



# What You Need to Know

ABOUT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS IN TEXAS



# CHARTER SCHOOLS 101

Public charter schools are providing hundreds of thousands of Texas students with high-quality public education, allowing families in the state to choose the type of learning environment that is best for them. Families are seeing the value charter schools provide—and they want more!

## What Exactly is a Charter School?

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools that are open to all students, varying in mission and model. They serve all types of students, many with needs that aren't well-served by a one-size-fits-all traditional public school. Charter schools are held to strict financial and academic accountability standards in exchange for autonomy and flexibility. They currently educate 6% of Texas public school students, but make up more than 20% of A-rated districts in the state.

## How are Charter Schools Funded?

Charter schools receive state funds based on the number of students who attend (same as traditional public schools). However, charter schools receive less funding than traditional public schools because they do not receive any local taxpayer dollars. TPCSA advocates for more charter school funding to close the gap.

## BY THE NUMBERS IN TEXAS



**316,869**  
charter school students



**179**  
charter holders



**761**  
charter school campuses

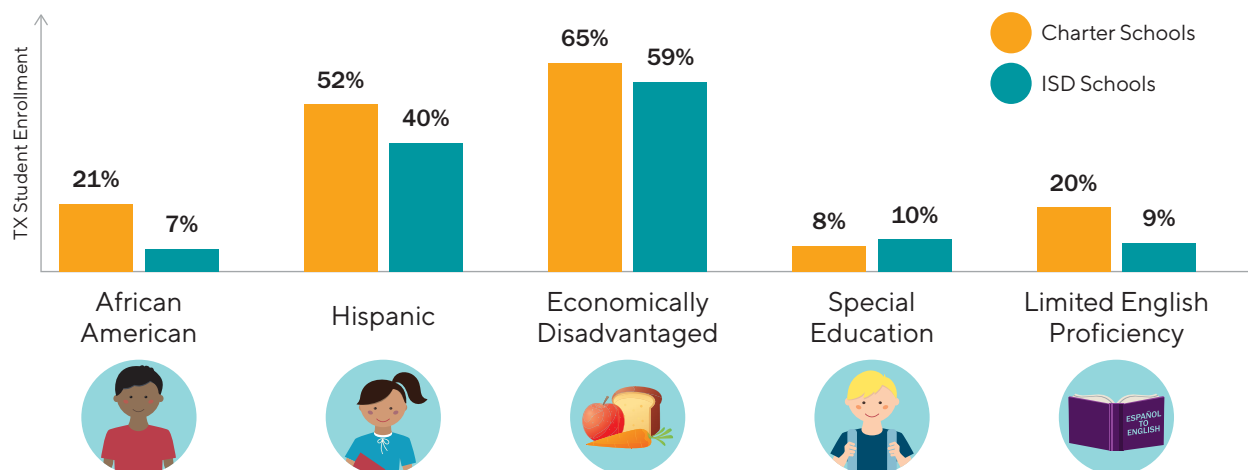


**141,000**  
names on charter school waiting lists



**24**  
years charter schools have been serving students

## CHARTER SCHOOL VS. ISD SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN TEXAS





Every Texas charter school is required by law to be public, a fact which the Texas Supreme Court affirmed as recently as 2018, stating, “open-enrollment charter schools are public schools.”

Authorized by Texas in 1995, charter schools provide tuition-free public school options to students and families. They are often called “open-enrollment” charter schools because they are open to all students. Public charter schools are authorized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and are funded through the state’s Foundation School Program—just like traditional ISDs. Additionally, public charter schools are held to the same academic and financial standards as traditional ISDs.

For-profit charter schools are not allowed in Texas. Under Texas law, open-enrollment charters may only be operated by one of four types of entities. Those entities include public institutions of higher education, private or independent institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, or governmental entities. Currently there are 179 open-enrollment charters: 172 are run by non-profits, six are run by universities, and one is run by a municipality.

#### **FACT 1**

Charter schools are public schools.

#### **FACT 2**

Charter schools are providing excellent education to students from historically underserved families.

#### **FACT 3**

Public charter schools send an average of 4% more — or more than 5,000 more kids — to college than their ISD counterparts every single year.

#### **FACT 4**

Public charter schools are preparing special needs students for college; nearly twice as many (43% vs. 23% of special needs students attending ISD schools) go on to college.

