

# 2023-24 IMPACT REPORT



Tennessee Charter  
School Center



# CELEBRATING 20 YEARS



2023 marked a special anniversary for public school choice in Tennessee: 20 years of public charter schools in the state. Our state's first public charter schools opened their doors in 2003 in Chattanooga, Nashville, and Memphis. As you read the stories in this report – stories of innovative models for elementary schools creating space for all students to thrive, of high school students beating the odds, of tireless advocates who have dedicated their time and energy to students – consider the number of lives that have been changed thanks to the work of Tennessee's public charter schools over the last 20 years.

## What Makes TN Charters Special?

Public charter schools are one of the tools our state has to create opportunities for our future leaders. Thousands of Tennessee students have gained opportunities they might never have found without the hard work of public charter school advocates and educators. Public charter schools have allowed our state to offer families the opportunity to seek out the unique environments where their children can thrive, and our work at TCSC is dedicated to ensuring this can continue.

Thank you for joining us in celebrating 20 years of education innovation through public charter schools in Tennessee.

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## ABOUT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Public charter schools are public schools that are free to attend and open to all students, but operate under an independent contract, or, “charter,” with an authorizing agency – in Tennessee, most commonly a local education agency (school district), though some are authorized by the Achievement School District (ASD) or the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, following an appeal or transfer from the ASD. Tennessee state law requires all public charter schools to be not-for-profit, and prohibits for-profit charter school operators. Public charter schools in Tennessee are required to meet the same academic standards and administer the same assessments as any other public school in Tennessee. Their business operations are subject to annual independent audits, as well as the oversight of their authorizers. If a public charter school fails to meet academic or operational standards, they can be closed.

## ABOUT THE TENNESSEE CHARTER SCHOOL CENTER

The Tennessee Charter School Center (TCSC) is the state’s primary charter school support organization, or CSO.

A non-profit organization, TCSC engages in policy, advocacy, and school support work to ensure that Tennessee’s public charter schools have an equitable environment to operate in and have the resources they need to ensure they are offering a high-quality public education to all of their students.



# 2023-24

# IMPACT REPORT

Each year as the Tennessee Charter School Center team works to prepare this report, we find so much cause for celebration in the stories and impact of public charter schools across our state.

*From innovative models to steady evidence of student growth, Tennessee should be proud of the excellent learning opportunities our public charter schools provide. The TCSC team is proud to support public charter schools in ways large and small, from board training to public policy, helping to ensure students have access to great public schools. This report offers both a portrait of this work, and the facts about Tennessee’s public charter school sector.*

*I’m proud of the work our team has done over the past year to help ensure that Tennessee continues to be an environment where public charter schools and the students who attend them can succeed. The public charter school model seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their background or economic status, have access to a great education. In 2023, a key effort for our policy team was working to make sure public charter schools with this goal in mind can prioritize historically underserved students in the enrollment process, staying true to this mission. We also worked hard to make sure public charter schools continue to have access to critical and equitable resources, including facilities and school safety funding.*

*Our programs team brought charter school educators, advocates, and partners together in Memphis for an in-person conference, the first chance we’ve all had to gather since the pandemic. School leaders traveled from across the state to learn, collaborate, and celebrate – you’ll find more information about our annual Charter Champion awards and those recognized in this report.*

*On the heels of our first K-8 Charter School Changemaker List, honoring schools demonstrating the biggest impact on students, published in 2022, we published our first High School Charter Changemaker List in 2023, recognizing public charter high schools achieving outstanding results in preparing students for graduation and beyond. Our advocacy team worked to support high quality charter schools as they navigated the renewal and application processes, and established TCSC’s first advocacy network, empowering parents and advocates to use their voices in support of public charter schools when it matters most.*

*The team is already working hard to make a positive impact in support of public charter schools in 2024. We hope this report will serve as both a valuable resource for the facts on public charter schools in our state and an inspiring picture of what’s possible.*

Sincerely,



**Dr. Maya Bugg Faison**  
President and CEO  
Tennessee Charter School Center

# WHO WE ARE

## MISSION

OUR MISSION IS TO DEVELOP & SUPPORT TENNESSEE'S HIGH-PERFORMING PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS.

## VISION

Our vision is that every student in the state of Tennessee will receive and have access to a high-quality public education that equitably allocates opportunity, is aligned with their best needs and prepares them to thrive and experience post-secondary success.

## VALUES

Our work to lead the charge for effective policy, excellent schools, quality operators and informed communities is driven by:



### COLLABORATION

To achieve the vision of all students accessing and realizing a high-quality education, it will be crucial that we work with, for and alongside myriad partners, stakeholders and communities.



### DIVERSITY

Diversity at all levels (professional background, race, gender, etc.) is paramount to our ability to demonstrate empathy for others, build diversity of experience and think critically about our personal beliefs and biases



### EQUITY

Academic and opportunity gaps are real in our public education system. With this in mind, it is essential that public education advocates work to create an equitable environment for families; our actions must be rooted in social justice. From equitable funding across schools, fair distribution of quality teachers and legitimate access to a variety of meaningful experiences that foster growth and opportunity, an equitable public education system will be key.



