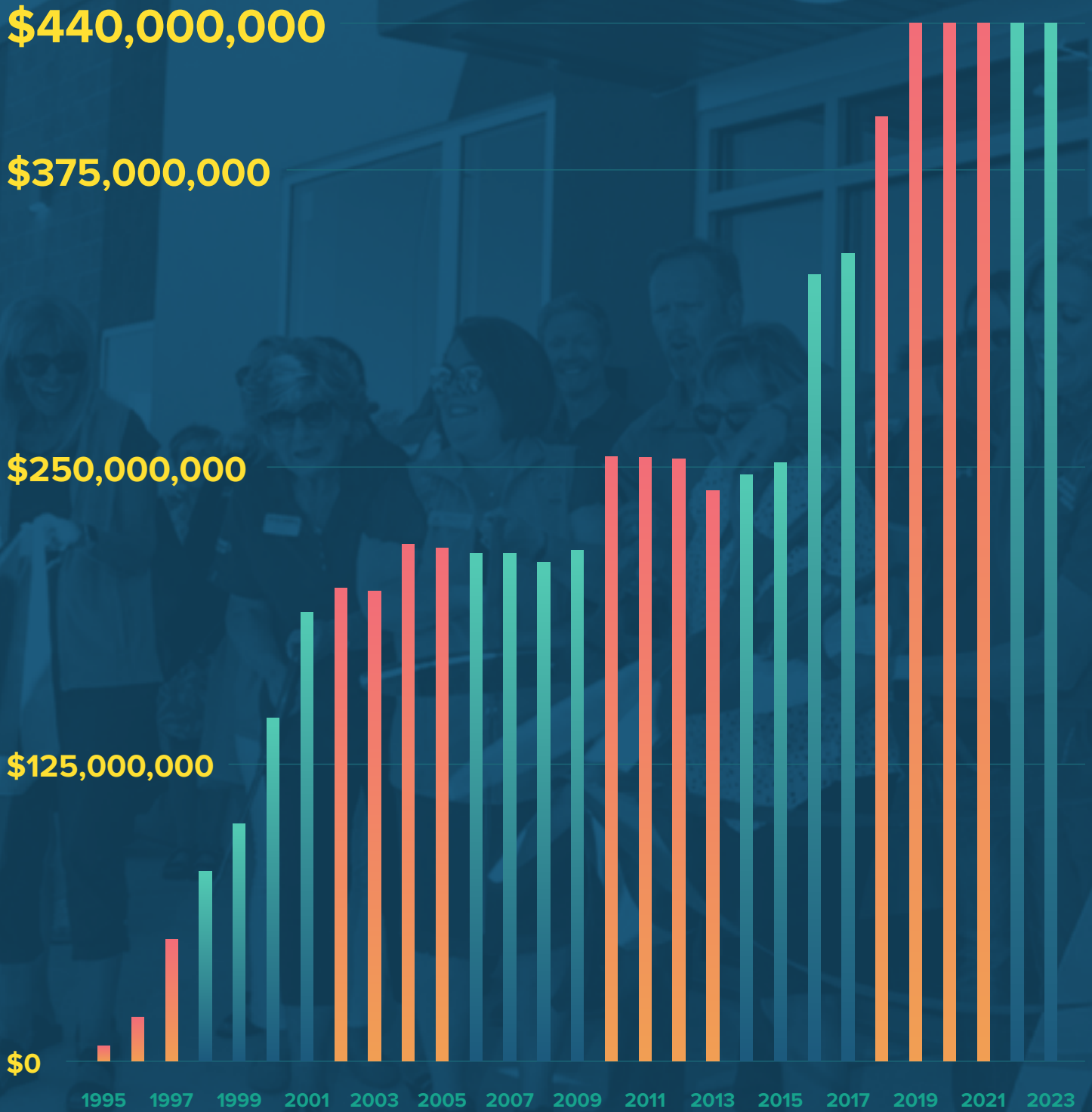
7 states with charter school laws, including Guam, do not have a CSP grant.

³⁰ Puerto Rico, Guam, and the District of Columbia are considered states for the purposes of this document.

³¹ States can have both developer and state entity grants when there are developer grantees that received their awards before the state entity received its grant.

Charter Schools Program Funding

Fiscal Year 1995–2023



What Do CSP Startup Grants Pay For?

CSP startup grants pay for non-sustained costs associated with starting a new charter school, not for ongoing costs associated with operating the schools. Major categories of allowable CSP expenditures include:

- **Professional development and recruitment:** Preparing teachers, school leaders, and specialized instructional support personnel, including by providing professional development, and hiring and compensating teachers, school leaders, and specialized instructional support personnel during the implementation phase of the grant
- **Supplies:** Acquiring supplies, training, equipment (including technology), and educational materials (including developing and acquiring instructional materials)
- **Minor renovations:** Carrying out necessary renovations to ensure that a new school building complies with applicable statutes and regulations, as well as making minor facility repairs
- **Community engagement:** Carrying out community engagement activities, which may include student and staff recruitment (because students and teachers are not assigned to charter schools)
- **Transportation:** Providing one-time startup costs associated with providing transportation to students, such as buying a bus
- **Other non-sustained costs not met from other funding sources**



New Rules for the Charter Schools Program

In March 2022, the U.S. Department of Education released a Notice of Proposed Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria (NPP) for the CSP. These proposed rules were developed without consultation with the charter school community, as required by section 4307 in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act,³² and proposed significant new requirements that would make it harder for charter schools to access funds.

The National Alliance and the entire charter school community strongly opposed these proposed rules, which would have further complicated an already complex program and would likely disproportionately impact small, single-site charter schools, rural school leaders, and leaders of color.

The proposed rules included numerous burdensome requirements that would make it harder for charter schools—especially small, single-site schools with limited capacity—to access these vital funds. For example, the proposals included requirements that would hold charter schools responsible for maintaining diverse student and staff populations, even in communities that are not diverse, such as in rural areas, on Native American Lands, and in urban communities that are likely to be racially isolated. The U.S. Department of Education also proposed asking for documentation of “unmet need” (such as over-enrollment in surrounding district schools) and evidence that proposed charter schools wouldn’t “exceed the number of public schools needed to accommodate

demand in the community.” These requirements imply that charter schools should only open in districts where schools are overcrowded. Around the country, charter schools have succeeded in all sorts of communities, especially in ones where the existing district schools have struggled to serve historically underserved students—regardless of the enrollment levels at district schools.

Another proposed requirement would prioritize charter schools that collaborate with local school districts, essentially giving districts power to disadvantage new charter school applicants by refusing to collaborate. The NPP also proposed significant reporting requirements regarding contracts with for-profit entities. While the National Alliance supports transparency, the proposed requirements were onerous and confusing, especially for small, single-site schools. In addition to these other problematic requirements, one of the fundamental flaws of the proposed regulations was that they would empower CSP application peer reviewers to second-guess decisions that are central to the authorizing process about where and how charter schools can operate.

In response to the proposed rules, the National Alliance rallied the charter school community to send the message that these rules would hurt students and families. Across the comment period, more than 25,000 letters were submitted and at least 10,000 of those came through the National Alliance’s call to action.

