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2025 State Assessments: Urban Charter Schools Continue to Close Gaps, Outperforming the State & Pre-Pandemic Reading Levels

Charter School Students Are 50% More Likely to Read At Grade Level

HAMILTON, NJ – December 10, 2025 – Last week, the New Jersey Department of Education released the spring 2025 New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) scores for all public school districts in the Garden State. A vast majority of New Jersey’s 64,000 charter school students are students of color and 76% of charter school students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Charter schools are quickly closing the literacy gap and are within striking distance of outperforming the statewide average in one of the highest performing public school systems in the country. Overall, 51.9% of charter students are proficient or higher in reading compared to the state average of 53.1%. In Newark and Jersey City, charter students outperform the state average in reading, while in Plainfield and Paterson, charter students have exceeded pre-pandemic reading levels.

“New Jersey’s public charter school assessment data is a true national success story,” **said Harry Lee, President and CEO of the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association (NJPCSA)**. “Charter schools serve many of the state’s most economically disadvantaged communities, yet charter students are performing on par with students in more affluent suburban districts. When schools are committed, focused, and meet students where they are, every child, regardless of zip code, can achieve at the highest levels. Public charter schools are a shining example of what happens when we invest in our children.”

Overall, public charter school students are making tremendous gains and are 50% more likely to read at grade level and 47% more likely to be on grade level in math compared to their district peers, as demonstrated by students scoring proficient (levels 4 or 5) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics on NJSLA.

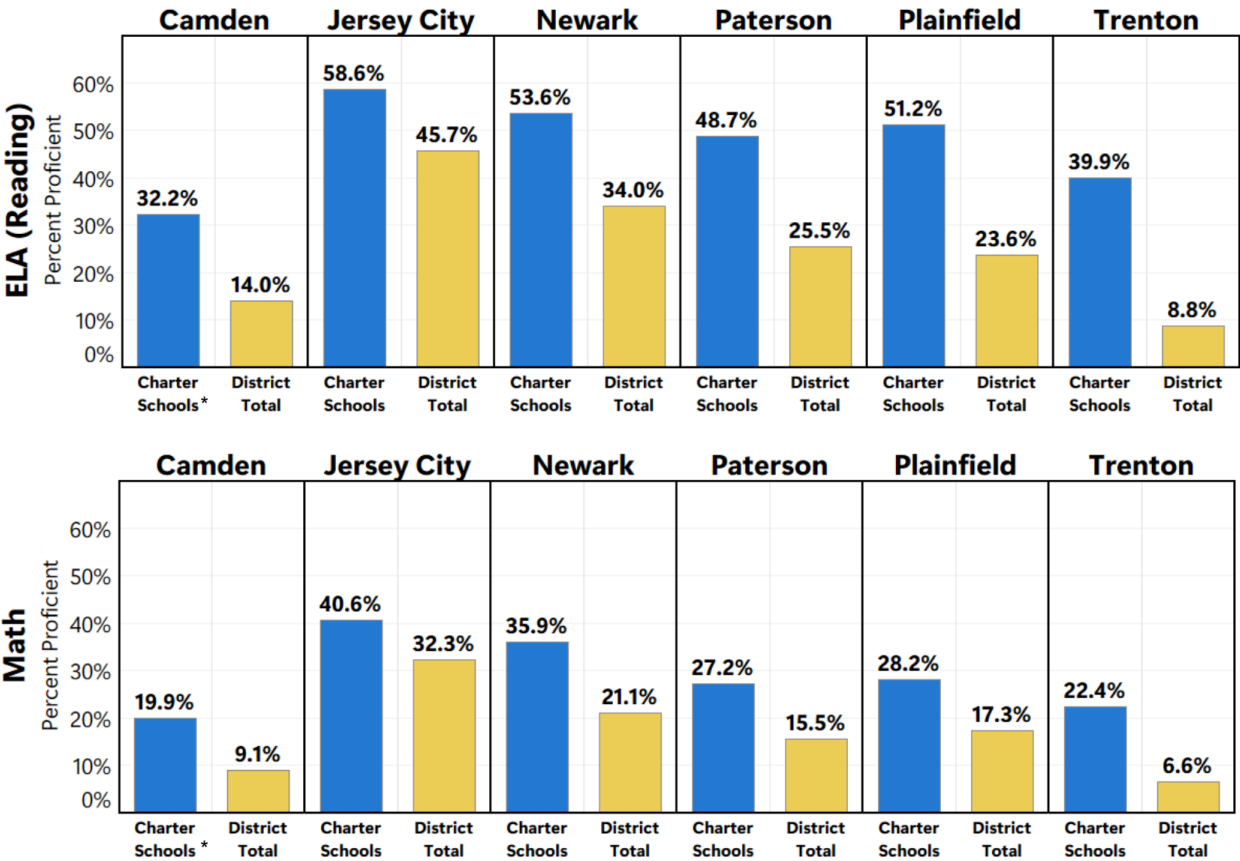
“Focused and caring educators, longer school days, more professional development, and a strong and positive school culture are the reasons why charter schools continue to succeed,” **said TJ Best, Senior Advisor at NJPCSA**. “With 64,000 students currently enrolled and 32,000 more students on wait lists today, charter schools are providing educational opportunities for families that change lives. We must support all of our public school students, including charter school students, by providing the proper resources they need to reach their fullest potential.”