### INTEGRITY

Honesty, care and candor are critical to build trusting relationships with our communities. We will have the courage to have difficult conversations, admit mistakes and stand up for the right thing to do on behalf of children, even if it's not the most popular.



### QUALITY & EXCELLENCE

All families deserve access to a high-quality public education that will provide the foundation for future success and growth. Schools, districts, authorizers, elected officials and other committed partners in this work must be held accountable for high standards of quality and excellence.



# CHARTERS BY THE NUMBERS

## TENNESSEE CHARTER LOCATIONS IN 2023-2024



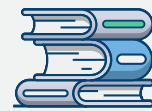
Metro Nashville Public Schools	27 Schools
Shelby County Schools	53 Schools
Knox County Schools	1 School
Hamilton County Schools	8 Schools
TN Public Charter School Commission	13 Schools
Achievement School District	13 Schools

## TENNESSEE CHARTER SCHOOL DATA HIGHLIGHTS<sup>1</sup>



115

TOTAL CHARTER SCHOOLS



20 Years

OF INNOVATION IN EDUCATION



44,000+

STUDENTS ENROLLED

## TVAAS SCORES



38% Traditional

63% Charters

In 2023, charter schools earned TVAAS scores of 4's and 5's at significantly higher rates than traditional public schools, statewide with 63% of charter schools earning a 4 or 5 compared to 38% of traditional public schools.



What's more, this rate includes schools operated by the Achievement School District, a body tasked with overseeing some of the state's lowest performing schools.

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



88% of Tennessee charter school students are people of color – welcoming all students and providing public school options to communities of color.

14% Multilingual

40% Economically Disadvantaged

Additionally, 40% of charter students are economically disadvantaged while 14% are multilingual learners.

<sup>1</sup> SOURCES: Data requested directly from charter school authorizers, 12/11/23  
Tennessee Department of Education, School Wide TVAAS, 2022-2023 Composite.  
<https://www.tn.gov/education/districts/federal-programs-and-oversight/data/data-downloads.html> Accessed 12/11/23

Note: Analyses are based on publicly available files where data are redacted for some schools due to small student counts. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. Data reflect the most recent years available as of this writing.

# BOARD & STAFF

## TCSC BOARD

The Tennessee Charter School Center Board members are committed to high-quality education for all of Tennessee's children. Along with the Center's chief executive officer, they lead the organization advising on policy, advocacy, programming, funding and communication.



**Chris Barbic** *Board Chair*  
**The City Fund**  
PARTNER  
CHRIS@CITY-FUND.ORG



**Yetta Lewis** *Board Vice Chair*  
**Gestalt Community Schools**  
CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
YLEWIS@GESTALTCS.ORG



**Holly Coleman** *Board Secretary*  
**Hyde Family Foundations**  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
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**Pitt Hyde** *Emeritus Board Member*  
**AutoZone**  
FOUNDER  
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**Dr. Maya Bugg Faison**  
**Tennessee Charter School Center**  
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**Lin Johnson**  
**The New Teacher Project**  
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**Lagra Newman**  
**Purpose Preparatory Academy**  
FOUNDER AND HEAD OF SCHOOL  
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**Terence Patterson**  
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**Tim Ware**  
**Grizzlies Preparatory**  
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## TCSC STAFF



**Dr. Maya Bugg Faison**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
MAYA@TNCHARTERCENTER.ORG

Maya creates the center's vision and strategy. She leads fundraising; local, state and national partnership development, and state-level policy efforts.



**Cameron Quick**  
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER  
CAMERON@TNCHARTERS.ORG

Cameron is an expert in facilities financing and real estate development. He helps bring real estate resources and support to the charter sector and assists schools in seeking and securing financing.



**Elizabeth Fiveash**  
POLICY CHIEF  
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Elizabeth is responsible for creating the organization's policy and advocacy agendas, as well as building a roadmap for the future, regulatory and advocacy work on behalf of the public charter school sector in Tennessee.



**Emily Lilley**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
EMILY@TNCHARTERCENTER.ORG

Emily oversees TCSC's internal and external communication work, advises the TCSC policy team, manages external organization relationships, and represents TCSC in East Tennessee. She also supports both the work of the TCSC board and organizational development efforts.



**Joshua Perkins**  
DIRECTOR OF QUALITY SCHOOLS  
JOSHUA@TNCHARTERCENTER.ORG

Joshua oversees the implementation of professional development and training for charter school teachers, leaders and board members.



**Carra Powell**  
MEMPHIS DIRECTOR OF POLICY & ADVOCACY  
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Carra leads the organization's Memphis-based advocacy, connects stakeholders, sets TCSC's citywide policy agenda and identifies the roadmap for future policy.



**Tommiea Jackson**  
COMMUNICATION MANAGER  
TOMMIEA@TNCHARTERCENTER.ORG

Tommiea uses media to inform educators, families, community members and elected officials about the Center's efforts to ensure high-quality education for Tennessee's children through programming and advocacy.



