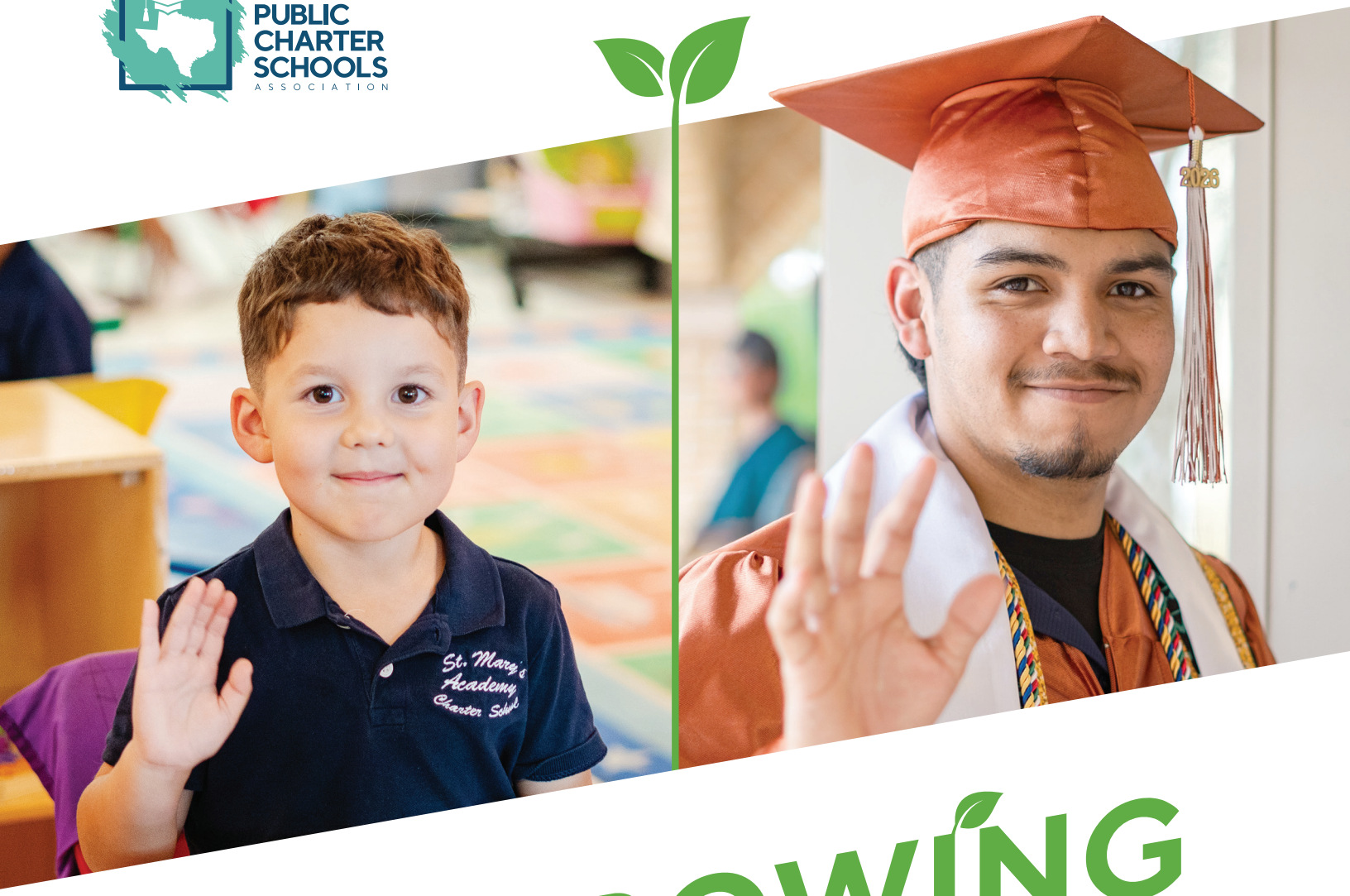
TEXAS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION



GROWING TOWARD TOMORROW

ANNUAL REPORT
2025–26

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF IMPACT

Charter schools have transformed public education in Texas. TPCSA told that story during a yearlong celebration of our community's 30th anniversary — including original research that makes the impact of public charter schools undeniable.

