

Success in the Texas Charter School Movement
1995 – 2011

What *exactly* is a charter school?

Chances are you have heard of charter schools. Your neighbors might send their children to a charter school or maybe you've read a few news stories about charters. You might have heard something about funding issues or teacher effectiveness, but what exactly are charter schools, and most importantly — *why do charter schools matter to Texas?*

Texas charter schools are not Superman, nor are they a conspiracy to dismantle the public education system. Independently designed and operated to improve student achievement, **charter schools are tuition-free, open-enrollment public schools that allow taxpayer education dollars to support student and parent choice.** Originally designed as experimental learning labs, these unique public schools have the flexibility to try innovative methods to impact student learning not only on charter campuses but also across the Texas public education system.

In the state of Texas, charter schools receive public funding — though considerably less than traditional public schools — and operate under academic accountability ratings from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Although charter schools have more autonomy than traditional public schools—charters have complete control over budget, staffing and curriculum — they must meet the same state academic and financial standards as traditional public schools.

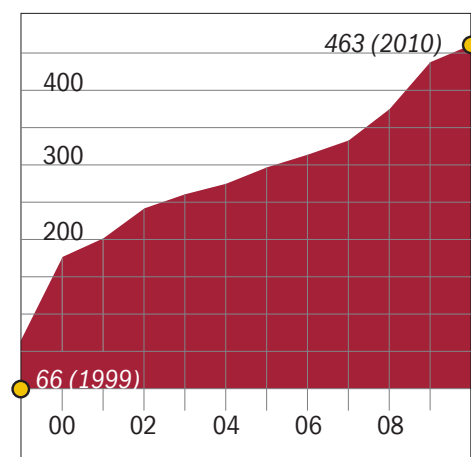
As of 2009, there were 4,900 charter schools across the country, educating more than 1.5 million children.¹ Nearly one tenth of those charters are based here in Texas, placing Texas third in the nation in the number of charter schools.²



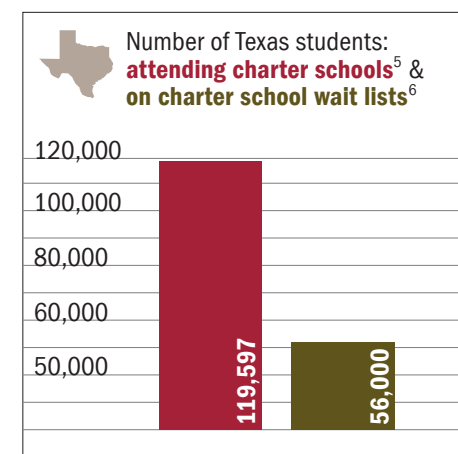
Photo by Amanda Thomas

*“Innovation, opportunity and educational success are the hallmarks of the charter school movement. Let’s encourage more growth and reap the rewards.”*³

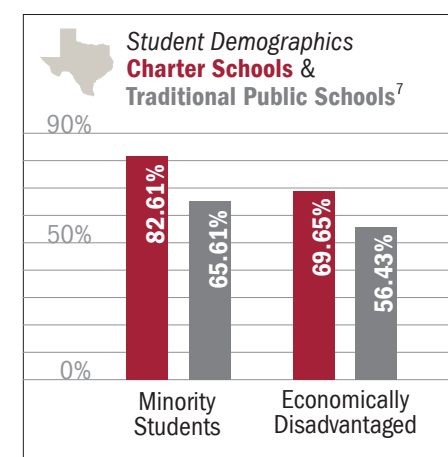
Texas State Senator Florence Shapiro (R-Plano)
Chair, Texas State Senate Committee on Education



Number of Active Texas Charter Campuses 1999–2010⁴



Texas has played an important role in the national movement, leading the way with model charter schools like the Knowledge is Power Program (known as KIPP) and with legislation that supports students. Charter schools were authorized by the Texas Legislature in 1995 to elevate all public schools by providing choice for parents and students and encouraging healthy competition among educators.

