



# Texas Public Charter School Post-Secondary Outcomes

BY TIMOTHY MATTISON, Ph.D.

# Texas Public Charters are Getting Their Students to and through College

Texas opened its education system to public charter schools in 1995 hoping, among other things, to improve students' post-secondary outcomes. After more than two decades, Texas public charters are sending proportionately more of their students to college than traditional public schools. A majority of these charter students are from historically under-served communities.

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. In fact, public charters send an average of 4% more students to college than ISD schools. More important, public charters send higher percentages of historically under-served 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.

We are encouraged by this data and seek opportunities to work together with all public schools to set ambitious goals for student post-secondary readiness and college enrollment, especially for historically under-served students. Together we can seek out and adopt best practices from high-performing campuses, whether they are charter or traditional public schools, to ensure that our schools continue to perform better for all students.

This brief provides comparison statistics between public charter and traditional public schools on the following: **1) enrollment rates in Texas colleges, 2) college completion rates, 3) college readiness indicators, and 4) student demographics.**

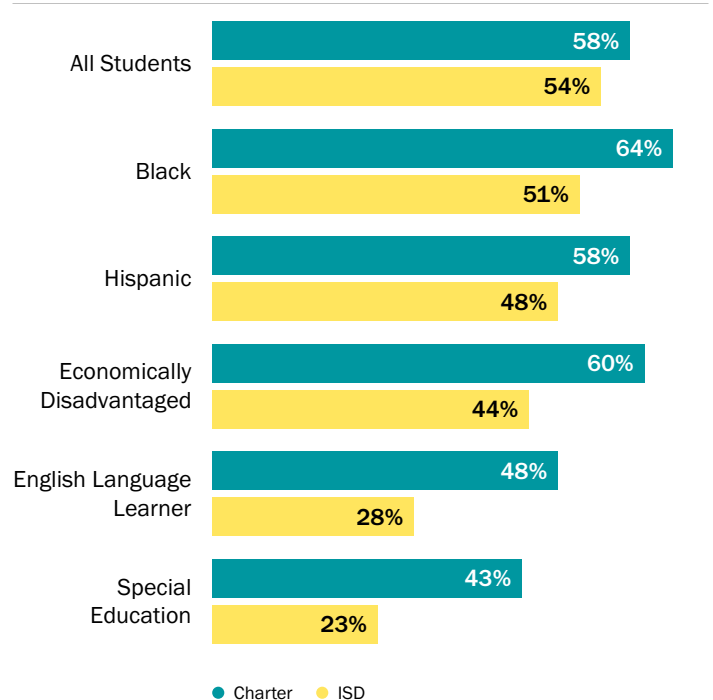
## MEETING EXPECTATIONS

# 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 over 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.

Enrollment in Texas Colleges



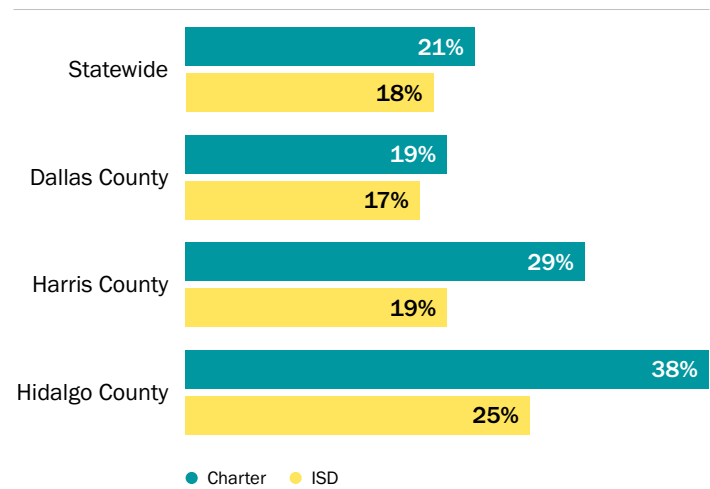
## EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

# 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.

College Completion—Economically Disadvantaged



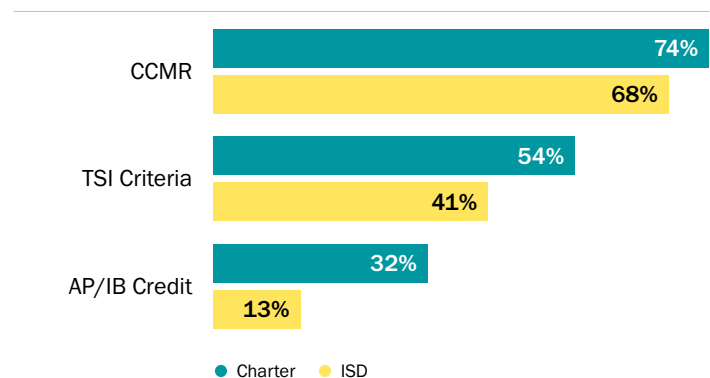
## EXPLAINING CHARTER SUCCESS

# Students Better Prepared for College

Texas public charters owe much of their success getting students to and through college to their commitment to promoting college readiness. According to 2019 Texas Education Agency data, college readiness indicators are the most influential in increasing college enrollment rates. As the chart to the right indicates, Texas public charter students have higher college readiness rates than traditional public schools.