Our three-part series struck a chord with **200,000 parents, educators, and supporters** statewide, who opened **1.1 million emails** and engaged **1,248 times on social media**. Many actively joined the celebration by sharing their own pieces of Texas charter history.

More than **1.5 million students** have attended a Texas public charter school.

Charter schools help **more graduates earn college degrees, industry certifications, and higher wages**.



Public charter school students enroll in college at a rate about **12 percentage points** higher than students in traditional districts.

370,000 Texas high school students have access to a great public school only because of their proximity to high-performing charters.

Friends,

More than 30 years after the first public charter schools took root in Texas, this community continues to flourish: sprouting diverse new opportunities, serving more communities, and nurturing future leaders. I'm inspired by the success we've cultivated together, and even more excited about what's next.

Throughout 2025-26, I had the privilege of hearing from school leaders, board members, policymakers, funders, and partners across Texas and beyond. Though they bring different perspectives, they **share a common belief that every student deserves access to a high-quality public education**. This collective commitment shaped TPCSA's 2026-2030 strategic plan.

As we enter this next chapter, we are redoubling our focus on what matters — making sure that Texas public charter schools keep **winning in Austin**. Every member service, advocacy initiative, communications effort, and investment in our organization will advance that goal.

Of course, winning means more than passing legislation. It's about creating the conditions for growth, protecting the autonomy that allows schools to innovate, and removing unnecessary regulatory barriers. It means putting strong student outcomes at the center of every decision.

That work accelerates as we prepare for the 90th Texas Legislative Session. This year, we have an opportunity to build on historic facilities wins and tackle some of our schools' biggest challenges. **But only if we come together.** TPCSA's advocacy is powerful because it reflects charter schools of every size and model — united by a single voice and purpose.

Thank you for believing in this mission, growing beside us, and providing the resources and feedback we need along the way. I hope the pages ahead remind you how far we have come and inspire you to help write the next chapter for Texas public charter schools.

Because when public charter schools speak with one voice, Texas listens.

Natalie Kaharick

Natalie Kaharick
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

COVER: An early-career student and a recent graduate of St. Mary's Academy Charter School greet the future with open palms, ready for the new opportunities ahead.



ROOTED IN RELATIONSHIPS

Just eight years ago, Texas public charter schools planted the first seeds of intentional lawmaker engagement. Today, TPCSA's regional advocacy work is evergreen, and meaningful new relationships are always in bloom.

87%
of member charter holders engaged in advocacy

437
lawmaker engagements

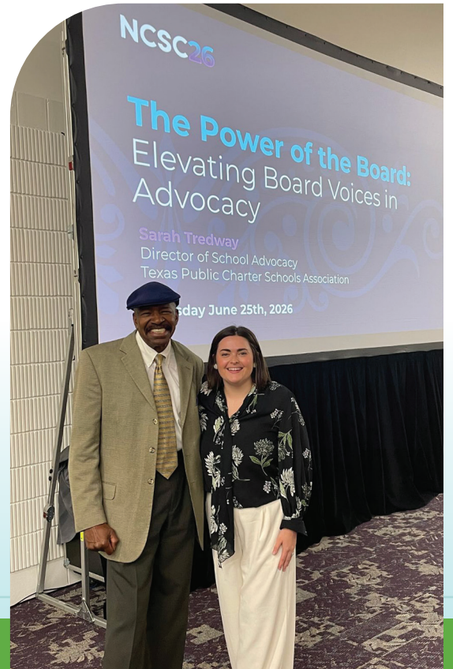
109
state lawmaker offices

446,000+
students benefit from effective advocacy

- This year, TPCSA helped member schools design **memorable lawmaker events**, showcase the impact of **investments in facilities funding**, and participate in roundtables focused on research and policy issues.
- Our **Amplify Advocacy Program** activated **24 charter school board members across Texas** — building a larger network of these influential advocates than ever before.
- Our government affairs team branched out into federal advocacy, meeting with **95% of Texas congressional offices**. These budding connections helped us grow awareness of three pieces of federal legislation championed by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools that would expand opportunity nationwide.