Diverse state and local partners submitted letters detailing how the proposed rules would impact their communities. And a broad, bipartisan coalition of elected officials wrote letters, including governors, members of Congress, and state attorneys general. Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) also led a coalition of 48 Senators to vote in favor of invoking the Congressional Review Act to strike the rules. While the vote ultimately fell short, the charter school community is grateful for these champions of public education.

After this public outcry, the U.S. Department of Education softened the proposed rules. Though the final rules will be less harmful than what was originally proposed, they are not without impact. The first competitions were held under the new rules in summer 2022 with a dramatically truncated application period of just 30 days, and six state entities and six developers received awards. Now, the full impact of the new rules remains to be seen as new FY 2022 state entity grantees begin to make subgrants in their states and future competitions are held under these rules. The National Alliance will continue to work with elected officials and the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that the CSP can serve its essential purpose of expanding opportunities for students.



“We are offering something different and families should have that right, particularly our families that have been traditionally disenfranchised and generationally systematically underserved. We have to be able to give options. When we have options for our groceries, for where we buy our apples, should we not have for the education that we want our children to receive?”

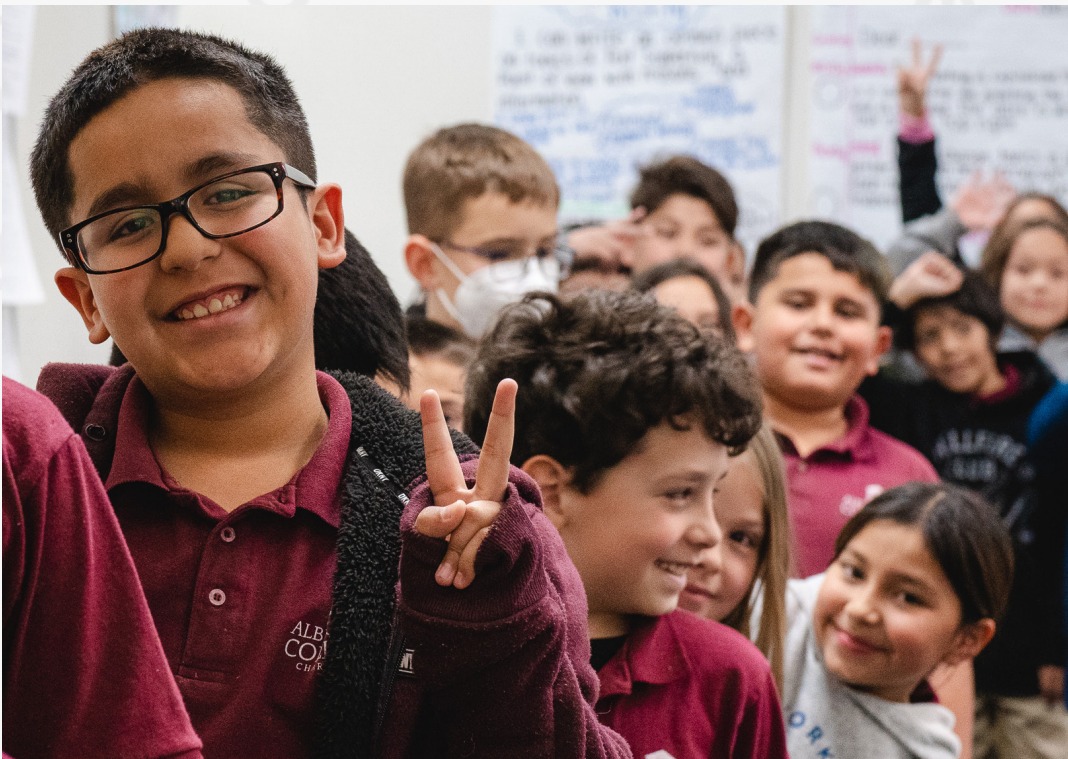
**Jade Rivera, Lead Founder,
Albuquerque Collegiate Charter School**



