

Texas Public Charter Schools Prepare Children for Kindergarten and Beyond

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SUMMARY

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Pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs help ensure that all children, regardless of their background, are prepared to thrive in kindergarten and beyond. Texas public charter schools play an outsized role in creating these educational opportunities. Pre-K enrollment at public charter schools is growing at a rate nearly quadruple that of traditional districts.

Nearly a quarter million students in Texas attend pre-K. From 2016 to 2020, pre-K enrollment at public charter schools increased by 40%, compared to 13% for the state as a whole.¹ Pre-K now accounts for 9% of all public charter school students and 4% of students enrolled in traditional school districts.²

| Pre-K Type | Enrollment in 2016 | Enrollment in 2020 | % Increase |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Public Charter School | 13,714 | 19,213 | 40% |
| Traditional District | 206,877 | 229,130 | 11% |
| Overall | 220,591 | 248,343 | 13% |

PERCENT OF BLACK PRE-K STUDENTS PREPARED FOR KINDERGARTEN



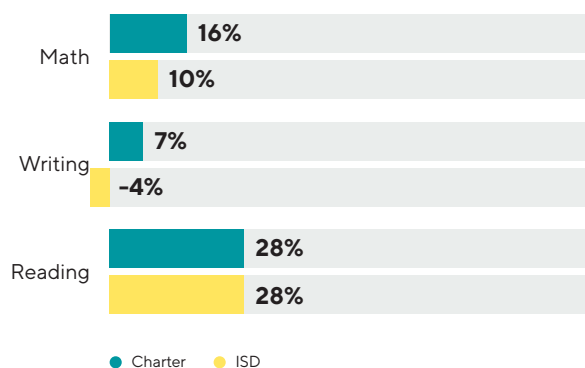
Black pre-K students at public charter schools finish their program prepared for kindergarten math at a rate 9% higher than their ISD peers. And they're not only prepared for kindergarten writing at a rate 8% higher, but fully 100% leave pre-K with the foundational skills they need.

PERCENT OF HOMELESS PRE-K STUDENTS PREPARED FOR KINDERGARTEN



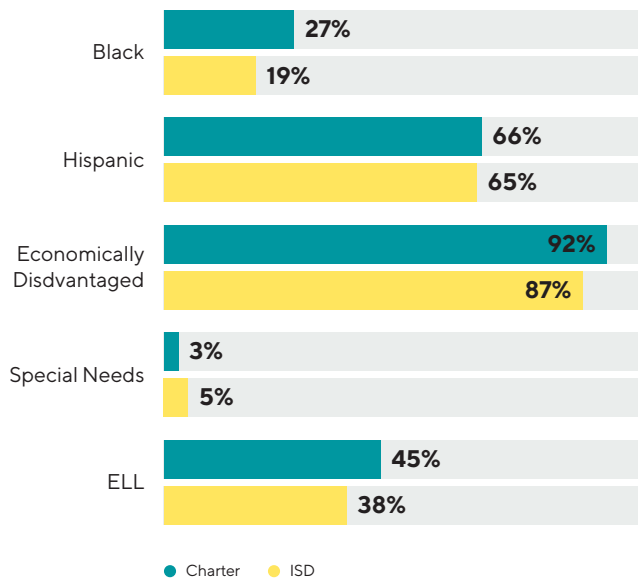
More **homeless pre-K students** at public charter schools finish their program ready for kindergarten—at a rate 10% higher in math, 8% higher in writing, and 8% higher in reading.

PRE-K STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO PROGRESS FROM “NOT READY” TO “READY” FOR KINDERGARTEN



At public charter schools, 7% of **pre-K students with disabilities** progressed from “not ready” to “ready” for kindergarten writing. This is a clear need in the education system: At ISDs, the percentage of pre-K students with disabilities prepared for kindergarten writing *declined* by 4%. Public charter schools also helped a higher percentage of these students make progress toward readiness for kindergarten math (16% vs. 10%).

Enrollment in Pre-K Programs



PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS SERVE MORE HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS

Texas public charter school pre-K programs enroll 8% more Black students, 5% more economically disadvantaged students, and 7% more English learners than traditional Independent School Districts (ISDs).

These differences are similar to those that exist overall between public charter schools and traditional public schools in grades K-12, with the exception of Hispanic students (who represent a higher percentage of public charter school students in grades that follow pre-K).³

The Faces of Charter School Pre-K Success



TARA HIGLEY: Last year, every pre-K student at Cedars Academy in Austin was from a low-income household—and every one emerged from the program prepared for kindergarten.

Tara Higley, a Cedars pre-K educator, shares her public charter school peers' convictions about "play with purpose." She explains that imaginative play helps her students develop language skills and makes them more likely to start experimenting with scientific concepts.

Ms. Higley believes in the power of students learning kinesthetically—remembering letters of the alphabet, for example, by associating them with "exciting facial expressions" and other movements.

At Cedars, educators focus on making students with disabilities feel safe and included. There are "peace corners" in every classroom, safe places where children who might get overstimulated can retreat. Pre-K teachers also have special toolboxes filled with objects that help give students sensory experiences that calm them down.



DIANA HARRIS: At Universal Academy in the Dallas area, nine out of 10 pre-K students are children of color and nearly half are learning English. Yet 100% complete their program prepared to hit the ground running in kindergarten.

"We must learn to prepare our early learners as thoroughly as we prepare college graduates," says Diane Harris, Founder, CEO, and Superintendent. "Universal Academy has used scientifically-based research strategies that have proven results infused with creative, interactive, child-centered, and fun activities which produce life-long learners."