

Get the Facts

New Jersey's Public Charter Schools

January 2026

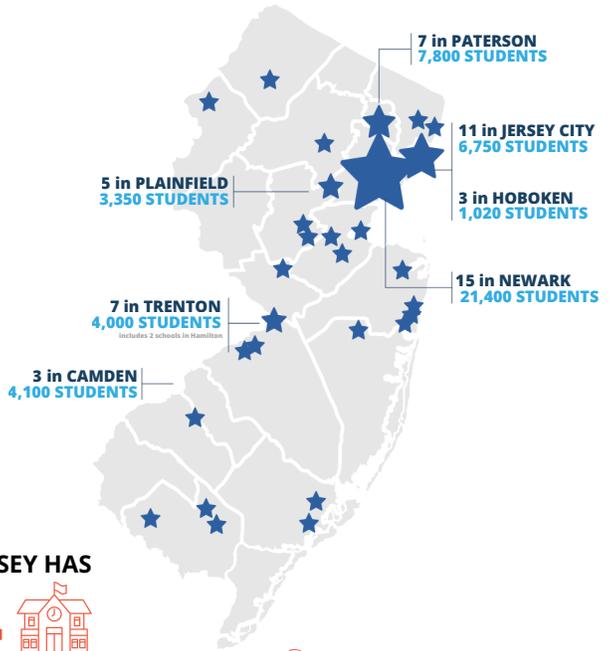
What is a Public Charter School?

Charter schools are **free, nonprofit public schools** that are open to all students. They operate with more flexibility than traditional public schools in exchange for increased accountability including rigorous financial, academic and operational standards.



1 in 5
STUDENTS

Public charter and renaissance schools serve 1 in 5 public school students in NJ's 31 most underserved communities (former Abbott/SDA districts).



NEW JERSEY HAS

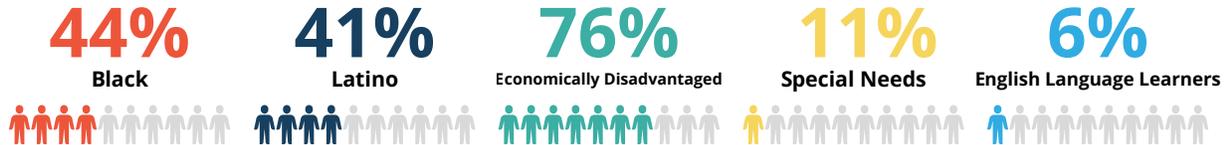
84 CHARTER SCHOOLS
IN **44** CITIES
AND **18** COUNTIES

64,000 STUDENTS
32,000 CHARTER WAITLIST TOTAL

SOURCES: School count & cities/counties (NJDOE Public School Directory, pulled July 2025); Enrollment (2024-25 NJDOE Fall Enrollment File); Waitlists (Annual Reports and school records)

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

SOURCE: 2024-25 NJDOE Fall Enrollment File

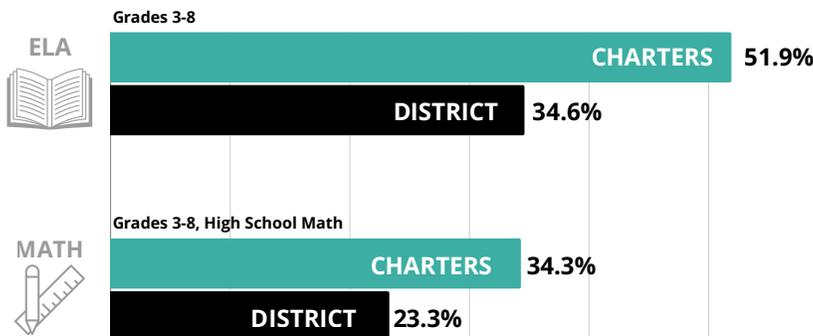


➡ Charter schools serve **14%** of all **Black students** in NJ's public school system.
➡ Charter schools serve **6%** of all **Latino students** in NJ's public school system.

PERFORMANCE

SOURCE: 2024-25 State Assessment Files

2024-25 Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations



Charter students are **50%** more likely to read and do math at grade level.

Black, Latino and economically disadvantaged students are **thriving** in New Jersey's public charter schools and **outperforming** their statewide counterparts.

Black & Latino Charter Students

+10 points in ELA
+5 points in math

Economically Disadvantaged Charter Students

+12 points in ELA
+7 points in math



**PUBLIC CHARTER
SCHOOL FACILITIES**

Public charter schools, on average, spend \$2,000 per student for school buildings — money that would otherwise be spent on teachers or students in the classroom — but they have been excluded from most state facilities funding.



THIRD GRADE READING

Research shows that by the end of third grade, students must shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Students who are not proficient by this point are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

+13 Students in charter schools **outperform** their **local district peers** in 3rd grade reading.



NEWARK'S CHARTER SCHOOLS

Newark charter schools post best student learning gains in the nation



Students learn more in Newark public charter schools with gains of 48 additional days per year in reading and 73 additional days per year in math when compared to the state average accounting for student characteristics. This outpaces the national finding that public charter school students nationally gained 16 days in reading and 6 days in math.

Source: 2022 Newark City Study; 2023 Stanford CREDO Report

FUNDING

Public Charter Schools Are Deeply Underfunded

64,000 public school students in charter schools are not funded equitably in New Jersey. On average, public charter schools receive approximately \$4,700 less per student per year when compared to traditional district schools. Public charter schools also spend, on average, \$2,000 per student on facilities, and while **the State has committed over \$21 billion since 2001 for traditional district** for school construction, **public charter schools have received just \$52 million** for minor building improvements.

CHARTERS RECEIVE
\$4,700
LESS PER STUDENT
Compared to traditional school districts

CHARTERS NEED OVER
\$1 BILLION
OVER THE NEXT DECADE FOR SAFE AND SECURE FACILITIES

LONGER SCHOOL DAY = INCREASED LEARNING

Length of School Day: The average school day in public charter schools is **over an hour longer** than it is in both local district schools and schools statewide.

More School Days: Charter school students attend school for **35 additional school days** compared to their peers in local school districts and **33 additional school days** compared to students statewide.

1 HOUR Longer school days

33 additional days

ACCOUNTABLE TO FAMILIES

Public charter schools have **greater flexibility** to bring in new and creative approaches, and with that flexibility comes **greater accountability**. Public charter schools:

Provide **financial reports** to the state and conduct an annual audit

Must meet all state and federal **education standards**

Must be **renewed very five years**—and face closure if not delivering results