Overview of

FY 2022

CSP Program Awards



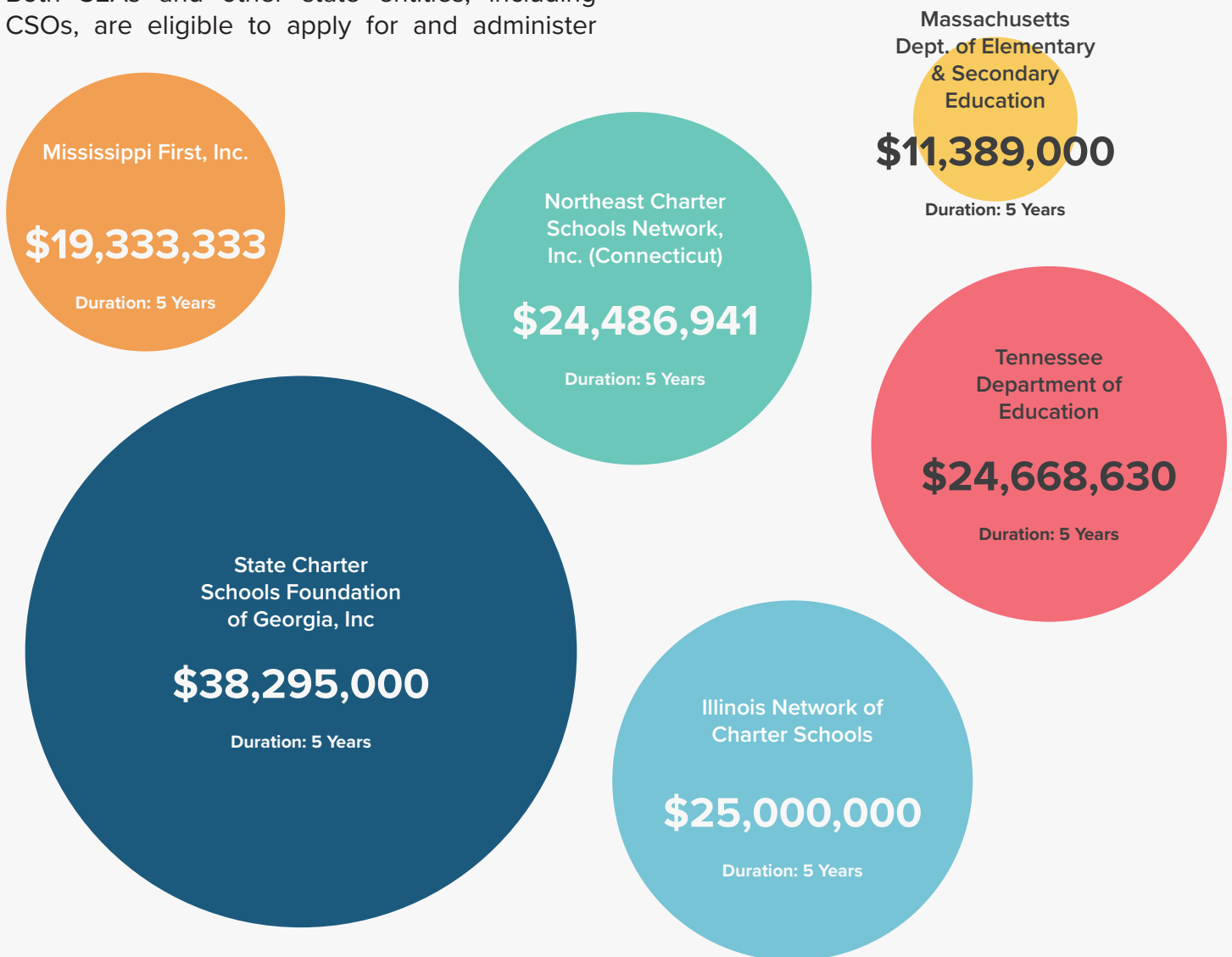
Grants to State Entities

At the core of the CSP are the State Entity Grants. The State Entity Program offers competitive grants to states, which then make subgrants within their states to open new charter schools or to replicate or expand existing charter schools. For-profit management companies are not eligible to apply for these grants. To receive a subgrant, a school must meet state law requirements for schools, as well as meet the definition of a charter school in federal law. The federal definition includes the requirement that schools have open enrollment and conduct a lottery if they are oversubscribed.

Both SEAs and other state entities, including CSOs, are eligible to apply for and administer

State Entity grants. Grant funds may also be used to provide technical assistance to applicants and to authorizers to help improve the quality of authorizing in the state.³³

In fiscal year 2022, six grantees were awarded more than \$143 million that will be distributed over the life of the grants. Notably, four of the grantees—Northeast Charter Schools Network (Connecticut), State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia, Illinois Network of Charter Schools, and Mississippi First—are CSOs.



CSP IN ACTION: STATE ENTITY GRANTS

Nevada State High School has helped thousands of students succeed in college by directly enrolling them in college classes during their junior and senior years. Unlike many other dual credit programs, Nevada State students take classes from real college professors and learn alongside other college students on campus. Since students enroll directly at local colleges, each Nevada State campus serves as a sort of one-room schoolhouse where students receive intensive academic advising, study skills classes, tutoring, and other supports to help them succeed in their college classes. Educators at Nevada State are committed to meeting students where they are and co-creating a pathway that will get them to where they want to be. About 25% of Nevada State students earn an associate degree by the time they graduate high school and all students leave with credits they can apply to future higher education at no cost to them, making a college degree more accessible. The Nevada State mission is for every student to be college ready, and funding from the CSP has helped the network grow to nine campuses so more Nevada students have access to early college regardless of their backgrounds.

“We truly offer a real college experience. That is the difference and there is not another school in Nevada that offers that. Other schools may offer dual credit opportunities but it’s not the same to earn college credit but be sitting in a high school building getting taught by a high school teacher. In our program, the professors don’t even know which students are ours and which are traditional college students.”

– Dr. Jesse Welsh, Chief Executive Officer, Nevada State High School

NEVADA STATE HIGH SCHOOL

NV

State entity subgrant for replication and expansion from Opportunity 180 (a CSO and 2020 SE grant recipient)