# HOW CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE FUNDED

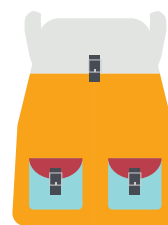
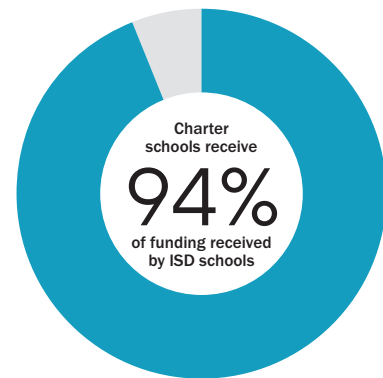
Texas school districts receive state and local funding to educate their students. Public charter schools, however, receive *no* local tax dollars. Because traditional ISDs receive both local and state funding, there is a funding gap.

Texans fund traditional ISD and public charter schools through state and local taxes. Local taxpayer money accounts for an estimated 49% of local traditional ISD budgets. By contrast, public charter schools receive only state funding and no local funds from property taxes. Given this inequity, public charter schools cost taxpayers less overall than traditional ISDs.

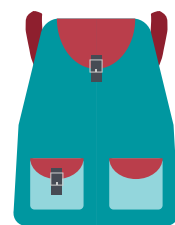
## PER PUPIL EXPENDITURES IN TEXAS

HB 3 increased the basic allotment and raised many allotment weights so that children from special populations (e.g. economically disadvantaged, ELLs, etc.) receive more funding than the average student. HB 3 also created a generous allotment for dropout-recovery schools. Texas public charter schools benefitted from these changes, because they enroll 10% more economically disadvantaged students and 8% more ELLs than traditional ISD schools. In addition, 13% of Texas public charter schools educate dropout recovery students, compared to 3% of ISD schools.

In 2018-19, public charters are receiving an average of \$10,721 per pupil, and ISD schools receive \$11,397. Texas Public Charter Schools are taking on the important work of educating the students who have been traditionally underserved by the public education system – and with slightly less money than other public schools.



**\$10,721**  
per charter  
school student



**\$11,397**  
per ISD  
student



# PREPARING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

In 2015, the Texas Legislature adopted its 60x30 goal, which aims to ensure that 60% of all Texans ages 25 to 34 will have a certificate or college degree by 2030. Texas public charter schools play an important role in achieving the state's 60x30 goal. For example, public charters send an average of 4% more students to college than ISD schools every year. That means 4,000 more students are going to college than would have if they'd attended ISD schools.

More important, public charters send higher percentages of historically underserved students to college. In fact, Texas public charters send two times the number of special education students to college than traditional schools.

On average, 9% more public charter school students overall are college, career and military ready than those in traditional ISD schools. Simply put, charter schools are living up their promise to improve post-secondary outcomes for students in the state and helping students create a better future for themselves and their families.



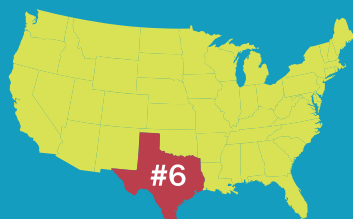
## HOW DO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS STACK UP IN TEXAS?

Public charter schools were authorized by the Texas Legislature in 1995. Since then, they have become a valuable part of the public education system. No matter the background of students they serve, charter schools are preparing students for college and career.



Charter schools send 58 percent of student to college versus 54 percent at ISD schools.

In 2018 charter school students in Texas scored 6th highest in the country on the Nation's Report Card 8th grade math test.



On average, Texas public charter school students gain an additional 17 days of learning in reading annually as compared to their traditional school district peers.

+17



In 2018 Hispanic Texas charter school students outscored all statewide averages for Hispanic students from every state in the U.S. on the Nation's Report Card.



In 2018 African American charter school students had higher passage rates on state reading and writing tests and White charter school students passed at higher rates on reading.

# PUBLIC CHARTERS SEND STUDENTS TO AND THROUGH COLLEGE

## TEXAS PUBLIC CHARTERS SEND STUDENTS TO COLLEGE

Texas public charters are playing an important role in reaching the state's 60x30 goal to improve post-secondary outcomes. Public charters are sending 4% more (58%) of their students to college than traditional public schools. If all Texas public school graduates had the same college enrollment rates as charters in 2018, then traditional public schools would have sent 12,000 more students to college.