**Kim West**  
OFFICE COORDINATOR AND  
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE CEO  
KIM@TNCHARTERCENTER.ORG

Kim is the Special Assistant to CEO Maya Bugg and helps coordinate meetings, office logistics and board meetings.

# THROUGH THE YEARS

## OVERVIEW OF TN CHARTER SCHOOLS

Tennessee policymakers and education stakeholders have demonstrated a strong commitment to education reform by advancing significant policies and programs to support Tennessee's public education improvement and innovation. As a result, Tennessee's public charter school movement has gained strength and generated positive outcomes for students and communities.

Today, 115 charter schools are serving more than 44,000 Tennessee students - and our numbers continue to grow each year. Not only are charter schools promoting choice and opportunity in our K-12 education system, but they are also playing a pivotal role in helping the state address several critical education issues, including literacy and workforce development.

**1998**

The Tennessee Charter Schools Association (TCSA) was established to unite efforts and resources towards creating a local and statewide policy environment that enables the creation and growth of high-quality public charter schools.

**2002**

Tennessee Charter School Act passed. This act introduced charter schools as an "alternative means" within the public school system for ensuring the accomplishment of the necessary outcomes of education.

**2003**

First Tennessee charter schools opened in Nashville (1) and Memphis (3)

**2005**

Law amended to allow students zoned to "high priority" schools to attend charter schools

**2009**

Inspired by the success of high-quality public charter schools in other parts of the country, the Tennessee Charter School Incubator (TCSI) was started. TCSI focused on systematically identifying and training new charter leaders and managing school launch and early support activities. TCSI has launched nine charter schools in Tennessee, recruited and placed two high-impact Fellows into school leadership positions in the Achievement School District, and initially incubated five new public charter schools that opened in 2015.

Expansion of enrollment eligibility to "at-risk" students. Limit or "cap" on the number of charter schools raised to 90.

**2011**

Open Enrollment amendment passed to allow all students the option to attend a charter school, removing the "cap" on the number of charter schools. Achievement School District created.

**2013**

The Tennessee Charter School Incubator and the Tennessee Charter Schools Association merged to form the Tennessee Charter School Center. This new organization combines the resources and functions of both groups (charter school incubation and support and policy and advocacy) to better respond to the strong demand for high-quality public charter schools across the state. The new Center aims to provide ongoing, comprehensive support to the growing charter sector in Tennessee while also creating a unified voice among charter organizations.

**2014**

Legislation passed to allow the State Board of Education to act as an authorizer upon appeal for charter applicants in school districts with a priority school in their area.

**2016**

TCSC collaborates with TN Dept. of Ed. to secure a federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant to support the launch of new high-quality charter schools in TN

**2017**

Legislation is passed that modernizes and strengthens the 2002 Tennessee Charter School Act. This law clarifies rules on everything from the application process to closure. Enables local districts to charge an authorizer fee to cover the cost of charter oversight. Established fund of up to \$6 million per year for facilities.

The Memphis Charter Compact was approved. The Compact will help to Provide facility support for charters, Establish a School Performance Framework, Formalize School Closure Procedures for charters, Establish a District Shared Services Standard Operating Procedure and a more collaborative agreement for unified relations with a focus on quality schools regardless of model or operator type

TCSC awarded a federal credit enhancement grant to support charter school facilities in TN

**2018**

Legislation to ensure public charter schools are included in reimbursements for high-cost special needs students was passed.

**2019**

The Public Charter School Commission-- an independent commission with the authority to hear charter school appeals and authorize schools following successful appeal anywhere in Tennessee-- was established. The State Board of Education was established as a formal accountability body for charter school authorizers, including the requirement for evaluation of authorizer compliance with state law and the Tennessee Quality Authorizing Standards, as well as the power to enforce compliance.

**2022**

Funding specifically for students enrolled in charter schools was included in the state's new funding formula, Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA)

**2023**

Legislation passed to allow charter schools the option to prioritize students who are economically disadvantaged, clarified out-of-district enrollment policies for charter schools, and added a corrective action plan provision that required authorizers to notify its charter schools of perceived problems and provide opportunities to remedy.



# POLICY & ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP

## OUR COMMITMENT

The Tennessee Charter School Center's Policy & Advocacy team is dedicated to promoting innovation, collaboration, and quality in education through state policies. We believe in creating equitable policies that prioritize transparency, autonomy, and accountability.

Our team works closely with educators, legislators, parents, and other community advocates to address the significant policy challenges and opportunities facing the charter school sector in Tennessee. TCSC is committed to prioritizing students' needs and ensuring that all voices are heard.

## Legislative Session

TCSC SECURED SEVERAL BIG WINS DURING THE 11TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION, INCLUDING:

### ✓ SB980/HB1086

Secured passage of SB980/HB1086 which revises several items of charter law including rewriting the charter enrollment lottery to allow schools the option to prioritize students who are economically disadvantaged, requiring districts to change their grade bands to notify charter schools so they may pursue the necessary charter amendments, clarifying out-of-district enrollment policy, and adding a corrective action plan provision that allows authorizers to notify its charter schools of perceived problems and provide opportunities to remedy.