2022

Grant Year

\$300,000

Grant Amount

2004

Year Founded

9

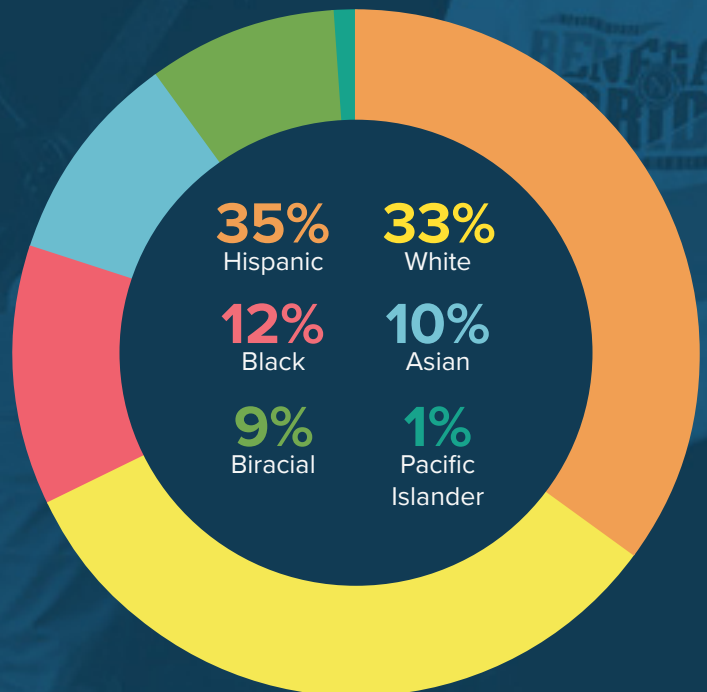
Campuses

1,101

Students Currently Served

40%

Free & Reduced Price Lunch Rate

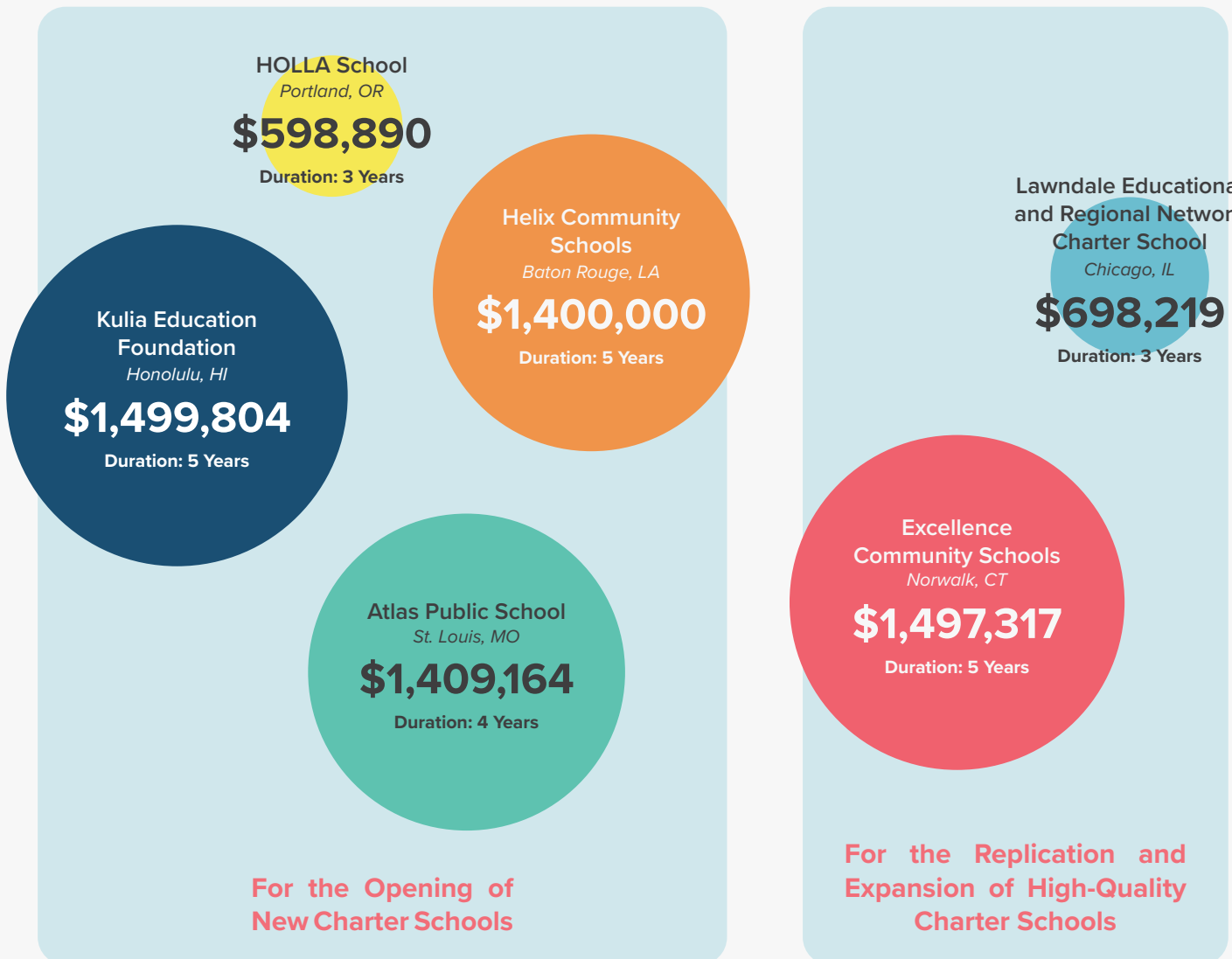


Developer Grants for the Opening of New Charter Schools and for the Replication & Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools

Developer grants provide funds directly to charter school operators in states without a current State Entity grant and fund the same activities as an State Entity grant does. Developers are only eligible to apply in states without current State Entity funding.³⁴ Applicants may apply for funds to open a new charter school or to replicate or expand an existing high-quality school.³⁵

In FY 2022, six grantees were awarded a total of more than \$7 million in funding to support the opening of new charter schools, or for the replication and expansion of existing high-quality charter schools.

FY 2022 Developer Grants



CSP IN ACTION: DEVELOPER GRANTS

Atlas Public Schools opened in the fall of 2021 in St. Louis, MO with a mission to build a school *with* the community, not *for* the community. Atlas’ leaders wanted to change the narrative that families had to leave the city to access good schools by creating a school where all kids can thrive and learn together across lines of difference. Atlas is built on four pillars: real-world experiences, year-round education, co-taught classrooms, and diversity by design. Family and community engagement is critical to Atlas’ success. A family council helps guide school practices and frequent family events, surveys, listening sessions, and more help center parents’ voices. Atlas also invests heavily in its teachers. Multiple adults in every classroom and two planning periods have made teacher retention easy at a time when many schools are struggling to hire and retain staff. While Atlas didn’t receive CSP funding until its second year of operation, the funds have been an incredible boost and helped solidify its standing in the community.

“To a skeptic, I would say look at the data. Not just our data, but data at other area schools. And talk to our families. I think their minds would change a little bit.”

—Genevieve Backer, Co-Founder and Chief of Staff, Atlas Public Schools



ATLAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

St. Louis, MO

Developer grant for the opening of new charter schools

2022

Grant Year

\$1,409,164

Grant Amount

2021

Year Founded

N/A

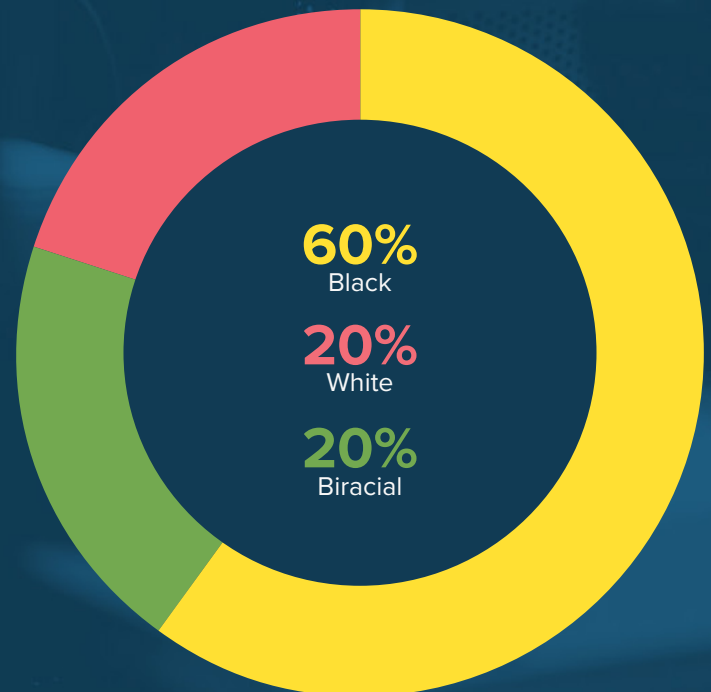
Campuses

~200

Students Currently Served

80%

Free & Reduced Price Lunch Rate



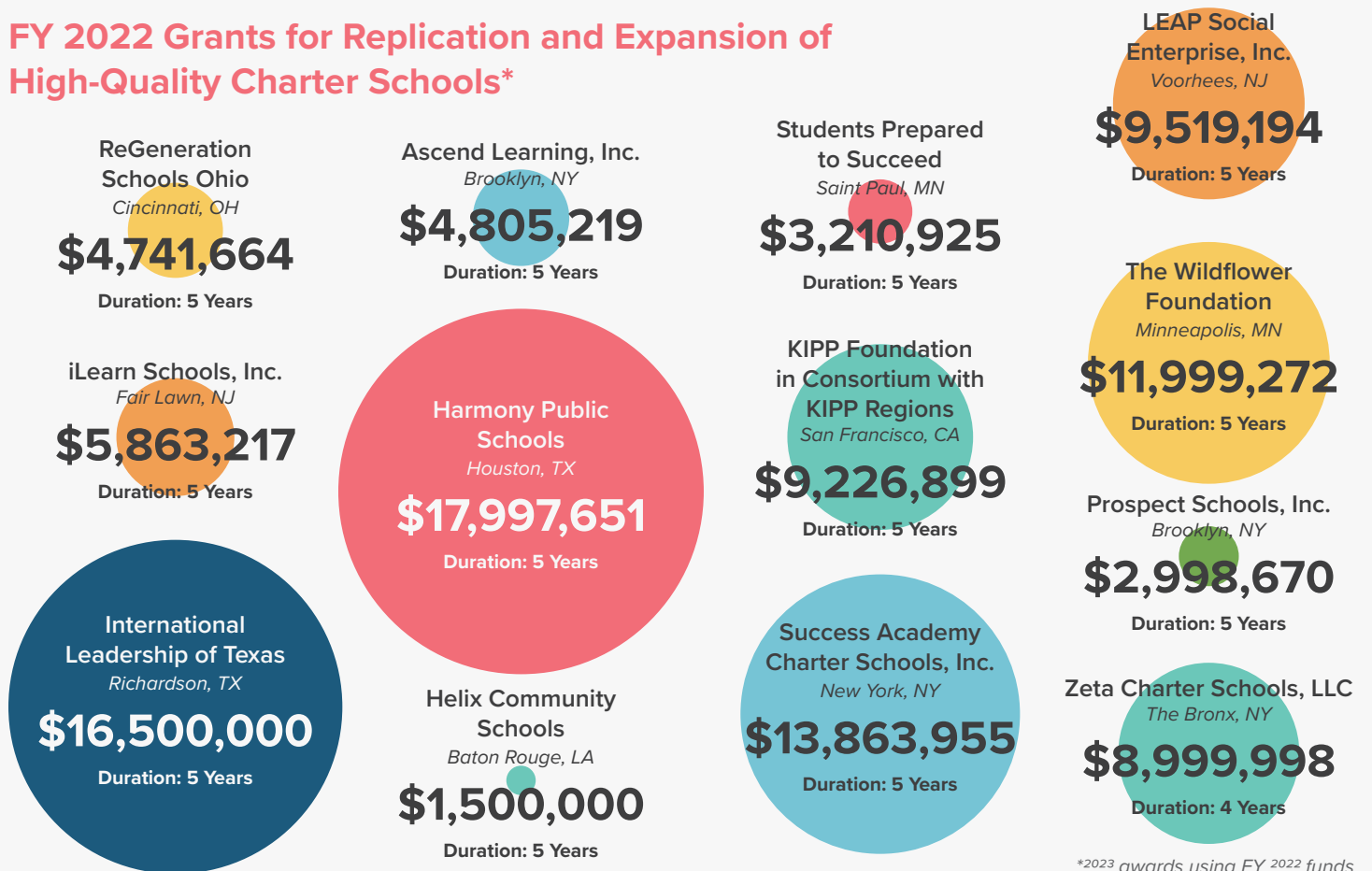
Grants to Charter Management Organizations for the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools

Grants to Charter Management Organizations (CMO grants) support the growth of existing high-quality charter schools. CMO grant funds can be used for replication, by opening new schools based on a high-quality school model, or expansion, such as adding additional grades or classes to an existing school.³⁶ CMO grants are awarded competitively based on the demonstrated quality of the CMO’s existing school(s), including a track record of increasing academic success for all students. CMO grants also target high-poverty communities: 81% of students in funded schools are from low-income families.³⁷

Stanford University’s Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (CREDO) 2017 study of CMOs found that CMOs funded with CSP replication and expansion funds are making impressive growth in reading and math scores. In addition, the study found that more than half of the CMO grants have been awarded to CMOs that outpaced district-run public schools in growth rates for both math and reading scores. (Not all funded CMOs were included in the study).³⁸

In 2023, more than \$111 million was awarded to 13 charter school networks to expand or replicate. These awards were made using FY2022 funds.

FY 2022 Grants for Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools*



*2023 awards using FY 2022 funds

CSP IN ACTION: CMO GRANTS

Building on Illinois’ commitment to expanding pre-K statewide, Chicago International Charter Schools (CICS) received a replication and expansion grant in 2020 to add pre-K programming at 10 of their campuses in Chicago. CICS serves predominately students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, so the new pre-K offering will be an important step toward bridging the opportunity gap in the community. Access to high-quality pre-K is critical to ensure students have the academic and social skills needed for success in kindergarten and beyond. Over the course of the grant, CICS will add an estimated 780 pre-K seats with a focus on significantly increasing the number of students demonstrating that they are kindergarten-ready. For communities with historically limited access to high-quality early childhood education, the CICS pre-K expansion stands to provide transformational opportunities for the youngest learners. The new program will also serve as a model for other public schools and CICS is committed to collaborating with Chicago Public Schools, city and state officials, and other entities to develop a pre-K program that will meet community needs.

CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS

Chicago, IL

Replication and expansion (CMO Grants)

2020

Grant Year

\$3,764,879

Grant Amount

1997

Year Founded

14

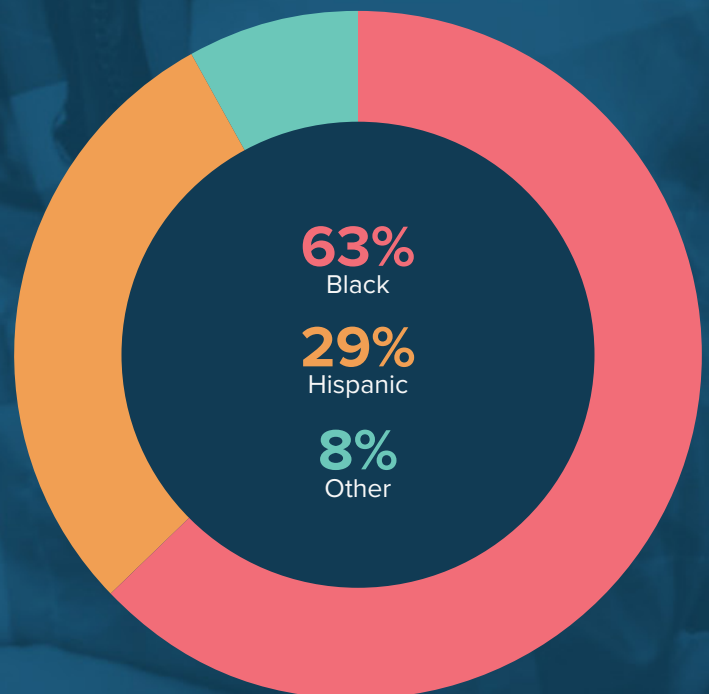
Campuses

~8,000

Students Currently Served

84%

Free & Reduced Price Lunch Rate



Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program

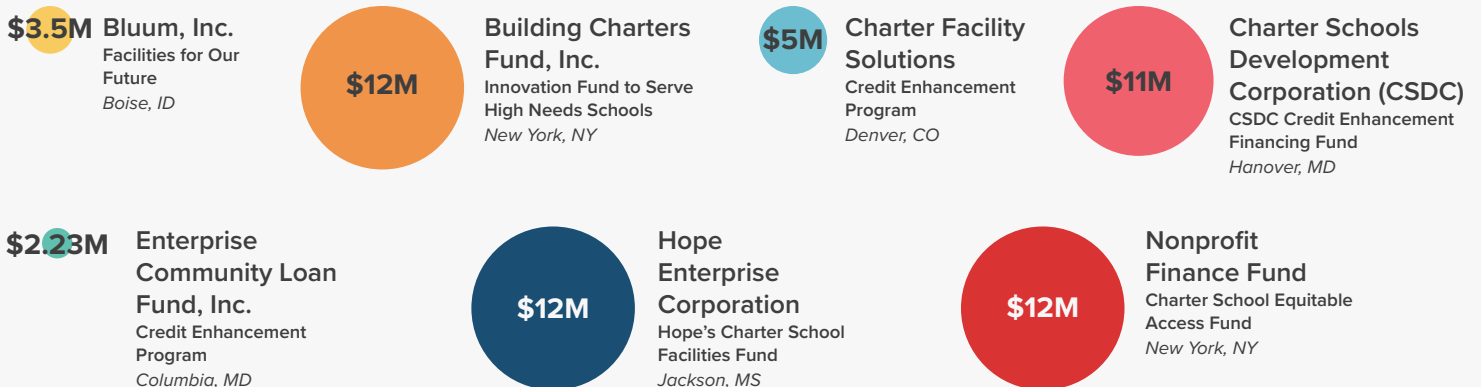
Charter schools generally do not have the same free access to public buildings as do district-operated schools, and gaining access to an affordable school building is one of the most significant barriers to opening new schools. Two facility-focused programs were added to the CSP to help meet this need: Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities and the State Facilities Incentive Grant.