An analysis of test scores disaggregated by the six cities which serve the largest number of charter school

students demonstrate similar findings. Despite these schools serving more economically disadvantaged students than their resident districts, students at charter schools in Newark, Camden, Paterson, Trenton, Jersey City, and Plainfield are, on average, 71% more likely to read at grade level and 65% more likely to do math at grade level compared to their district peers. In the aggregate, urban charter schools in Newark and Jersey City continue to outpace the state average when it comes to students reading on grade level.

2024-25 NJSLA Performance, By City

*Includes Renaissance Schools



Newark and Jersey City Charter Students Outperform Statewide Average In Reading

85% of Newark’s 20,000 charter school students come from low-income backgrounds. For the third year in a row, public charter school students in Newark beat the New Jersey state average in reading proficiency, with 53.6% of students scoring proficient (levels 4 or 5) on the ELA section of NJSLA compared to 53.1% statewide. Both district and charter schools in Newark have seen significant student achievement gains over the last several years demonstrating that district and charter schools can work together and increase outcomes for all students.

Robert Treat Academy Charter School in Newark continues to beat the New Jersey state average in reading proficiency by 17 percentage points despite serving nearly twice as many economically disadvantaged students than the state.

“As a parent, seeing our school’s assessment results come back so strong means more to me than just numbers on a page. It tells me that the long nights of homework, the patience of our teachers, and the hard work our kids put in every single day are paying off,” said **Brenda Mendez, a parent at Robert Treat**