Elevating Charter School Board Voices

Sarah Tredway, director of the **Amplify Advocacy Program** (AMP), and **Otis "Scotty" Scott, Jr., BRAINATION board president and longtime board advocacy participant**, took the stage at the 2026 National Public Charter Schools Conference. Their session on tapping into the power of board members to grow charter influence inspired more than 300 advocates from across the country.



Our community celebrated **68 incredible Charter Champions** from the 89th Texas Legislative Session, featuring a unique piece of student artwork to make each award special.



House Public Education Chairman Brad Buckley is a staunch advocate for public charter schools like **Richard Milburn Academy**, a dropout recovery school helping students turn their lives around. In recognition of his longtime education contributions, a **classroom at the RMA – Killeen campus has been named in Chairman Buckley's honor.**

While there for the dedication, it seemed only fitting that he also receive his Charter Champion award from **RMA board member Rose Thompson**.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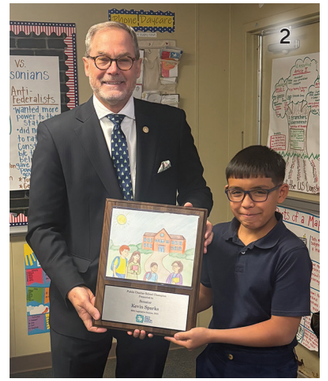
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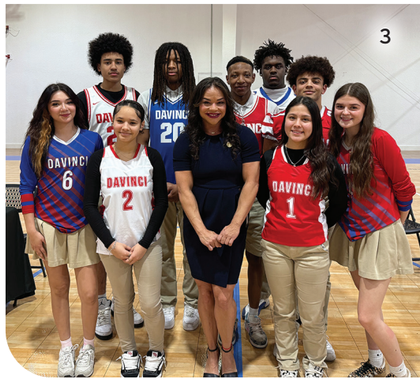
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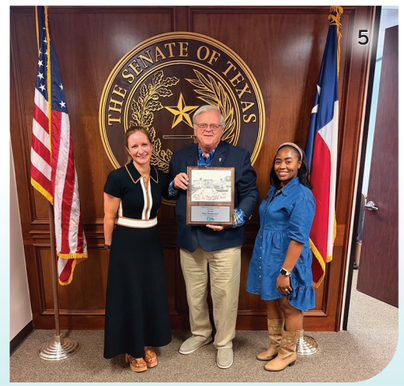

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1. Sen. Judith Zaffirini with Wayside Superintendent Matt Abbott and his son, with whom she had taken a photo nearly ten years ago. 2. Sen. Kevin Sparks at Midland Academy. 3. Rep. Josey Garcia at DaVinci Academy of San Antonio. 4. Rep. Linda Garcia at Trinity Basin Prep. 5. Sen. Paul Bettencourt with Thrive Academy.

ADVOCACY IN THE INTERIM

Advocacy doesn't have an off-season. Throughout the interim year, TPCSA cultivated relationships with lawmakers, State Board of Education members, and dozens of candidates who will shape the future of Texas public education. And, we saw fresh evidence that years of steady engagement are creating the right conditions for growth.

This spring, when the **Texas House Committee on Public Education** convened hearings on the state of education and expanding high-performing schools, TPCSA had a seat at the table. Our VP of government affairs, Bryce Adams, gave compelling invited testimony on the charter sector, while **Elizabeth Goldsmith**, founder and executive director of **Thrive Center for Success**, shared the importance of earlier funding projections.



Cynthia Trigg, **CEO of Evolution Academy**, was invited to represent dropout recovery charter schools. Though public charter schools serve an outsized portion of students seeking a second chance at success, they haven't always had a voice.

Now, they do. With college and career readiness rates rivaling those of standard accountability schools, Evolution Academy blooms with the best. It's pretty hard to impress every member of the committee, but Ms. Trigg did it.



Changing Minds and Warming Hearts

Throughout the year, policy advisors and staffers for **43 state lawmaker offices** joined our government affairs team for candid conversations about top myths circulating at the Capitol.