The purpose of the Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program (CE) is to help charter schools address the cost of facilities by funding eligible entities that in turn enhance the credit of charter schools so they can access private and nonfederal capital to finance facilities projects and pay affordable interest rates. Credit enhancement funds may be used to assist charter schools in accessing funding to acquire a facility by purchase or lease, to construct or renovate facilities, or to finance predevelopment site assessment costs.³⁹ Public entities, private nonprofit entities, and consortiums comprising them are eligible to apply for credit enhancement grants. Grantees are required to deposit funds received in a reserve account invested in low-risk obligations, such as those guaranteed by the United States or a state. Grant funds held in the reserve funds may be used for several purposes, including guaranteeing and

insuring bonds or leases, facilitating financing by identifying lenders and encouraging private lenders to lend to charter schools, and providing technical assistance to help facilitate the issuance of bonds by charter schools or other entities on behalf of charter schools. Funds may not be used to directly pay for a school’s construction, renovation, acquisition, or to provide a down payment for a charter school seeking a loan.⁴⁰

In fiscal year 2022, seven grantees received almost \$58 million in CE grants to help charter schools meet the cost of financing facilities. The Department funded these grantees by awarding funds to prior-year applicants who submitted high-quality applications but could not receive an award due to insufficient funds. Among these new grantees is Bluum, the CSO for Idaho. Bluum is the first CSO to receive a CE grant since the program was reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. Since CSOs are intimately aware of the facilities challenges in their states, this pioneering project could set an example for how other CSOs can leverage CE funds to meet the specific needs of schools in each state.

As of 2021, Credit Enhancement funds have helped enable approximately \$8.5 billion in facilities financing for 967 charter schools.⁴¹



Nonprofit Finance Fund
Charter School Equitable Access Fund
New York, NY

CSP IN ACTION: CREDIT ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

In 2022, Idaho's Bluum became the first CSO in the country to receive a credit enhancement grant since the program was reauthorized under ESSA. Bluum had already advanced some financing tools and state policies to support schools in accessing facilities, but found that costs associated with the pre-development stage were still a barrier for schools. Pre-development work includes finding a site, hiring an architect and contractor, conducting due diligence on environmental and traffic impacts, designing the facility, and more. Most school leaders aren't experts in this work, but doing the pre-development stage well is critical to getting future loans on good terms. Bluum's small, \$3.5 million CE grant will narrowly focus on guaranteeing a loan to support a school during the pre-development period to help schools get a strong start. It will also provide technical assistance and support for school leaders. This initial loan will then be paid off as part of the construction loan and cycle back into the program to fund another future school, creating a sort of self-sustaining revolving loan fund.

The CE grant will allow Bluum to provide these funds to leaders without charging any fees or interest. Bluum estimates that most schools incur about \$300,000 to \$700,000 in pre-development costs, a cost for which there was previously no public support. With public support through the CE grant, Bluum will help level the playing field for aspiring new single-site charter schools to build the school buildings their students deserve, especially in rural areas where access to resources may be even more limited. This innovative grant will also demonstrate what can be accomplished with a small CE grant and set the stage for other CSOs to leverage CE grants to support schools in their states.

FACILITIES FOR OUR FUTURE

Bluum, CSO for Idaho

Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program

2022

Grant Year

\$3,500,000

Grant Amount

“Buildings do matter. You don't need to build a \$100 million Taj Majal for your school, but having a quality, safe learning space for both teachers and kids matters. What we're doing with these tools supported by credit enhancement is trying to build schools with the most efficient use of taxpayer funds possible. This is about enabling schools to do what they need to do at a lower cost instead of asking for more funds.”

- Keith Donahue, Director of School Strategy and Operations, Bluum



State Facilities Incentive Grant

The second facility-focused program within the CSP is the State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grants Program (SFIG). SFIG exists to help states establish or improve per-pupil facilities aid for charter schools. Because charter schools in most states lack access to traditional funding mechanisms for school facilities (such as tax-supported bonds), per-pupil facilities aid is a critical tool to help charter schools access facilities. SFIG incentivizes states to invest in per-pupil facilities funding by providing federal matching dollars for nonfederal funds. The federal share of funding decreases over the life of the grant, from 90% in year one to 20% in the final year, allowing states to gradually build capacity for a sustainable per-pupil funding stream. To be eligible, states must have enacted a law to provide per-pupil facilities

aid by formula and have funded the nonfederal share of the program. Qualifying matching funds include regular state appropriations, funds from a state bonding agency, surplus from previous years, or foundation (philanthropic) funds.⁴² States receiving SFIG are allowed to weight their funding formulas, for example⁴³, by assigning greater weight to students with disabilities or those living in poverty. States are also not required to ensure that every charter school is eligible for a grant and can choose, for example, to prioritize schools serving high numbers of low-income students.⁴⁴

The most recent SFIG award was in FY 2019, when the Indiana Department of Education was awarded \$20 million over four years to enhance an existing per-pupil facilities aid program.

Building A Better State Facilities Incentive Grant

SFIG was added to the CSP in 2001 to help address the challenges charter schools face in accessing facilities, but over the past two decades it has become clear that SFIG doesn't work well in its current form. To date, just five states have benefited from the program and the majority of funds have gone to California. Two fundamental problems with the program have limited its impact. First, the competitive nature of the program means that funds may not be available immediately when a state implements a per-pupil funding program, leaving the state responsible for funding the first year or more until the next application cycle opens. This dilutes the incentive for states to enact such programs. Second, the program is narrowly focused only on per-pupil funding programs. There are a variety of other policies that have been successfully implemented around the country—including direct grants to charter schools, subsidized financing mechanisms, or policies that promote charter schools' access to public buildings—but that are not eligible for support from SFIG.

The bipartisan Equitable Access to School Facilities Act would revise the SFIG program to more broadly address

charter school facilities challenges. First introduced in 2022 by Senators Bill Cassidy (LA) and Michael Bennet (CO), the Equitable Access to School Facilities Act would expand the types of state facility aid programs the subprogram can support.⁴⁵ It would also prioritize funds for states with certain policies in place, including access to tax-exempt financing, funding for or access to facilities, ability to share in bonds or mill levies, low or no-cost leasing privileges, fair treatment in land use policies, prohibiting deed restrictions that limit charter school access to rent or purchase a building, and preference for charter schools to purchase surplus public buildings.