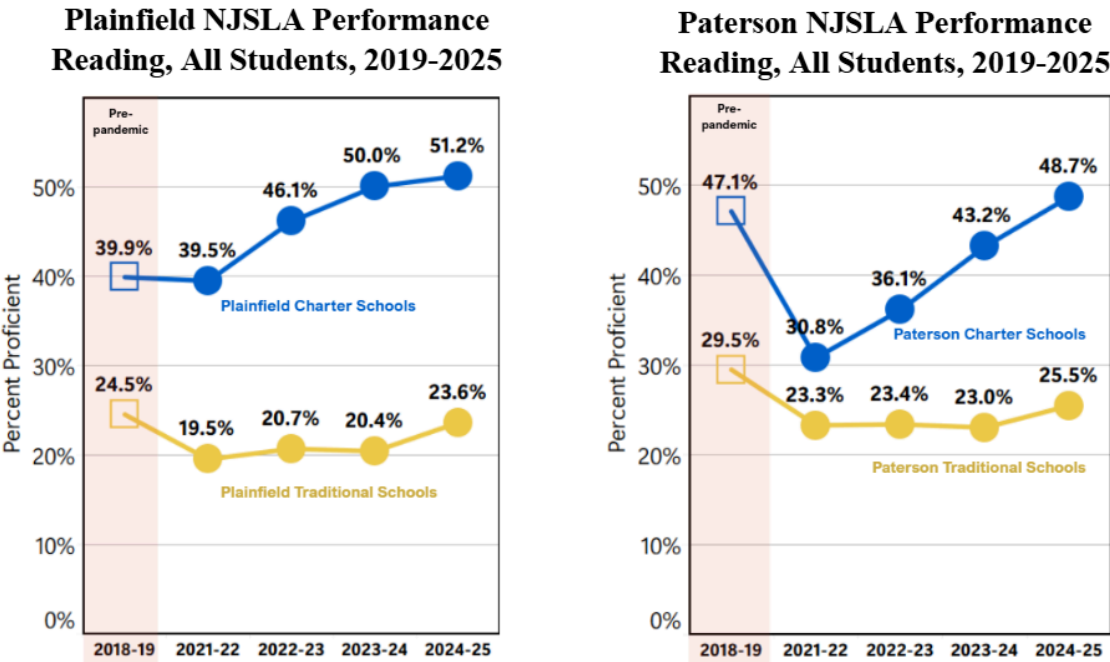
Academy. “These results show real learning and real progress is being made. It’s further proof that our family found a school that is a great fit because its dedicated teachers and administration are invested in my kids’ classroom success.”

Jersey City charter schools boast some of the most diverse public schools in the entire state. There are 11 charter schools in the city serving nearly 7,000 students. 34% of Jersey City charter students are Black, 32% are Latino, 22% are Asian, and 14% are White. Two out of three students are economically disadvantaged. 2025 results show that 58.6% of Jersey City charter students are reading at grade level, outperforming the state’s reading proficiency rate by 5.5 percentage points.

Plainfield and Paterson Charter Students Beat Pre-Pandemic Literacy Rates & Make Strong Year Over Year Gains

There are currently five charter schools operating in Plainfield, serving approximately 3,300 students. 84% of Plainfield charter students come from low-income backgrounds and 14% are multilingual learners. 2025 NJSLA scores show that Plainfield charter school students’ reading proficiency rates outpace pre-pandemic proficiency rates by double digits, going from 39.9% proficient in 2019 to 51.2% proficient in 2025.

In Paterson, charter schools serve 7,400 students, 86% of whom come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Paterson charters are alleviating overcrowding in the public school system while simultaneously producing strong student achievement results. The latest NJSLA scores show that Paterson charter students’ reading proficiency rates now exceed their pre-pandemic proficiency rates (48.7% proficient in 2025 vs. 47.1% proficient in 2019).



Queen City Academy Charter School in Plainfield, a K-12 charter school serving 506 students, 87% of whom are economically disadvantaged, recently surpassed its pre-pandemic reading proficiency rate. By utilizing data to drive instruction and personalizing learning through targeted support programs such as weekday and Saturday academies, Queen City is also outperforming the state average by 12% percentage points in reading.