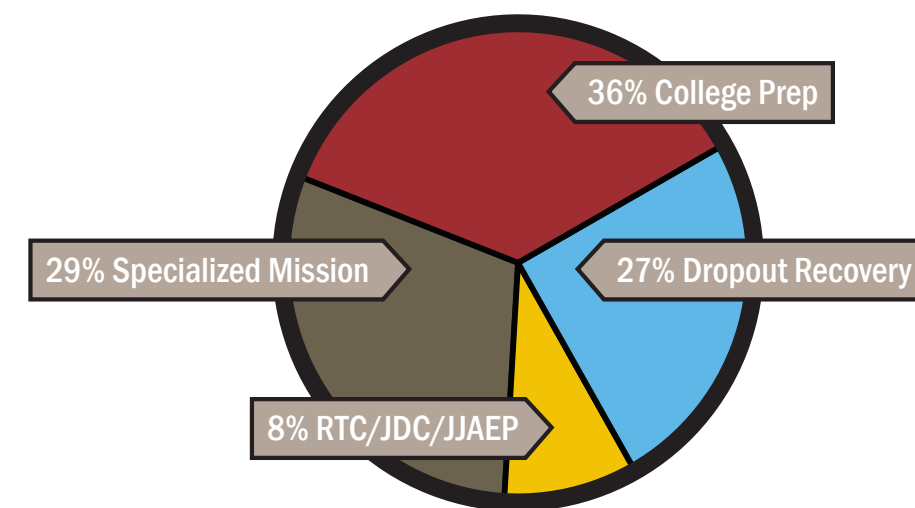


With a diverse range of missions and models, charters serve students from many ethnic backgrounds and walks of life. Effective charter schools create and sustain high-quality, innovative educational systems aligned with their mission that advance measurable, increased learning and development for each student.

¹ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Public Charter School Dashboard, Feb. 2011.
² Calculated using TEA and National Alliance for Public Charter Schools data.
³ “The Promise of Charter Schools: Letter to the Editor,” Sen. Florence Shapiro, Dallas Morning News, July 17, 2010.
⁴ 1999–2010 Accountability System State Summaries, TEA
⁵ 2010 AEIS report and Ask Ted: 2009 Snapshot Enrollment.
⁶ 2011 self-reported survey of Association charter member campuses.
⁷ 2010 AEIS Report.
⁸ 2011 self-reported survey of 364 Association charter member campuses.

% OF CAMPUSES: 2011⁸

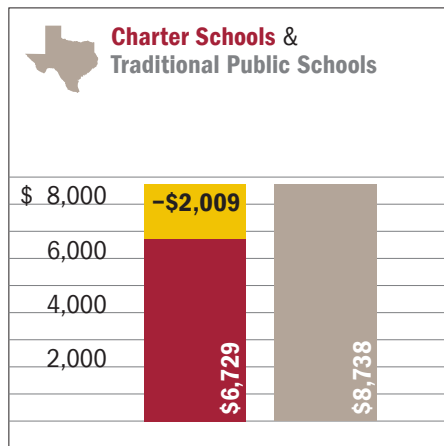
Mission Type



- Specialized Mission** schools represent 29 percent of all Texas charters and may focus on the arts, languages or science. Some even provide vocational training, allowing students to earn a high school degree along with up to two years of college credit or a technical certificate.
- College Preparatory** schools account for approximately 36 percent of all charter schools in Texas. Typically these schools have longer instructional days, meet on weekends and during parts of the summer, and often create a contract with students and their parents about academic expectations, including graduating from a four-year college.
- Twelve percent of Texas charter schools are part of a **Residential Treatment Center, Juvenile Detention Center or Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program**. These schools seek to keep students in a learning environment while they confront other challenges in their lives.
- Dropout recovery schools** serve students who are many grade levels behind. These schools, which make up 27 percent of the charters in Texas, participate in the state’s alternative accountability rating system and operate non-traditional hours to allow students to work or care for family.