### ✓ SB881/HB36

Passage of SB881/HB36 which clarifies that identification on the 2022 or 2023 priority lists can not be used as the sole reason for the closure of a charter school.

### ✓ SB64/HB230

Passage of SB64/HB230 which extends the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission until June 30, 2026

# Policy Wins

## ✓ \$22 Million

for the TISA direct allocation for charter school students (approx. \$500/student)

## ✓ \$3 Million

non-recurring for an Innovative Instruction Models Pilot Program to support for charter schools in sharing information about scaling and replicating effective practices with other schools

## ✓ \$20 Million

in school safety grant funding, which charter schools will be able to directly apply for without going through their authorizer

## ✓ SRO on Duty

Funding for an SRO in every public school, including every public charter school

## ✓ Memo

A comprehensive memo on the school safety legislation and funding was shared with TCSC members





# POLICY & ADVOCACY IN ACTION

## TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION: MONTESSORI EXCELLENCE IN TN'S PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Flexibility is one of the key factors that can allow the charter school model to be effective, and in Tennessee, public charter schools are using their flexibility to offer innovative learning environments for students all over the state. Tennessee's public charter school sector proudly hosts two (soon to be three) exceptional Montessori schools, where innovation and academic excellence meet community upliftment.

The **Libertas School in Memphis, Montessori Elementary at Highland Park in Chattanooga, and the upcoming Invictus Nashville Charter School** not only exemplify a steadfast commitment to Montessori principles but also operate within the unique framework of aligning with Tennessee's public school curriculum and testing standards. This distinctive approach showcases these institutions as pioneers, successfully blending progressive educational philosophies with state-mandated standards.

Founded on the principles developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, the Montessori model emphasizes children's natural inclination towards deep concentration, problem-solving, and collaborative learning. With roots tracing back to Dr. Montessori's first school in Rome in 1907, the Montessori method has evolved to serve diverse populations worldwide.

## ADDRESSING EDUCATIONAL DISPARITIES IN TENNESSEE

Recognizing the scarcity of a Montessori education in some of Tennessee's most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, like Frayser in Memphis, Highland Park in Chattanooga, and the Stratford neighborhood of East Nashville, Tennessee's public charter Montessori schools play a pivotal role. Serving children as young as six months old, these free Montessori public schools aim to reach students before kindergarten, contributing to improved future educational outcomes.

Tennessee's Montessori charter schools implement project-based and individualized learning plans unique to each student. Classrooms are intentionally designed to foster lifelong learning habits from a very young age. Emphasizing independence, freedom within limits, and a sense of order, the Montessori schools employ work cycles that support a variety of activities during free time, including related arts, music, and physical education.



## THE LIBERTAS SCHOOL (MEMPHIS)

Located in North Memphis' Frayser neighborhood, Libertas Memphis is a trailblazing Montessori charter school serving 500 children from six weeks old to 5th grade. Libertas was the first Montessori school in the state, achieving remarkable academic rigor and community engagement. Libertas transformed a previously academically failing neighborhood school in 2014 into the number one public charter school in Memphis, ranking in the top 15% of all schools in Tennessee, while addressing the needs of some of Tennessee's most economically disadvantaged students.

## INVICTUS NASHVILLE CHARTER SCHOOL (NASHVILLE)

Founded by Dr. Brenda Jones, Invictus Montessori Academy is set to open in Fall 2024 in response to the East Nashville Stratford community's needs. Despite initial challenges, including a denied charter application by Nashville's school board, Invictus persevered. Dr. Jones, a Nashville native and first generation high school graduate, has devoted her career to public education as a math teacher, instructional coach, dean of curriculum, and assistant principal. She brings a personal commitment to family-centric education, aiming to uplift the community by providing a high quality education and high quality opportunities to those who need them most.

## MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY AT HIGHLAND PARK (CHATTANOOGA)

Under the leadership of Dr. Elaine Swafford, Montessori Elementary at Highland Park has successfully expanded its enrollment from Pre-K to 5th grade since it opened in 2021. Striving for educational equity, the school has embraced the challenge of educating previously marginalized students and aims to provide an advantaged education for those who are disadvantaged. With a commitment to teacher training and community-centered growth, Chattanooga's Montessori Elementary at Highland Park is deeply dedicated to the community and further enriching the lives of its students and families.

## RESEARCH

Research indicates that Montessori students consistently outperform their peers in traditional education in both reading and math. Montessori students also exhibit more adaptive behavioral and social skills, coupled with a positive perception of their school environment and teachers.

Tennessee's Montessori charter schools stand as beacons of educational innovation, community engagement and empowerment. The Tennessee Charter School Center is proud to celebrate the transformative potential of Montessori principles within Tennessee's public school system.

[VIEW EVALUATION REPORT](#)

# INNOVATION, ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION



TCSC strongly values innovation and collaboration as there are always opportunities to learn and grow from others. In order to achieve the vision of all students accessing and realizing a high-quality education, it is important that we work with, for and alongside a variety of partners, stakeholders and communities.