An October mythbusting tour took key legislative offices to **IDEA Rundberg College Preparatory** in North Austin. Built on the site of a former bowling alley, this A+ campus is now a beacon of opportunity in a neighborhood of underperforming schools — proving that students of all backgrounds can succeed at the highest levels. **Staffers for Governor Abbott, House Speaker Burrows**, and **10 other offices** enjoyed the hospitality of IDEA's student baristas.

CLEARING THE WAY FOR GROWTH

Each year, TPCSA dedicates hundreds of hours to pruning red tape and enriching the policy landscape. In 2025-26, we tackled more than **40 proposed regulations** from the Texas Education Agency and State Board of Education — and secured important wins — so that member schools spend less time in the weeds and more time changing lives.



Literary Works List: The SBOE recommended roughly 300 works for consideration, well exceeding the requirement of at least one literary work in each grade and **specifying the year each must be taught**.

Impact: We gave public testimony on the need to preserve curriculum autonomy and organized school advocacy efforts. **Greater flexibility allows texts to be taught in earlier grades as part of advanced curricula**, and the list was reduced by around 100 works.

ESA Implementation: Proposed comptroller rules required schools to provide **proof of accreditation** before becoming an approved provider.

Impact: Thanks to our public comments, the final rules require the comptroller to use electronic verification on the TEA website. This **streamlines the process** for schools that wish to serve families through the Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) program.

DPS Process: Schools and TEA were wasting time on **letters of good standing** each time they needed access to the DPS background check system.

Impact: TPCSA engaged, and DPS updated its internal processes to **remove the requirement**.

Seed to Sprout: Full Cycle SBOE Engagement

TPCSA provided comprehensive support for the Texas High School for Accelerated Learning as its leaders navigated the rigorous Gen. 31 charter approval process. When THSAL was awarded its charter in June, SBOE Members Brandon Hall and Julie Pickren were among the first to congratulate them.



CHARTER FACILITIES

THE LONG BOUGH OF ADVOCACY

Policy change doesn't happen in a single season. This timeline traces how each advocacy win for charter school facilities grew into the next — blossoming into reduced costs, more cash, and greater access to buildings ready to help kids learn.

2017 In the 85th Texas Legislature, Texas Senator Donna Campbell filed a bill to increase public charter school facilities funding. With the leadership of Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, the Texas Legislature made a **$60 million investment in public charter school facilities**.



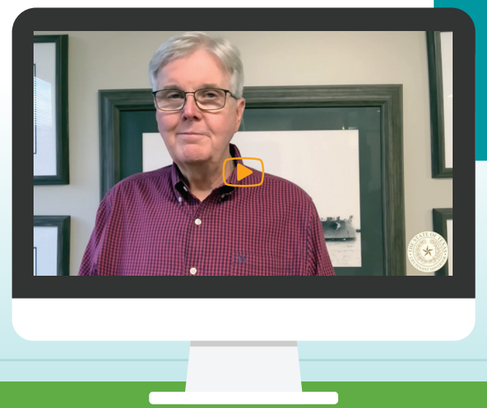
Pictured, 2017: **Texas Senator Donna Campbell** thanks Spurs legend **David Robinson**, an important advocate for the 2017 facilities bill. We're excited to continue working with Sen. Campbell as she steps into the role of chair of the Senate Committee on Education.

2021 TPCSA advocated for the State Board of Education to significantly expand the **Permanent School Fund (PSF) Bond Guarantee** amount, lowering interest for public charter schools using the program to build and renovate facilities.

2023 Our community's advocacy brought an **end to municipal discrimination** in zoning and permitting, putting millions of dollars back into charter school classrooms.

2025 In the 89th session, the Texas Legislature repealed the cap on charter school facilities funding as part of HB 2. This landmark victory, which followed years of advocacy, **unlocked more than half a billion dollars in new state facilities funding over the next five years**.

Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick has been a driving force behind the Texas charter community's long history of progress for students, including the monumental increase in facilities funding in 2025. To help us kick off our 30th anniversary celebration, he shared a special message reaffirming his commitment to public charter schools.