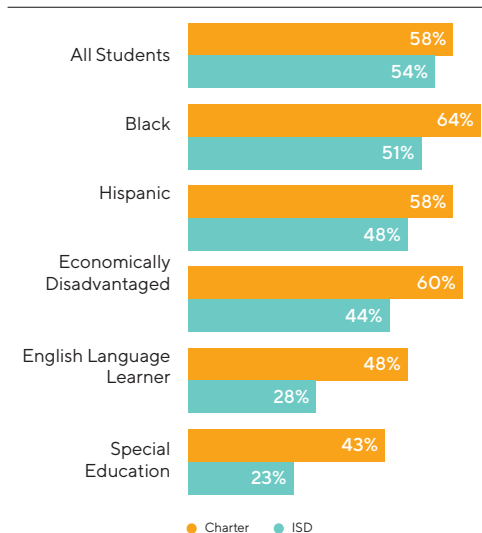
Notably, public charters are doing this while serving higher percentages of students from historically under-served groups. In fact, the trends for these populations defy traditional conventions and national data about these students' college-going rates.

## TEXAS PUBLIC CHARTERS GET STUDENTS THROUGH COLLEGE

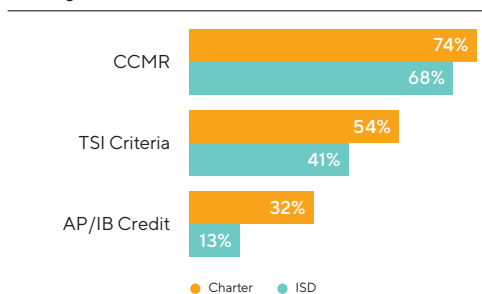
Public charter graduates are completing college at a 3% higher rate statewide than those from traditional public schools. This means, for example, that 4,000 more economically disadvantaged, public charter graduates finish college every year, compared to traditional public schools.

These higher rates of college completion occurred in the most populous metropolitan areas of the state (and in places like Hidalgo County, which is almost completely Hispanic), with some of the lowest average rates of educational attainment state and nationwide, according to the United States Census Bureau (2019). Therefore, public charters are improving post-secondary outcomes and future incomes for students in parts of Texas who need it the most.

Enrollment in Texas Colleges



College Readiness Indicators



# CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO TAXPAYERS

Public charter schools in Texas must meet high standards for academic and financial performance — as well follow federal, state, and local regulations that ensure good governance and student welfare.

In fact, taxpayers in the Lone Star State hold public charter schools to higher standards than traditional ISD schools when it comes to:

- **Transparency:** Unlike ISD schools, public charters must submit their academic calendars to state education authorities for approval and release their waiting lists. Charters in Texas also face harsher consequences for violating open meetings laws. Charter schools are also subject to strict financial scrutiny, and must publicly report on their financial management through the School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST), to ensure most of their money is being spent on actually helping kids learn.
- **Evaluating Performance:** Both public charters and ISDs have an A-F accountability system for academic and financial performance. But charters are comprehensively evaluated by the state using a long list of indicators.
- **Closures:** Any public charter that receives a failing grade from the state for three straight years must close – no appeals allowed. This “three strikes” rule is far stricter than laws concerning low-performing ISD schools.
- **Expanding:** In order to open new schools, public charters must meet rigorous performance benchmarks and secure approval from the State Education Agency, State Board of Education, and Attorney General (for bond agreements).



## Texas Public School Traits

	Traditional Public	Public Charter
School Board Transparency Required	✓	✓
Academic and Financial Accountability to State	✓	✓
Must use Texas graduation requirements	✓	✓
Subject to State Takeover or Closure	✓	✓
Must follow federal education and labor laws	✓	✓
Governed by the Texas Education Code	✓	✓
Receive State Funding	✓	✓
Mandatory contributions to Texas Retirement System	✓	✓

The Texas Public Charter Schools Association (TPCSA) is committed to making sure every child in Texas has access to a high-quality public school that will set them on the path to future success. Working as complements to ISDs, public charter schools in Texas are preparing the workforce of the future—getting more students to and through colleges, universities, and technical training programs. Public charter schools are accountable to taxpayers and are doing their part to help the state meet its academic goals so that all Texas children can thrive.

TPCSA's mission is to support and advocate for public charter schools to ensure every family has the ability to choose a high-quality public school. We are committed to informing the public and policymakers about the value of charter schools and advancing policies that will enable public charter schools to serve students well.



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