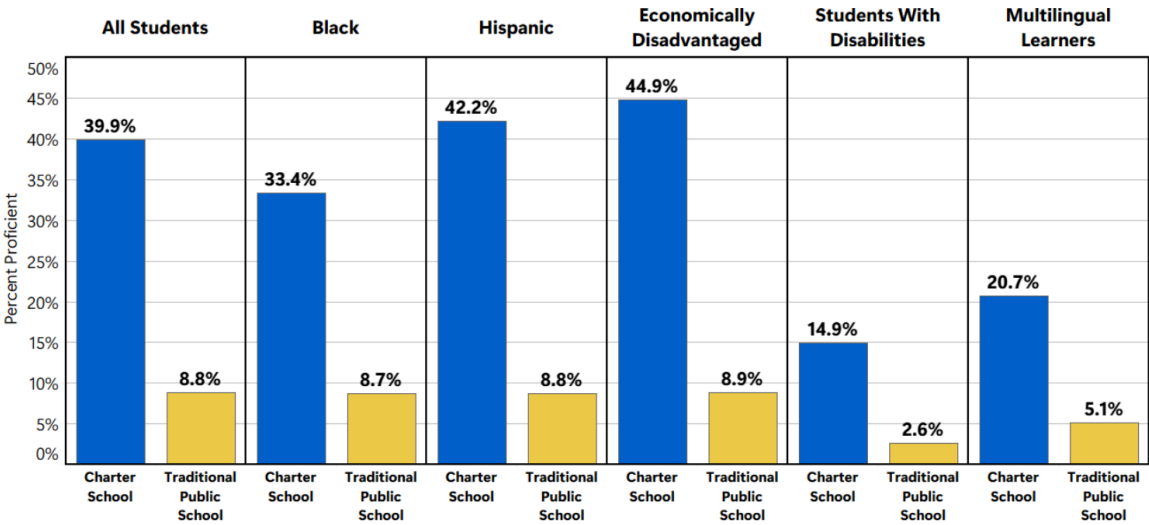
“We know that all children have an inner genius that great teachers and supportive schools can unlock and cultivate over time,” said **Danielle West-Augustin, school leader at Queen City Academy Charter**

School. “Our academic model engages all learners, and coupled with our strong wraparound supports, we give our students the tools to grow and succeed despite the immense challenges they face. At Queen City Academy, we truly try to live out our values of responsibility, excellence, caring and lifelong learning every single day.”

Trenton Charter Students Are 4.5x More Likely to Read at Grade Level

In Trenton, 85% of the city’s 4,200 charter students are economically disadvantaged, 10% are students with disabilities, and 9% are multilingual learners. A 2025 analysis shows that Trenton charter students are four and a half times more likely to read at grade level than their district peers. Despite serving just 20% of Trenton public school students, Trenton charters account for nearly 60% of all students reading on grade level in the city.

Trenton 2024-25 NJSLA ELA (Reading) Percent Proficient by Subgroup



Foundation Academy Charter School in Trenton is closing the gap and is performing above pre-pandemic proficiency levels in reading. Reading proficiency has jumped by 22 percentage points since 2022 and is nearing the state average for all students.

“As a lifelong educator who grew up right here in Trenton, I’m incredibly proud of the work our school is doing to advance educational outcomes for our scholars,” **said Sheria McRae, CEO of Foundation Academies in Trenton.** “Our progress is driven by the combination of high-impact tutoring, a rigorous curriculum, and most importantly caring and dedicated teachers who believe in every child’s ability to achieve. We must continue to support all public schools, including public charter schools, that are helping scholars excel academically while preparing them for lifelong success.”

Camden Schools Continue to Rise

Over the last several years, Camden district, charter and renaissance schools have continued to improve faster than the rest of the state. Overall, Camden students improved from 17% proficient in reading in 2022 to 27% proficient in 2025, more than doubling the pace of improvement statewide (10 points vs. 4 points). The latest assessment scores show Camden charter and renaissance schools saw significant growth in students meeting grade level standards from 2024 to 2025, improving by 4.2 percentage points in reading and 3.3 percentage points in math across all grades.

About the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association

The New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association (NJPCSA) is the non-profit membership association that represents the state's charter school community and, by extension, charter school students and their parents. There are currently 84 charter schools in New Jersey serving 64,000 students. We are committed to advancing quality public education for New Jersey's children through the cultivation of excellent public charter schools. The Association seeks to influence legislative and policy environments, leverage collective advocacy, and provide resources to support our members in developing and operating high quality, public charter schools.