The year 2023 saw relationships develop and partnerships grow as TCSC identified similarly focused leaders and organizations committed to educating Tennessee's children. Together, we focused on empowering educators, students and families with information, trainings and other resources.

## IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOLS

TCSC's Communication and Administrative teams conducted a detailed review of the organization's school, educator and partner contact information. Updating this information led to a significant increase in communication, with newsletter opens increasing from approximately 30 percent to more than 50 percent.

## FEDEX PARTNERSHIP

TCSC partnered with FedEx's youth aviation program to grant scholarships to ten children, enabling them to attend the National Flight Academy.

## CHANGEMAKERS

TCSC launched the High School Charter Changemaker List in 2023, recognizing public charter high schools in Tennessee that perform exceptionally in Ready Graduate, College Going, and Growth criteria compared to all public high schools in the state.

## MEMBERSHIP PORTAL

TCSC's Programs, Communication, and Administrative teams worked together to launch the membership portal. This project's success has enabled TCSC to access accurate and updated contact information for each school. Members can now conveniently keep track of training courses, events, and invoice due dates.

## CELEBRATING LEADERS OF COLOR

TCSC hosted a cocktail party for the Leaders of Color community, with 35 attendees joining in. Additionally, the organization partnered with the National Charter Collaborative on a mixer for Black and Brown-led single-site charter leaders held in the Memphis area.

## CHARTER LEADERS AND TN EDUCATION COMMISSIONER

Charter leaders from Memphis met with the new TN Commissioner of Education to discuss upcoming changes to the A-F grading scale, sharing their thoughts and suggestions.

## HIGH SCHOOL CASE STUDY

TCSC analyzed the strategies and best practices of Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy, whose high school was named to two TCSC High School Changemaker lists for outperforming public schools in college-going rates and Ready Graduates. The study focuses on how the academy prepares its students for graduation and postsecondary success.

## BOARD TRAINING

The Programs team successfully launched board training on TCSC's new website. Board members can now conveniently track and monitor their training progress.

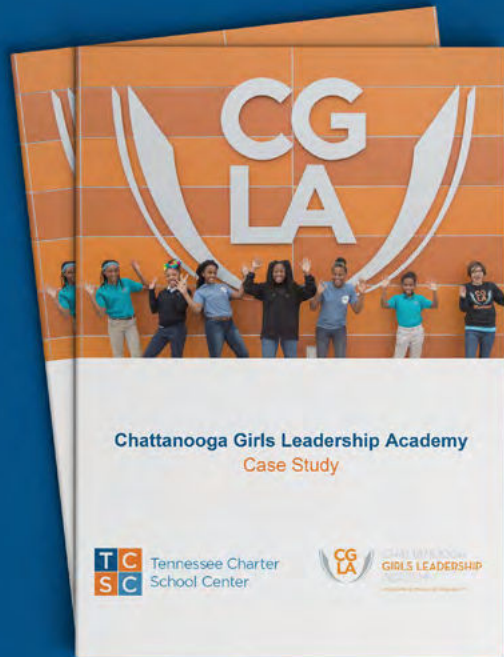
## BEP TO TISA TRANSITION

TCSC assisted schools across the state with the BEP to TISA transition in collaboration with Afton Partners and SCORE. Schools received funding forecasting tools, direct support, and key updates as they navigated funding formula changes.

## MILLIONS FOR SROs

TCSC helped secure \$10 million during a special legislative session to support charter schools that could not obtain an SRO through the grant program.

# HIGHLIGHTS



Access the complete case study through this QR code:



## CHATTANOOGA GIRLS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY CASE STUDY

Since 2003, charter schools have provided Tennessee parents and students with high-quality, flexible educational opportunities. Now in its twentieth year, Tennessee's charter sector has shown tremendous promise as these public schools have utilized the flexibility inherent to the public charter school model to find innovative ways to meet student needs.

While we often see great success stories among Tennessee's public charter schools, we don't often see detailed studies on what it took to reach those levels of success. This year we launched the first in a series of reports that can begin to address this gap. Specifically, we conducted an in-depth case study with one of the highest performing charter schools in the state: Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy. This school stands out for several reasons.

Founded in 2009, Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy (CGLA) is an all-girls public charter school in Chattanooga, Tennessee serving just over 350 students in grades 6-12. CGLA was recently recognized for its academic accomplishments by the Tennessee Charter School Center through placement on the High School Changemaker Charter Schools List. Not only did CGLA have the highest ready-graduate rate in the state among all public high schools and a TVAAS score of 5 in 2022, but its college-going rate for the class of 2021 was in the top 33% of all public high schools and in the top 17% of high-poverty schools. As this last point suggests, what makes these accomplishments even more impressive is that more than half of CGLA's students are economically disadvantaged, an indicator that often means students have been academically underserved in the past.

CGLA's student demographics are not unique in Tennessee. However, their students' academic and postsecondary outcomes are; which begs the question: "What is CGLA doing differently?" This report attempts to answer this question with the goal of sharing successful practices with other school, district and state leaders. We've summarized the key takeaways from interviews and research here, but you can access the full report through the QR code on this page.