> "I've been a longtime champion for public charter schools in Texas because I believe students should receive an education that best fits their needs. Congratulations on 30 years of success. … I've been happy to stand with you along the way, and I will continue to do so."
>
> **Dan Patrick**
> Lieutenant Governor of Texas

2025 The story didn't end there. With input from our policy team, the Texas Education Agency applied for a **State Facilities Incentive Grant (SFIG)** from the federal government. In fall 2025, TEA received the largest SFIG grant ever awarded, bringing in **$67 million of *additional* facilities funding for public charter schools**.



GROWING TOWARD TOMORROW



2025 TEXAS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

In October 2025, more than 1,700 leaders and education partners gathered in Houston to learn, collaborate, and grow the future of Texas public charter schools.



1,794 attendees



Commissioner of Education Mike Morath



138 breakout sessions and workshops



99% of attendees want to return



Rhodes School Choir

TPCSA's three-day conference connected attendees with timely professional development and high-caliber solution providers. It also gave us a chance to elevate some of our most powerful voices, from a talented student ensemble to Commissioner of Education Mike Morath.

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workday
NOOK

SUPPORTING A VIBRANT CHARTER COMMUNITY



Dr. Dana Jobe

SUPERINTENDENT, UNIVERSAL ACADEMY

"Investing in our educators is the key to improving student achievement. TLAC's practical, research-based strategies have strengthened our instructional leadership, created a common language for effective teaching, and transformed our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) into collaborative coaching environments where teachers continuously refine their instructional practices."



Dr. Don Mills

SUPERINTENDENT, LIGHTHOUSE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"One of our high school teachers embraced the use of instructional data to continuously adjust teaching. His classroom performance improved, and his students demonstrated strong academic growth. He became an instructional leader on our campus and played an important role in helping our high school improve from an **F to a B rating in 2026**."



Dr. Julia Wright

SUPERINTENDENT, MEYERPARK CHARTER SCHOOL

"When your students face challenges outside the classroom, every minute of instructional time matters. For two years, MeyerPark has sent all of its new teachers, along with their instructional coach, to TPCSA's Teach Like a Champion workshop. We now dedicate time every Friday for teachers to model these techniques. Two of our highest implementers were even praised by a TEA visitor who observed their classrooms. This caliber of PD creates consistency and excellence across our campus."

When we grow together, the entire Texas public charter community thrives.

In 2025, TPCSA expanded its member services team so we could work even more strategically to get members the support they need — from creating dozens of new webinars and policy resources to connecting schools to the right solution providers. Our team also invested in innovative solutions to help new and established schools flourish.

- Our **upgraded job board** helped members recruit qualified candidates nationwide.
- We partnered with InsiteEFS to build a **sophisticated mapping tool** with demographics, real estate data, and other insights for targeted expansion.
- We provided deep coaching and planning support to **nine new charter schools** as they laid the foundations for success.

Teach Like a Champion Super Users

Each year, member schools complete more than **20,000 continuing education hours** through online webinars and our statewide conference. But several schools have made their strongest gains through initiatives like our in-person Teach Like a Champion workshops.

We recently connected with a few "super users" — schools that sent several teachers and coaches in 2024 and 2025, creating a critical mass of educators equipped with the same strategies.



Unlocking the Power of Greater Facilities Funding

Before the passage of House Bill 2, **Cedars Academy** faced a dilemma. The school had outgrown its buildings, but securing a new home in East Austin was simply too expensive.

That's why Dr. Leslie Sparacello, the superintendent, became the face of TPCSA's 2024-25 facilities funding campaign. She repeatedly met with lawmakers and testified at the Capitol multiple times during the 2025 session.

In fall 2026, Cedars Academy began the year in its brand-new campus. In May, we even took a few legislative staffers to tour the new building and see the impact of their support during the 89th session. According to Dr. Sparacello, it's a true Cinderella story — from cramped portable buildings and teaching in the cafeteria to ample classrooms with plenty of light and space for learning and play.

"We are absolutely, over-the-moon excited," she shared. Two weeks later, trucks arrived to take Cedars to its new home.



For Cedars, additional facilities funding means the community can stay together. That means everything to parents like Brianna Everett, a Cedars graduate whose two sons are thriving at the school today. (She even met her husband at Cedars in middle school.)



