

Public Charter Schools Welcomed At-Risk Students During the Pandemic

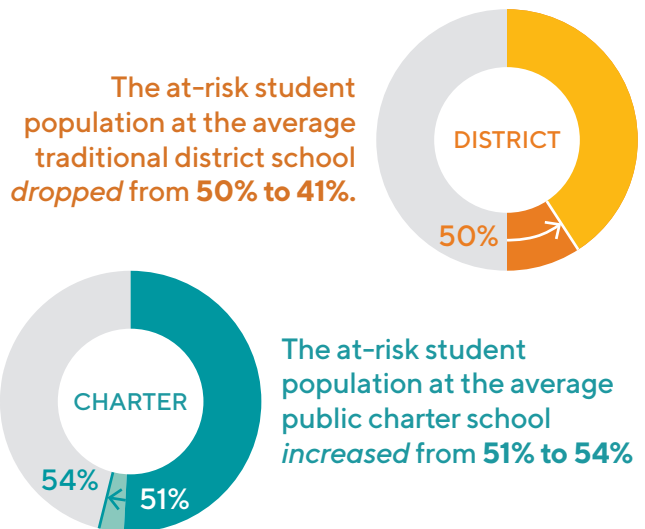
Many of the state's most vulnerable students left traditional district schools between 2020 and 2021. In some cases, administrators couldn't account for them. Public charter schools stepped up to help by opening their doors to thousands of these at-risk students during a time of crisis.

These students, designated "at-risk" by the Texas Education Agency, include those who:

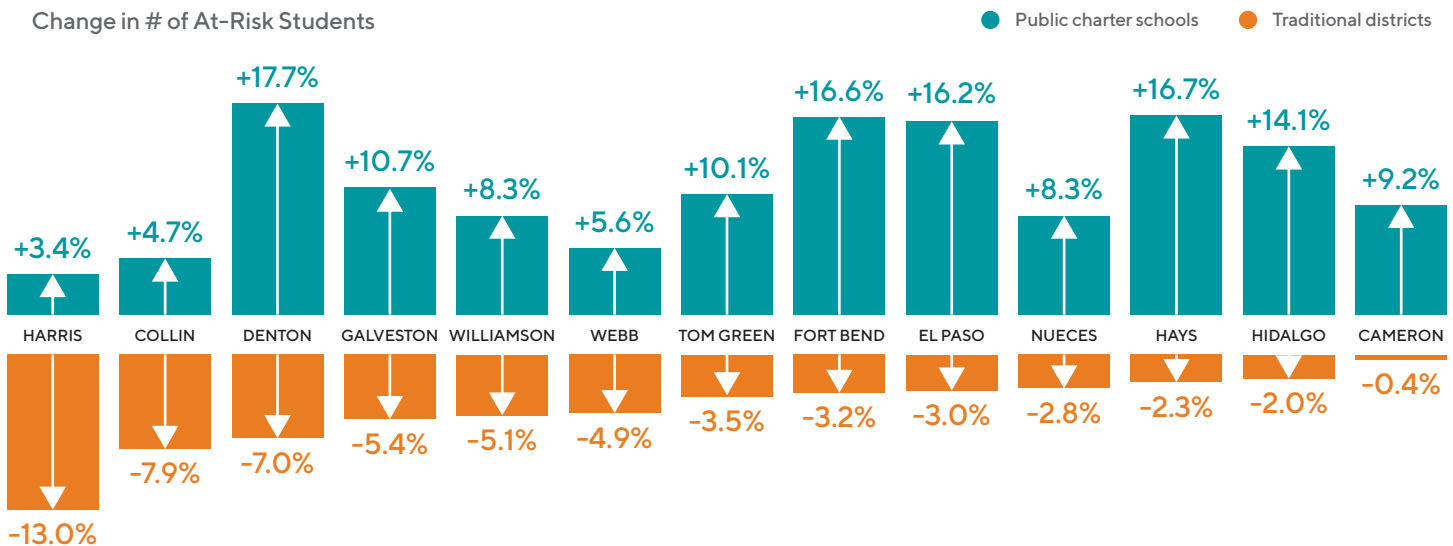
- Are severely behind academically
- Are pregnant or parents
- Have been previously expelled, incarcerated, or placed on parole
- Previously dropped out of school
- Are homeless
- Are still learning English
- Reside in a residential treatment facility

In the 2020-21 school year, ISDs enrolled many fewer at-risk students than the previous year. **But public charter schools enrolled many more.**

Between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years:



TREND BY COUNTY



PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

- In Harris County, the number of at-risk students doubled at nine public charter schools. That includes Beatrice Mayes Institute, KIPP Journey Collegiate, YES Prep Hobby, and ILTexas Windmill Lakes.
- In the Rio Grande Valley, the Rembrandt campus of Vanguard Academy and Tres Lagos campus of IDEA Public Schools both enrolled about 170 more at-risk students.
- In suburban Dallas, the number of at-risk students at iSchool Virtual Academy, part of Texas College Preparatory Academies, increased by 230%, from 126 to 416.
- The at-risk student population increased by 40% at Premier High School El Paso and 50% at the Linguistic Academy of El Paso.

Serving Vulnerable Students: Public Charter School Success Stories



Texans Can Academies

When Eddie grew up with his mother, brother, and sister, a regular family meal was a tortilla with salt for seasoning. His loving mother worked hard, but making ends meet was difficult. His dad was not in the picture. At 15, Eddie decided to leave the ninth grade to go to work so he could provide for his younger siblings.

Eddie moved in with his uncle, who had a construction job for him in San Antonio. After turning 21, Eddie decided he should go back to school and get his diploma. He looked online and found Texans Can – San Antonio. This was, Eddie says, “the best decision I ever made.” Eddie found staff and teachers who made him feel cared for—the first time he ever knew that feeling in school. He made friends. And he still worked construction, still sending money back home, while working for his high school diploma. “For the first time in my life, I actually got to be a kid.”

Seven years after graduation, Eddie is an award-winning store manager for AT&T. Married with two small children, Eddie is grateful that they “will never know what it was like to struggle” as he did. “They will never know the pain of growing up without their father.” And he continued to work in construction while earning his high-school diploma so that he could send money back home. The new life he created by attending Texans Can, Eddie says, is “truly amazing.”



Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success

Thaly Rios Lozano arrived in the United States at the age of 12. When her mother first enrolled her as an eighth grader at Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success (RYSS) in Houston, the teachers were concerned. Thaly only knew Spanish and wasn’t familiar with the Texas public school system. But educators closely monitored her progress and helped her successfully complete the year. Soon after, however, she and her mother returned to Mexico.

Three years later, Thaly moved back to Houston and re-enrolled at RYSS. During the coronavirus pandemic, she gave birth to her daughter. If teachers had concerns three years ago, when Thaly first enrolled, those concerns were only heightened. Teaching and learning virtually can be a challenge for any student — much less a new parent changing schools for her senior year of high school.

But Thaly is thriving. She has mastered Zoom and Google classroom, actively engaging with lessons on the school’s virtual learning platforms even while holding her toddler. She continues to learn English as educators at RYSS give her all the support she needs to keep up academically. One teacher described her as “a rock star.”

Why did Thaly choose to come back to RYSS? “I liked the atmosphere. It was small and made me feel comfortable,” she said. “And I recalled the attention and support I received from my teachers. Now, with my daughter and the pandemic, I know the only school for me is RYSS.”