*"One of the best things that CGLA did for me was teach me to advocate for myself. They taught me to seek out opportunities; scholarships, internships. To stand up for myself if I thought that a grade wasn't right."*

- A CGLA Alumna



## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CGLA'S WORK TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR GRADUATION, COLLEGE, AND CAREER:

- ✓ School turnaround, particularly in high-needs, low-income communities is possible with currently available resources. However, sustainability requires increases in funding - whether from the state, philanthropic or otherwise.
- ✓ A data-saturated school community is key to making informed, personalized decisions both for staff and students.
- ✓ Ensure school schedules allow for supplemental instruction for all students that can be tailored to individual needs. In the case of CGLA, in addition to required RTI instruction, all students receive high dosage Tier 3 instruction in an RTI framework.
- ✓ Culture is key! Establish a culture that promotes college and professional success. In the case of CGLA, this includes college-focused discussions, adult and peer mentoring relationships including professional mentorships, college visits, and a school-wide focus on the ACT.
- ✓ Help students focus on what is possible: Support identity formation for students as scholars by focusing on possibility and providing a physical environment scholars take pride in.
- ✓ Emphasize a growth mindset and personal responsibility through regular meetings with teachers that allow students to understand their own benchmarking data and participate in identifying areas of growth and strategies while teachers also ensure they are tailoring instruction based on individual student needs.
- ✓ Identify and remove barriers to success: In the case of CGLA, this includes hosting a FAFSA night for families to receive support on completing applications, providing funding for students to take the ACT multiple times, ensuring all students have access to a wifi hotspot at home, and offering an on-campus medical clinic.

# CHARTER CHAMPION AWARDS

The Tennessee Charter School Center, having its first in-person conference since 2020, presented its annual Charter Awards on Friday, October 27, 2023. Memphis Beale Street-style celebration definitely made its way inside the conference center at The Westin. It was a night to be remembered.

## TENNESSEE CHARTER SCHOOL MOVEMENT FOUNDERS

TCSC honors the pioneering leaders and schools that launched Tennessee's charter school movement.



## TCSC's 2023 Charter Champions:



### ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

**Dr. Edna Varner**  
PREP PUBLIC SCHOOLS & CHATTANOOGA  
GIRLS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY  
CHATTANOOGA

Edna Varner is a strong supporter of public charter schools and has earned recognition from Knoxville Prep. She's a committed advocate for improving educational opportunities and believes that charter schools can offer innovative approaches to education. Her advocacy for these institutions demonstrates her desire to see communities thrive through improved educational opportunities and contribute to student success.

**FINALISTS:**  
ONYA PARKER, Purpose Preparatory School, Nashville, TN  
ALLIE ARCOS, Memphis School of Excellence, Memphis, TN



### ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

**Lakendra Butler**  
STRIVE COLLEGIATE ACADEMY  
NASHVILLE

Lakendra Butler, STRIVE founder and leader, showed new levels of dedication to her school's success when she became the mother of a beautiful preemie baby girl while leader her school to be named one of the state's 2022 Reward School and TCSC's 2022 Changemaker Charter Schools.

**FINALISTS:**  
NOAH GORDON, Memphis Business Academy, Memphis, TN  
CARLISSA WEEKS, Emerald Academy, Knoxville, TN  
RAYMOND BRADFORD JR., Memphis School of Excellence, Memphis, TN



### COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECT OF THE YEAR

**Memphis School of Excellence**  
VERIZON INNOVATIVE LEARNING  
MEMPHIS

In 2021, TCSC became the only school in Tennessee accepted into the coveted Verizon Innovative Learning Program. The program puts technology in the hands of students, transforming schools into innovative and exciting learning environments. Students learn about robotics, 3D printing and building websites.

**FINALISTS:**  
ONYA PARKER, Purpose Preparatory School, Nashville, TN  
ALLIE ARCOS, Memphis School of Excellence, Memphis, TN



### TEACHER OF THE YEAR

**Jarmeisha Gladney**  
SOULSVILLE  
MEMPHIS

Gladney is recognized for her outstanding leadership qualities, unwavering commitment, dedication, and hard work towards the school community. Her compassionate heart, meek demeanor, and perseverance in the face of adversity are an inspiration to her colleagues and students. She upholds the school's core values and is respected by parents, fellow educators, and students alike.