Students deserve to learn in a safe, appropriate school building with access to resources like labs, libraries, and gyms. Passing the Equitable Access to School Facilities Act would be an important step towards a more equitable school facility landscape where all students have the opportunity to attend school in a building that meets the needs of their school community.

National Dissemination Grants

The U.S. Department of Education uses National Dissemination Grant funds to: (a) provide technical assistance to state entities in awarding subgrants and to recipients of facilities grants; (b) disseminate best practices regarding charter schools; and (c) evaluate the impact of CSP grants, including on student achievement. Consistent with this authority, the Department currently uses National Dissemination Grant funds to, among other things, support a National Charter School Resource Center and administer dissemination grants, through which state entities, charter school authorizers, and nonprofit organizations that operate, manage, or support charter schools can receive funds to disseminate information on issues of national significance. Currently, the priorities for

dissemination funds include providing information on accessing charter school facilities and authorizer quality. In 2022, the National Alliance was awarded a \$2.1 million three-year grant to study the charter school response to the COVID-19 pandemic and disseminate best practices. Previously, the National Alliance received a 2018 grant to establish a National Charter Schools Facilities Center to help charter schools with technical assistance and best practices for facility access and financing.

In fiscal year 2022, six grantees received more than \$13 million in National Dissemination Grant funds to support best practices in the charter school community.

California Charter
Authorizing Professionals

\$2,400,000

Duration: 3 Years

NN4DA Collaboration Initiative

Green Dot
Public Schools

\$2,173,858

Duration: 3 Years

A Multi-Context Operational
Guidebook to Catalyze Charter-
District Partnerships Focused on
Turning Around Low-Performing
Schools

Institute for
Excellence in
Education

\$2,391,962

Duration: 3 Years

A-GAME Measure What Matters:
Expanding A-GAME to Schools,
Boards, and Authorizers

Massachusetts
Charter Public School
Association

\$2,022,954

Duration: 3 Years

Educating for Excellence: Creating
and Sustaining Diverse and Effective
Charter School Leadership through
the Dissemination of Programs &
Supports

Mundo Verde
Bilingual Public
Charter School

\$2,369,507

Duration: 3 Years

Disseminating Lessons from Instituto
Mundo Verde's Efforts to Build a
Pipeline of Bilingual Charter School
Educators

National Alliance
for Public Charter
Schools

\$2,101,385

Duration: 3 Years

A Proposal to Create the Charter
School Collaborative to Accelerate
Student Learning in Response to the
Covid-19 Pandemic

CSP In Action: Educating Scholars for College, Graduation, and Life Success

“There is a narrative in New Mexico that we call the *‘pobrecito mentality’* which says our students are too poor and they’re too brown and they’re too this or that. And everyone kind of accepts that *los pobrecitos* just can’t,” explains Jade Rivera, Lead Founder of Albuquerque Collegiate Charter School. But after having the opportunity to observe other high-performing schools, serving a similar student population, Rivera saw the real-life proof that this doesn’t have to be the case. She set out to build a school in her own community that would prove that students can achieve at a high level regardless of



their background. Albuquerque Collegiate opened its doors in the fall of 2018 with a mission to educate K-5 scholars for college, graduation, and life success.

Five years later, the community at Albuquerque Collegiate is doing just that. The college prep school is in one of the lowest-income neighborhoods in Albuquerque, where neighborhood schools routinely produce single-digit student proficiency rates. Serving the same student population, results at Albuquerque Collegiate are anywhere from three to five times higher than neighboring schools. For the youngest learners, the results are even more striking: students at Albuquerque Collegiate have achieved the fourth highest K-2 literacy rates

in the state of New Mexico at 69% proficiency. At neighboring schools, scores were often at 20% or lower. Rivera explains, “That’s not to disparage the work of other schools. This is challenging work. But we are playing a critical role in our community, ensuring that families have access to a great education in our community without having to drive across town to get that.”

Results like these are the product of hard work from educators and students alike. But community support and buy-in is also critical to this kind of success. At Albuquerque Collegiate, community engagement was built into the model even before the doors opened. Rivera was born and raised in the community that Albuquerque Collegiate serves and grew up very close to where the school is located. Drawing on her direct experience of growing up in the same community, she set out to meet with community leaders and families to understand what they needed and wanted in a school. Since opening, school leaders also work to engage parents in advocacy both inside and outside the school. “We want our parents to know that their voice is a million times more important than my voice in advocating for our school and advocating for quality school options and programs.”

Albuquerque Collegiate gives families access to a high-quality education that wasn’t previously available to them and funding from the CSP helps make that possible. Rivera explains, “For scale purposes and growth, our operational funding would not have been enough to make everything happen, and we wouldn’t exist as the school that we are and with the results that we have without CSP funding.” Looking forward, Rivera expects to rely on CSP again, this time to open a middle school in 2024 and add more seats for the many families on the waiting list. New Mexico will need to receive a new state entity grant in order for this to be possible.

ALBUQUERQUE COLLEGIATE CHARTER SCHOOL

Albuquerque, New Mexico

State entity subgrant from New Mexico Public Education Department



2018

Grant Year

\$1,029,597

Grant Amount

2018

Year Founded

N/A

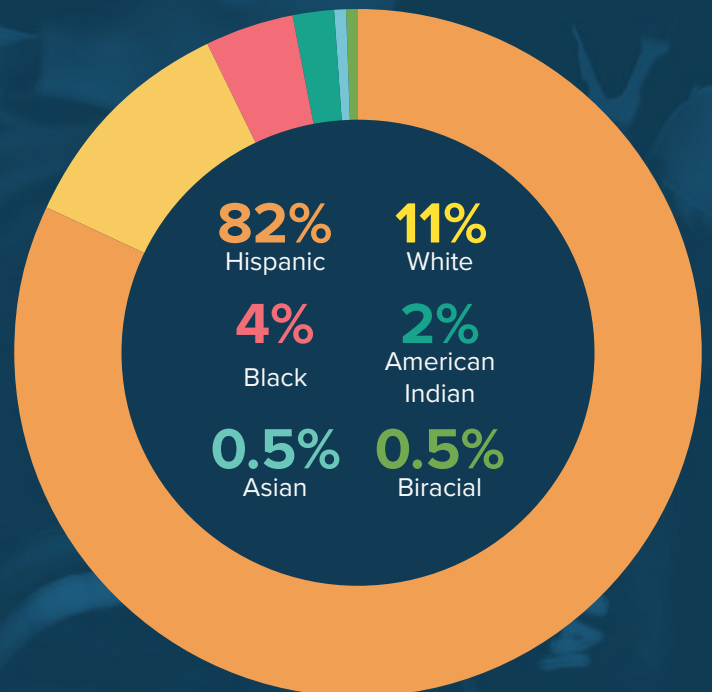
Campuses

200

Students Currently Served

67%

Free & Reduced Price Lunch Rate



Addendum: Additional Studies of Charter School Student Outcomes

CSP Supporting Successful Charter Schools

A 2022 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that within the first five years of operation, **schools that did not receive CSP funding were 1.6 times (or 40%) more likely to have closed than those that received CSP funding.**⁴⁶