Public charters' AP/IB credit rate stands out among all college readiness indicators, because of its importance in the college application process and transferring credit. For instance, according to the UT-Austin Office of Admissions, students can earn more points on their college applications if they earned AP/IB credit. Students can also use AP/IB credit to count toward their undergraduate degree.

College Readiness Indicators

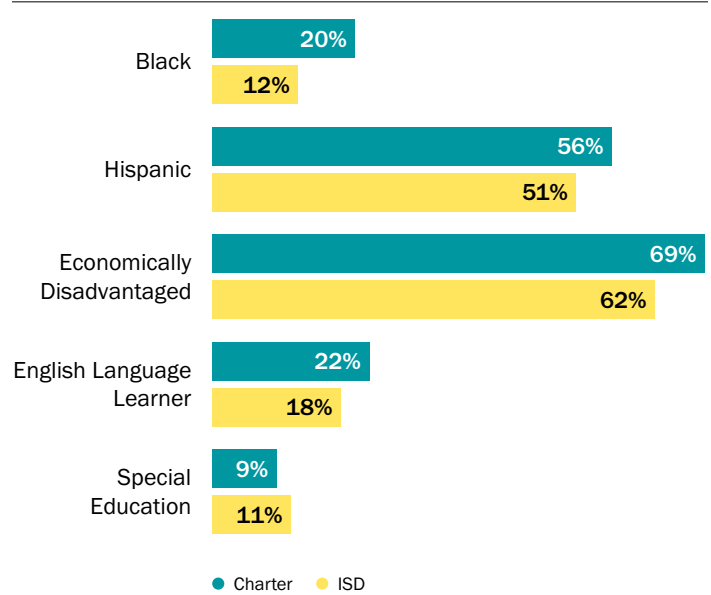


# Serving a Majority Minority Students

The chart to the left represents the projected demographics of 25 to 34 year-olds in the state by 2030. Texas public charters are driving post-secondary outcomes for these students, especially those from historically under-served populations. These are populations that the majority of research studies indicate struggle the most to get to and through college. (Refer to Wei et al. (2010) for more information on some of these struggles.) Texas public charters are helping these students overcome obstacles.

The most notable of these historically under-served populations are special education students. The chart to the right indicates that public charters enroll a similar percentage of special education students to traditional public schools. However, according to the “Enrollment in Texas Colleges” chart on the previous page, public charters send twice as many of their special education students to college, compared with traditional public schools.

Student Demographics



## HOW TO CITE THIS RESEARCH BRIEF IN APA FORMAT:

Mattison, T. (2019). Texas Public Charter Post-Secondary Outcomes. *Texas Charter Schools Association, Research Brief No. 1.*

## NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR:

The statistics appearing in this report come from Texas Education Agency (TEA), which TEA posts on its website. College readiness and student demographic figures are based on 2018-19 TEA data. College enrollment figures are based on 2017-18 TEA data, because 2018-19 enrollment data will not be released until 2020. All statistics are averages of campus-level rates. The author excluded both charter and ISD campuses that are subject to Alternative Educational Accountability (AEA) standards for a couple of reasons. First, both charter and ISD AEA campuses—many of which are dropout recovery schools—have systematically lower scores on all post-secondary metrics. Therefore, AEA campuses should be studied as a separate population of schools. Second, charters have proportionately many more AEA campuses than ISDs. Therefore, including AEA campuses in this report’s analysis would make charters appear to generate poorer post-secondary outcomes than in actuality. TCSA plans to study post-secondary outcomes of AEA campuses separately in 2020.

TCSA made every effort to use only the most recent TEA data available. However, there is a lag in the TEA data for college completion. College completion data is currently only available for 2008-2010 high school freshman cohorts. A high school freshman cohort is one that begins in the 9th grade. Therefore, since high school and college usually takes 8 years to complete, we will not have data on the 2011 high school freshmen cohort until 2020. This report uses the 2008 high school cohort only, because it is the only year available that involves not only completion at Texas public, but also private universities. Unlike for other freshman cohorts, 2008 includes data on college

completion from private colleges due to the efforts of the University of Houston Education Research Center. This team merged data from TEA on completion from public colleges with data from individual private institutions.

If the reader has any questions about the content of this research brief, they should contact the author Timothy Mattison at [tmattison@txcharterschools.org](mailto:tmattison@txcharterschools.org). Timothy is TCSA’s Director of Policy and Research.

To learn more about the struggles of under-served students, please read the following article and its list of sources: Wei, M., Liao, K. Y. H., Chao, R. C. L., Mallinckrodt, B., Tsai, P. C., & Botello-Zamarron, R. (2010). Minority stress, perceived bicultural competence, and depressive symptoms among ethnic minority college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 57*(4), 411.

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Dr. Timothy Mattison completed his Ph.D. in Educational Leadership at the University of Texas at San Antonio. He earned two master’s degrees in Global Policy Studies and Russian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where he specialized in international trade and finance. He completed his B.S. in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Dr. Mattison has published scholarly work on the factors influencing teacher labor supply in Texas, and on extending Medicare to Mexico. His dissertation focused on the factors influencing teacher happiness and psychological wellness. He has also completed research studies for the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Department of Agriculture, the Texas Historical Commission and the United States Foreign Agricultural Service. Before joining TCSA, Timothy worked for six years as a High School Math Teacher, Instructional Coach and as an Assistant Principal in San Antonio.