OUR TEAM

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Jennifer Acevedo
Data & Research Analyst

Bryce Adams
VP of Government Affairs

Renelle Bedell
VP of Operations

Kelsey Borza
Director of Advancement

Mallory Chesser
Director of Development Communications

Ally Crutcher
Director of Regional Advocacy, North Texas

Inga Dhillon
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Brandon Garcia
Senior Director of Government Affairs

Laurel Garcia
Senior Director of Continuing Education

Elizabeth Gunter
Development Project Manager

Jimmy Jackson
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Nadia Luna
VP of Member Engagement

Ila Mar
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Chelbi Mims
VP of External Engagement

Keenisha Protho
Director of Regional Advocacy, Southeast Texas

Crystal Rios
Senior Director of SBOE Engagement

Angel Salazar
Senior CRM & Data Administrator

Katrina Shea
Director of Special Events

Jessica Shopoff
VP of Policy & Research

Anjelica Solano
Senior Director of Communications

Betty Torgerson
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Director of School Advocacy

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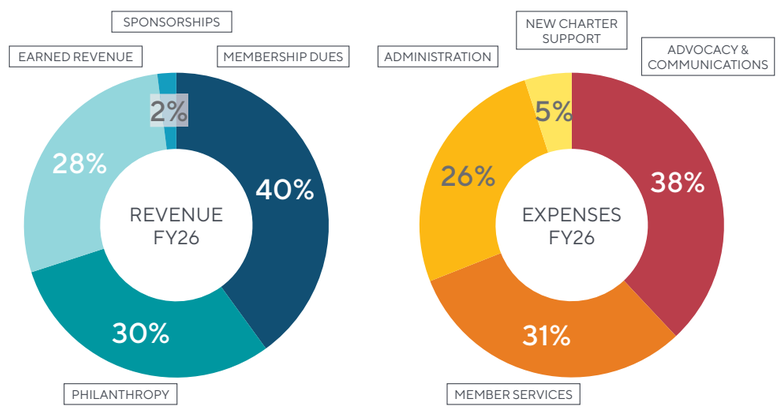



Thank you to the foundations and sponsors who so generously invest in the continued excellence, advocacy success, and growth of Texas public charter schools.

2025-26 TPCSA Member Charter Holders

Our strength is rooted in the dedication of our members. TPCSA is honored to serve 125 charter holders whose 857 campuses educate nearly 90% of Texas public charter school students. Thank you for investing your time, your voice, and your leadership. Together, we're cultivating a stronger future for students across Texas.

A+ Charter Schools
A+ Unlimited Potential
Academy of Accelerated Learning
Advantage Academy
Alief Montessori
Ambassadors Preparatory
Amigos Por Vida
Arcadia Schools
Aristoi Classical Academy
Arlington Classics Academy
Arrow Academy
Austin Achieve Public Schools
BakerRipley Community Schools
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Beta Academy
Betty M. Condra School
Big Springs Charter Schools
Bob Hope School
Brazos River School
Brazos School for Inquiry and Creativity
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Burnham Wood Charter School
Calvin Nelms Charter School
Cedars Academy
Celebrate Dyslexia
Chaparral Star Academy
CityScape Schools
Compass Academy Charter School
Compass Rose
Cumberland Academy
Doral Academy of Texas
Dr. M.L. Garza Charter School
East Texas Charter School
Ehrhart School
Eleanor Kolitz Hebrew Language Academy
Elevate Collegiate Charter School
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Fort Worth STEAM Academy
Frank Liu Jr. Academy for Music & Arts
George I. Sanchez Charter School
Great Hearts Texas
Harmony Public Schools
Heritage Academy Charter Schools
Heritage Classical Academy
Houston Classical Charter School
IDEA Public Schools
Inspire Academies
International Leadership of Texas
Jubilee Academies
Katherine Anne Porter School
KIPP Texas Public Schools
La Academia De Estrellas
La Fe Preparatory
Leadership Prep School
Legacy Traditional Schools – Texas
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Lighthouse Public Schools
Mater Academy
Meadowland Charter
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MeyerPark Charter
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University of Texas University Charter
The University of Texas System
Unparalleled Preparatory Academy
Valor Public Schools
Vanguard Academy
Village Tech Schools
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