Another GAO report from 2023 found that **new charter schools that received CSP funding to open grew faster than peer schools over time.**⁴⁷

COVID-19 Response

A 2022 study from Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) found that, by the end of the spring 2020 semester, **charter schools surveyed in California, New York, and Washington had secured devices and internet connections for nearly all of their students and teachers.** In fact, 97% of all charter schools surveyed provided remote professional development resources to their teachers, compared to less than 50% of the district schools.⁴⁸

A series of case studies produced by the National Alliance and the Charter School Growth Fund found that **charter schools prioritized investing COVID relief funds in technology, mental health supports, and teacher retention.**⁴⁹

Looking at eight leading charter school networks, the Fordham Institute found that during the initial pandemic-related school closures, these **networks established typical school days that maintained structure for students and prioritized student health and wellbeing through family outreach and support.**⁵⁰

Public Impact and the National Alliance explored how more than 350 single-site and small-network charter schools leveraged their independence to swiftly meet students' educational needs and ensure they had access to critical services. The report found that **charter schools were more likely to set expectations that teachers provide real-time instruction, check in regularly with students, and monitor attendance.**⁵¹

Academic Performance and College Completion

A 2022 study published in the journal of Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis found that **enrolling in a Newark charter school led to both math and ELA score improvement** (0.262 and 0.238 standard deviations respectively) and those students maintained the improvement in their later school years.⁵²

A 2022 study from the Fordham Institute found that on average **increased charter school enrollment share is associated with significant improvements in math achievement for economically disadvantaged, Black, and Hispanic students in larger metro areas.**⁵³

A 2021 meta-analysis of research on charter school effects and competitive influence by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) highlighted trends from three decades of research. Top findings include that **charters located in urban areas boost student test scores, particularly for Black, Latinx, and low-income students; that attending some urban charter schools increases college enrollment and voting; and that the competitive impact of charter schools on traditional public schools suggests a small beneficial influence on neighboring schools' student achievement.**⁵⁴

The Florida Department of Education's 2021 charter school student achievement report found that **"in 61 of the 77 (79%) comparisons, students enrolled in charter schools demonstrated higher rates of grade level performance"** than their peers in district schools.⁵⁵

A 2021 study from Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) found that **charter school students in Newark, New Jersey, made stronger gains in both reading and math than the state average.** The difference was particularly significant for Black charter school students, who showed stronger growth than their district school peers. Charter schools affiliated with a CMO also showed greater progress than state averages.⁵⁶

A 2020 study from the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University found that **students attending charter schools made greater academic gains from 2005 to 2017 than students attending district-operated schools, with the most significant gains for**

Black students and low-income students. This is the first nationwide study to compare student achievement trends over time between sectors rather than effectiveness at a single point in time.⁵⁷

Research conducted in 2019 by Mathematica found that **KIPP middle schools produced a noticeable increase in students' enrollment rate in four-year colleges.**⁵⁸

A 2019 study of Newark, New Jersey, charter schools found that **students attending schools that participated in the city's common enrollment system saw large improvements in math and reading scores**, and these effects are consistent across traditionally underserved populations. The effects are especially large for students who attend a charter school run by either the KIPP or Uncommon Schools networks, both of which used CSP startup grants to open schools. Overall, 12 of the 15 schools participating in the study received CSP grants.⁵⁹

A 2019 study found that Boston public charter schools have significant impact on the achievement and college graduation of special education and English language learner students. Enrolling in a Boston charter school doubles the likelihood that students exit their special education or English language learner status as they gain exposure to a high-performing general education program that includes high-intensity tutoring, data-driven instruction, and increased instructional time. The positive effects extend to college: **attending a public charter school nearly doubles the likelihood that English language learners enroll in four-year colleges and quadruples the likelihood that special education students graduate from a two-year college.**⁶⁰

A 2014 study found that **being admitted to a high-quality public charter school in Los Angeles led to statistically significant increases in math and reading scores** and a decreased propensity to engage in very risky behaviors.⁶¹

Other Student Outcomes

A rigorous 2019 study finds that **students who enrolled in public charter high schools in North Carolina were about 10% less likely to be chronically absent, about 50% less likely to be suspended, almost 40% less likely to be convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, 9% more likely to vote, and 2% more likely to register to vote.** Economically disadvantaged students accounted for most of the results, and Black students experienced the largest reduction in the likelihood of being suspended.⁶²

A 2018 study found that **students in startup public charter**

high schools in Georgia significantly outperformed their district school peers in college enrollment, college persistence, and post-secondary degree attainment.⁶³

A 2016 study found that attending a **public charter high school in Florida resulted in a 6% increase in the probability of earning a standard high school diploma within five years, a 9% increase in the probability of attending college, a 12% increase in college persistence, and more than \$2,300 in increased annual earnings by age 25.**⁶⁴

A 2013 study found that **Boston-area public charter school students were better prepared for college, had higher SAT scores, were more likely to take and pass AP exams, and much more likely to attend a four-year institution after high school than their district school peers.**⁶⁵

Community Impact

According to a 2022 report from the Center on Reinventing Public Education, charter school **parents in Washington State reported high satisfaction with their chosen charter schools**, noting individualized learning environments, a broad variety of skills being taught, one-on-one attention, and supportive school environments.⁶⁶

A 2016 study found that **New York City public charter schools exerted significant and positive competitive effects on district schools in both math and reading**, with the largest gains enjoyed by students who attended a district school co-located with a competing charter school.⁶⁷

A 2015 study found that **families were willing to pay roughly 8 to 10% more for homes in public charter school priority zones in metropolitan Atlanta**, indicating the positive impact of charter schools on residential property values in that area.⁶⁸

A 2014 study found that North Carolina **public charter schools produced significant and positive effects when they were compared with district schools with similar grade configurations.**⁶⁹



Notes

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⁵ Veney, Debbie, and Drew Jacobs. 2021. *Voting with Their Feet: A State-Level Analysis of Public Charter School and District Public School Trends*. Washington, D.C.: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. <https://www.publiccharters.org/our-work/publications/voting-their-feet-state-level-analysis-public-charter-school-and-district>.

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⁷ Government Accountability Office. 2023. *New Charter Schools Receiving Grants to Open Grew Faster Than Peers*. Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-106268>.

⁸ The Harris Poll. 2022. "Is the "Education Voter" the New Swing Voter?"

⁹ Cohodes, Sarah, and Katharine Parham. May 2021. *Charter Schools' Effectiveness, Mechanisms, and Competitive Influence*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w28477>.

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¹² Xu, Yueting "Cynthia." 2022. "Who Attends Charter Schools?" National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. <https://data.publiccharters.org/digest/charter-school-data-digest/who-attends-charter-schools/>.

¹³ Shakeel and Peterson, "Charter Schools Show Steeper Upward Trend in Student Achievement than District Schools."

¹⁴ Center for Research on Education Outcomes. 2015. *Urban Charter School Study Report on 41 Regions*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University. <https://urbancharters.stanford.edu/summary.php>.

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²³ White, Jamison. "How Many Charter Schools and Students Are There?"

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