To see Texas charter school campuses mapped by mission type, visit our interactive map at: http://bit.ly/charter_map.

Doing more with less.



Average Revenue Funds (All) per Student 2005-2009⁹

-\$2,009

Charter schools are public schools, but receive no funding for facilities and \$2,009 less in total revenue per student than traditional public schools.⁹ Even still, charter schools are improving academic performance.¹⁰



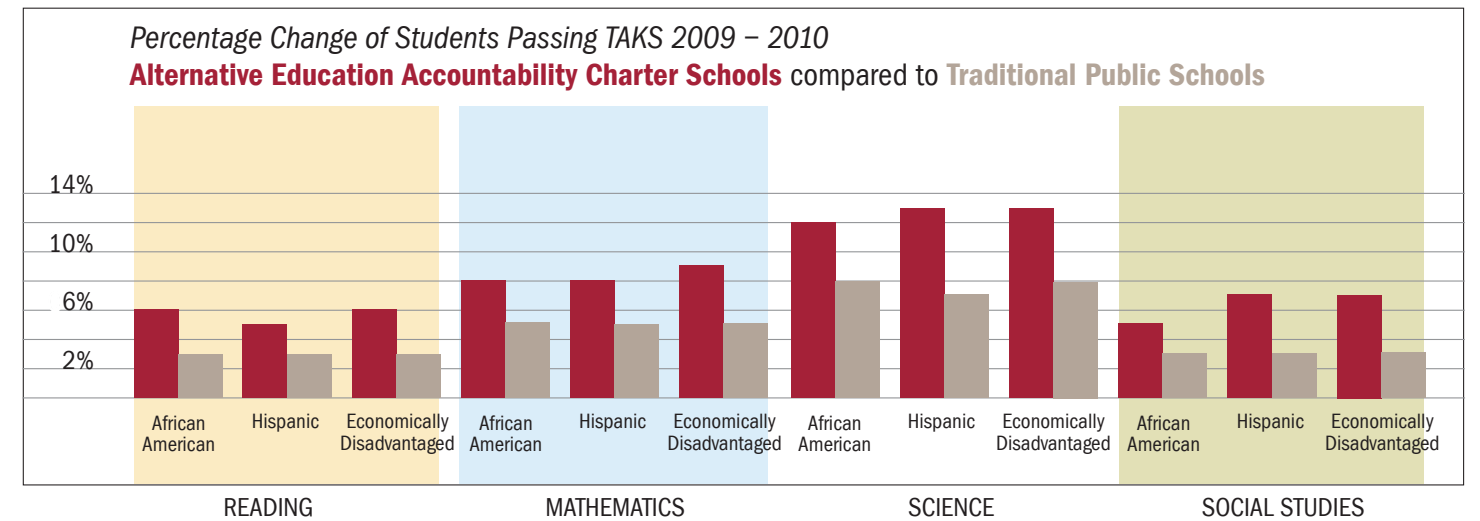
“Texas students deserve the best education we can afford to give them. Many Texas charter schools are achieving academic success while demonstrating financial efficiency. With no funding for facilities and around \$2,000 less per student than traditional public schools, innovative educators at the successful charter schools are proving they can do more with less taxpayer money.”

Texas State Representative Rob Eissler (R-The Woodlands)
Chair, Texas House Committee on Public Education

Students in Texas public charter schools are improving state assessment test scores more quickly, completing more advanced courses and taking more SAT and ACT college entrance exams than their traditional public school peers. These academic results are especially promising for students most likely to fall through the cracks. Minority and economically disadvantaged students at Standard Accountability charter schools are performing better in all subject areas than their peers at traditional public schools.¹⁰

⁹ Comparative Analysis of Revenues Generated from the Texas Foundation School Program for Independent School Districts and Charter School Districts, R.C. Wood and Associates, Feb. 2011.