**FINALISTS:**  
CATHERINE MARY BRICKHILL, Memphis School of Excellence, Memphis, TN  
NATALIA BRIGGS, Ivy Academy's Skillern Elementary, Nashville, TN



### STATEWIDE POLICY CHAMPION

**Senator Bo Watson**  
TN-11 (CHATTANOOGA)



### SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

**Intrepid College Prep. Charter School**  
ANTIOCH, TN

**FINALISTS:**  
KIPP ANTIOCH COLLEGE PREP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
EMERALD ACADEMY  
CHATTANOOGA GIRLS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION

- |                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Bill DeLoache        | John Danner                |
| John Eason           | Jeremy Kane                |
| Townes Duncan        | Charles Gerber             |
| Gov. Phil Bredesen   | Michael Maren              |
| Gov. Bill Haslam     | Greg Duckett               |
| Speaker Beth Harwell | Betty Anderson             |
| Jamie Woodson        | Steve Bares                |
| Mayor Karl Dean      | Kenneth & Marilyn Robinson |
| Pitt Hyde            | Derrick Joyce              |
| Rep. John DeBerry    | Calvin Anderson            |
| Rep. Lois DeBerry    | Sarah Carpente             |
| Matt Throckmorton    |                            |

# CREDO IMPACT REPORT

## STUDENT SUCCESS IN TENNESSEE'S PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

## OPPORTUNITIES AND LOOKING AHEAD

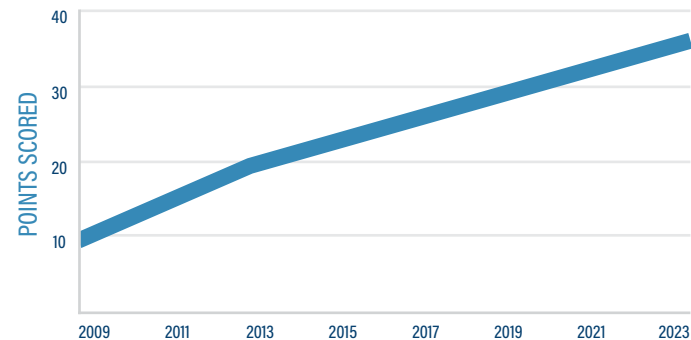
### SHOWCASING TENNESSEE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS ACADEMIC SUCCESS

A recent national charter school study conducted by Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) provides invaluable insights into the academic growth of charter school students across the United States, and in Tennessee.

From 2009 to 2023, CREDO undertook three comprehensive studies to measure the performance and growth of public charter schools in Tennessee, revealing notable achievements when compared to charter schools nationally.

### EXCEPTIONAL ACADEMIC GROWTH IN TENNESSEE'S PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

#### ACADEMIC GAINS FROM 2009-2023



Tennessee's public charter school students have emerged as national leaders in academic growth. **Despite serving students with greater needs, Tennessee's charter schools demonstrated one of the highest average growth rates in the nation.** This growth is particularly significant considering that, on average, Tennessee charter students enter their schools with lower achievement levels compared to the national charter sector.



 **34 + Days** of growth in reading  **39 + Days** of growth in reading

Across Tennessee, public charter school students are academically outgrowing their peers in non-charter schools. According to the w's public charter students receive the equivalent of **34 extra days of growth in reading and 39 extra days in math**, showcasing the tangible impact of a public charter school education. Nationwide, charter school students, on average, have 16 more days of learning in reading and 6 more days in math within a school year compared to their non-charter counterparts.

With approximately 44,000 students across the state attending 115 public charter schools, Tennessee's public charter sector represents about five percent of the overall public school population. Notably, 20% are English Language Learners, 48% are economically disadvantaged, and 87% identify as Black, Hispanic, or Native American.

Public charter schools in Tennessee play a crucial role in serving a more diverse student population compared to non-charter schools. Black students attending public charter schools experience 23 days more growth in reading and 17 days more growth in math, while Hispanic students achieve an additional 76 days in reading and 103 days in math, equivalent to attending an extra four to five months of schooling each year.

The CREDO study also delved into the academic growth of special populations in Tennessee's charter schools. Economically disadvantaged students showed stronger growth, with 28 additional days of learning in reading and 34 additional days in math compared to their non-charter peers. English Language Learners experienced significant growth in reading (50 days) and math (86 days).

While Tennessee's charter schools have achieved remarkable growth, there is acknowledgment that work remains to ensure equitable education for all students. Stanford University's CREDO Study affirms the commendable growth and impact of Tennessee's public charter schools, emphasizing their role in enhancing educational outcomes for students facing diverse challenges.

Through deliberate strategic initiatives and a steadfast commitment to equity, the Tennessee Charter School Center remains dedicated to delivering high-quality education and replicating successful models across the educational landscape of Tennessee. By addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities, we can continue to foster academic excellence and positively impact the lives and trajectory of students across the state.

Access the full CREDO study through this QR code:



# 2023 HIGH SCHOOL CHANGEMAKER LIST



## TENNESSEE CHARTER SCHOOL CENTER NAMES STATE'S OUTSTANDING CHANGEMAKER PUBLIC CHARTER HIGH SCHOOLS

TCSC's first High School Changemaker Charter School List honored the public charter high schools that stand out among their traditional and charter school peers. Using TVAAS allowed us to compare student achievement on standardized tests while accounting for the fact that students enter school with a variety of backgrounds and abilities.

Ready Graduate is an indicator of how well high school graduates are prepared for college or a career. A student is considered "ready" if they meet one of several criteria including earning postsecondary credits in high school, achieving a high score on the ACT or SAT, or earning industry credentials, among others. Compared to other measures like graduation rates, Ready Graduate rates are a much stronger predictor of post-secondary enrollment after high school.

