

Public Charter Schools in Texas

Why public charter schools?

- Every student in Texas deserves to attend a school that prepares them for success—regardless of their ZIP code, income, learning style, or ability level.
- A one-size-fits-all education system leaves some families behind. We should empower parents to choose the learning environments and values they want for their children.



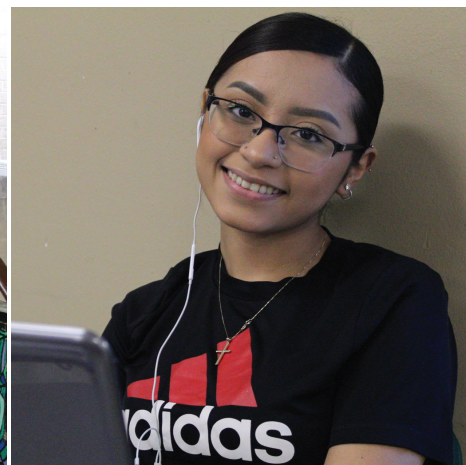
What are public charter schools?

- Charter schools are **tuition-free public schools** that are open to all students.
- The State of Texas grants charter schools the **flexibility and freedom** to introduce new ideas into classrooms—and in exchange, holds them to higher standards of academic and financial accountability than traditional school districts.
- The State Legislature created public charter schools in 1995 with bipartisan support. Charter schools are funded by the state on a per-student basis—just like traditional school districts—but receive **no local tax dollars**. On average, they receive 6% less funding from taxpayers than Independent School Districts (ISDs).
- All public charter schools in Texas are **non-profit**. They appoint school boards made up of skilled professionals. The Texas Education Agency holds these boards accountable.

What does it mean to have freedom and flexibility?

Public charter schools create educational opportunities that help more students thrive in a rapidly-changing world. Examples include:

- **Classical education:** Charter schools such as Aristoi Classical Academy believe in helping students understand truth, goodness, and beauty through the classics of Western literature—from Aristotle to Shakespeare.
- **Specialized instruction for students with disabilities:** Charter schools such as The Foundation Schools for Autism are deeply responsive to students with unique learning challenges.
- **Multi-lingual experiences:** Students at International Leadership of Texas learn to speak both Spanish and Chinese before they graduate—a trilingual education that helps them access careers in the global economy.



How does accountability compare for public charter schools and traditional districts?

Public charter schools in Texas are authorized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and 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 this respect, they share many traits in common with traditional school districts:

Texas Public School Traits

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	✓	✓

Traditional Public

Public Charter

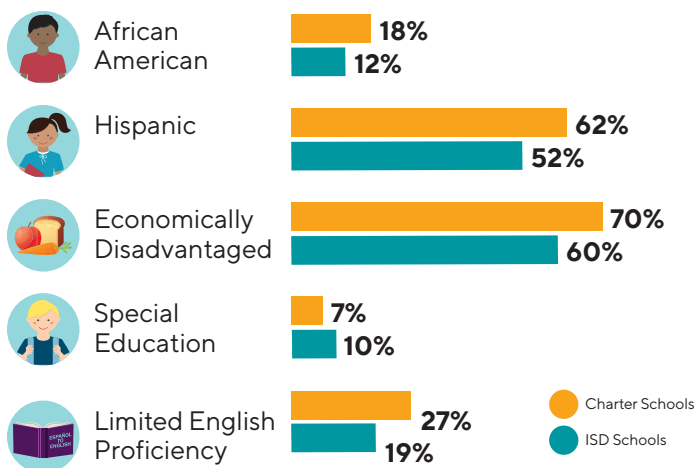


In fact, public charter schools are held to even higher standards than ISDs when it comes to transparency, expansion, and performance. That includes a “three strikes” rule that requires any charter school with a failing grade for three straight years to close—no appeals allowed.

Who do public charter schools serve?

Public charter schools in Texas enroll about 365,000 students from all kinds of different backgrounds. Overall, charter schools serve a higher percentage of high-needs and traditionally-underserved students than traditional districts.

CHARTER SCHOOL VS. ISD SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN TEXAS



Are public charter schools getting results?

Public charter schools are raising achievement for students from all backgrounds:

- Statewide, **two-thirds** of the top-rated school districts are public charter schools.
- Public charter schools send **more graduates to college** than traditional districts, including nearly twice as many students with disabilities (41% vs. 23%).
- In Houston, public charter school students achieve **43 more days' worth of reading** progress in a single year—and **88 more days' worth of math progress**—than statewide averages.
- Traditional districts with public charter schools in their boundaries are more likely to improve. Over three years, **82% of ISDs with charters boosted fifth-grade reading scores**—compared to 67% of ISDs without charters.