¹⁰ Texas Education Agency's 2010 Comprehensive Annual Report on Texas Public Schools.



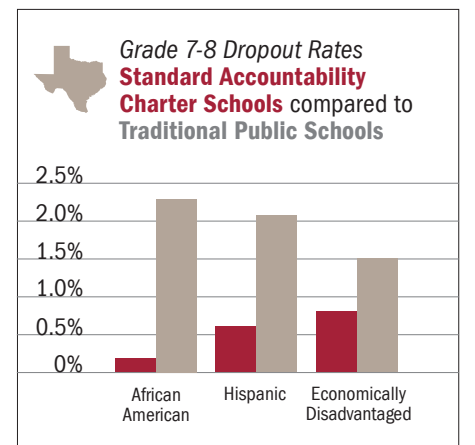
Improvements in Standard Accountability Charters Include:

- Higher percentages of African-American, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students:
 - pass the TAKS test in every core subject area, with exception of African American Social Studies, where the percent passing was equal to traditional public schools.
 - completed advanced courses in standard accountability charter schools than in traditional public schools.
- Lower percentages of African-American, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students drop out of charters than traditional public schools
- Higher percentage of charter graduating classes take the SAT and ACT than in traditional public schools

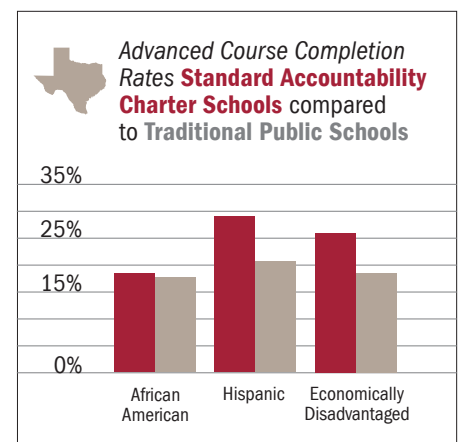
Improvements in Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) Charters Include:

- The largest gains in the percentage of students passing TAKS in each core subject area for African American, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students.
- Increased percentages of students passing TAKS in every subject and grade level.
- 48 percent of students that failed TAKS the previous year passed in 2010, up from 43 percent in 2009.
- Increased percentage of students continuing high school into their fifth year from 7.3 percent in 2008 to 27.9 percent in 2009.

All charts and graphs on this page compiled from: Texas Education Agency's 2010 Comprehensive Annual Report on Texas Public Schools.



Improvements in Standard Accountability Charter Schools Include: Lower percentages of African American, Hispanic and Economically Disadvantaged dropouts than traditional public schools



Texas Charter School Report Card—Quality, Efficiency and Accountability



According to the Texas Comptroller, charter schools make up 25 percent of the “five star districts” that have improved student achievement while keeping expenditures relatively low.

This is quite an accomplishment considering that Texas charter schools only account for roughly two percent of the student population and educate a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged and minority students.⁷



As effective educators, Texas charter schools are consistently recognized for their innovative, cost-effective educational approaches and the academic achievement of their exceptional students & teachers.

“The Texas Charter Schools Association’s Quality Framework is the first in the nation built specifically for charter schools, by charter school leaders, with the help of independent experts. It serves as an effective tool for charter school educators to track academic achievement, financial efficiency and accountability across a range of indicators that add up to the most important result—success for students.”

Marina Ballantyne Walne, Ph.D., Vice President for Education
Laura and John Arnold Foundation

Because a central focus of the Texas Charter Schools Association (TCSA) is to improve quality among charters of all types and missions, the Association tracks members’ performance across a range of key indicators using the TCSA Quality Framework. The framework measures not only academic results, but leadership, public accountability and fiscal management. In total, more than 75 indicators are part of the complete matrix, which helps member schools prepare for and excel in the state accountability system.

Charting a New Course—Charter School Myth versus Realities.

Ask 10 people for their definition of charter schools, and you’re likely to receive 10 different answers, many of which may be based upon inaccurate information. Below are the most common myths and the truth behind those myths:

Myth: Charter schools are private schools that eat away at public education dollars.

Truth: Charter schools are public schools that receive state funding based upon a per-student formula established by the state of Texas. Importantly, charter schools receive considerably less state funding than traditional public schools—\$2009 less per student, in fact—and do not receive state funding for their facilities.⁹

Myth: Charter schools aren’t required to meet the same standards as traditional public schools.

Truth: Charter schools are held to the same academic accountability ratings and financial requirements as traditional public schools as established by the Texas Education Code and administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Myth: All charter schools are college preparatory models.

Truth: In reality, charter schools have diverse missions, and only 36 percent of all charter schools in Texas have an express mission of preparing students for college. A close second to these mission types—approximately 29 percent—focus on a specialized mission, such as science, language or the arts. Dropout recovery schools account for 27 percent of charters in the state, while 8 percent of schools are focused on learning in special environments like residential treatment or juvenile detention centers, or in conjunction with juvenile justice alternative education programs.⁸

Myth: Charter schools are succeeding because they scoop the best students and the most involved parents.

Truth: With 56,000 students on waiting lists to enter charter schools across the state,⁶ the students who enter charters via a lottery are representative of a diversity of backgrounds.⁷ While it is true that parents across the state are taking notice of the results charter schools have achieved and taking control of their children’s education, not all students are high performing and many students are not succeeding in traditional public schools. Most charters accept any student who applies, and nearly 70 percent of charter students are economically disadvantaged. Many are serving at-risk, delinquent or special needs students. Yet, charter schools have experienced the largest gains in TAKS passage rates for at-risk students.¹⁰

Myth: Charter schools perform no better than traditional public schools.

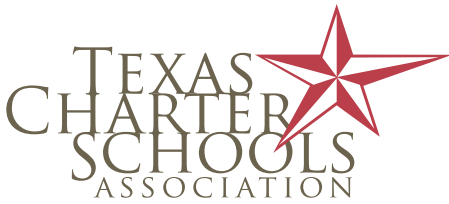
Truth: According to the TEA, Standard Accountability charter schools had strong performance in 2009-2010, demonstrating higher percentages of achievement in TAKS tests and lower percentages of drop outs for African American, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students than traditional public schools. Additionally, minority and economically disadvantaged students in Alternative Education Accountability charter schools showed larger gains in state assessment test passage rates in comparison.¹⁰

Myth: There is higher attrition among charter school teachers.

Truth: Across all schools, including charters, teacher attrition is a challenge. For charters, attrition is likely the result of the ease with which teachers can leave or be removed from their positions. The positive result is that charter schools are able to make personnel decisions that are in the best interest of their students.

Myth: Charter schools are only impacting a small number of students in the state.

Truth: Serving as laboratories for educational innovation, charter schools are developing new approaches that are proven to be successful. Collaborating with their traditional public school counterparts, charter schools are replicating their success to serve even more students across Texas.



A Unified Voice for Charter Schools in Texas

The Texas Charter Schools Association (TCSA) was formed in 2008 to accelerate student achievement in Texas by empowering charter schools to provide innovative, quality-driven education. Providing one voice to charter schools in Texas, TCSA has advocated for favorable legislation to advance the charter school movement; established standards to measure academic results, leadership, public accountability and fiscal management at charter schools in Texas; and served as a resource for charter schools across the state.

The Texas Charter Schools Association is accelerating student achievement in Texas by empowering a diverse set of effective & quality-driven charter schools. We proudly represent more than 364 charter schools where educators are preparing more than 96,000 students to graduate ready for college, career and life.



Photo of Little Longhorns by Josie Duckett, all other cover photos by Julia Robinson.

Texas Charter Schools Association

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