A school's College-Going rate reflects the percentage of graduates who enrolled in a postsecondary institution (4-year, 2-year, and less than 2-year) the year after high school. While we recognize that college is not for every student, research has shown a strong relationship between earning a college degree and higher earnings throughout life. Although not perfect, the number of students who enroll in college can serve as an indicator for how that school is preparing students for life after high school.

SCHOOL	CITY	TVAAS	QUALIFYING CRITERIA
<b>OVERALL</b>			
Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy	Chattanooga	5	The highest Ready Graduate rate in the state in 2022 (91.9%) and four-year change in Ready Graduate rates in the top 3% of all public schools (+24 percentage points).
Intrepid College Preparatory Charter School	Nashville	5	College-Going rate in 2021 in the top 4% of all public schools (82%)
<b>TRAILBLAZER</b>			
Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy	Chattanooga	5	Highest Ready Graduate rate among high-poverty public schools in 2022 (91.9%). College-Going rate in the top 17% of high-poverty public schools in 2021 (57%). Four-year change in Ready Graduate rates in the top 3% of high-poverty public schools (+24 percentage points).
Memphis Academy of Science and Engineering Middle/High	Memphis	4	College-Going rate in the top 25% of high-poverty schools in 2021 (46%).
Freedom Preparatory Academy Flagship	Memphis	5	Ready Graduate rate in the top 17% of high-poverty schools in 2022 (31%) and College-Going rate in the top 15% in 2021 (58%).
<b>RISING STAR</b>			
Chattanooga Preparatory School	Chattanooga	5	Total enrollment of 71
Memphis School of Excellence Cordova	Memphis	5	Total enrollment of 44
Valor College Prep	Nashville	5	Total enrollment of 858

# MEMPHIS

Home to Tennessee's first charter schools dating back to 2003, Memphis continues to host the largest public charter school sector in the state. Overwhelming parent demand for high-quality public school options and community engagement has spurred this growth. While some schools face performance struggles, most are making a positive difference and are offering quality options to families.

 **53**  
SCS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS\*

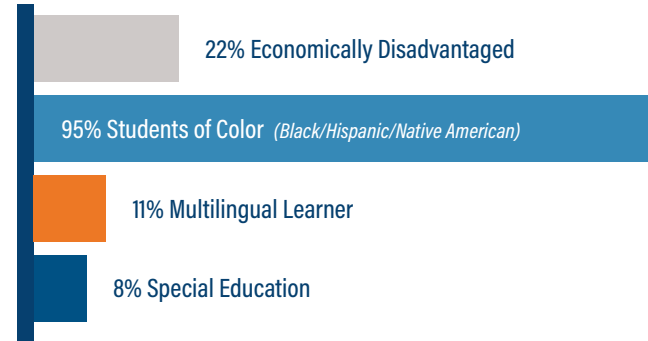
 **29**  
OPERATORS

 **18,838**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Assessment file, 2022-2023, and TVAAS Composite file, 2022-2023)

\*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY24. Assessment data only includes TNReady, grades 3-8.

## SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS - ELA - TNREADY



## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS - MATH - TNREADY



## PERCENT OF SCHOOLS EARNING TVAAS SCORES 1-5

	5	4	3	2	1
<b>CHARTER</b>	63%	13%	7%	6%	11%
<b>TRADITIONAL PUBLIC</b>	24%	4%	19%	14%	19%

# NASHVILLE

The city of Nashville has experienced a population boom in recent years, and a growing need for access to a high-quality public education has followed. Nashville's public charter schools are reimagining what's possible in public education and providing parents a new set of quality public school options to consider.

 **27**  
MNPS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS\*

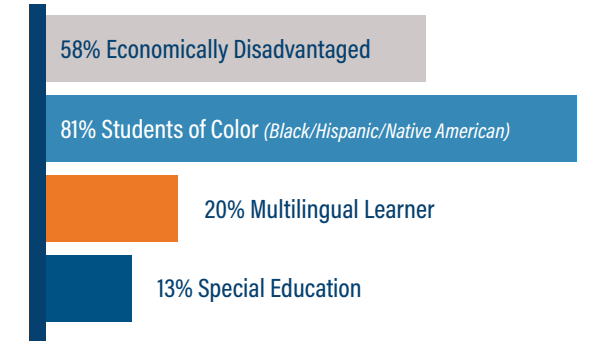
 **15**  
OPERATORS

 **13,210**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Assessment file, 2022-2023, and TVAAS Composite file, 2022-2023)

\*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY24. Assessment data only includes TNReady, grades 3-8.

## SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS - ELA - TNREADY



## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS - MATH - TNREADY



## PERCENT OF SCHOOLS EARNING TVAAS SCORES 1-5

	5	4	3	2	1
<b>CHARTER</b>	60%	8%	12%	16%	4%
<b>TRADITIONAL PUBLIC</b>	26%	11%	33%	11%	19%

# CHATTANOOGA

Although Chattanooga's charter sector is small, Hamilton County continues to see a significant demand for more public school options. The sector continues to expand this innovative and effective education model in the community.

 **8**  
HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

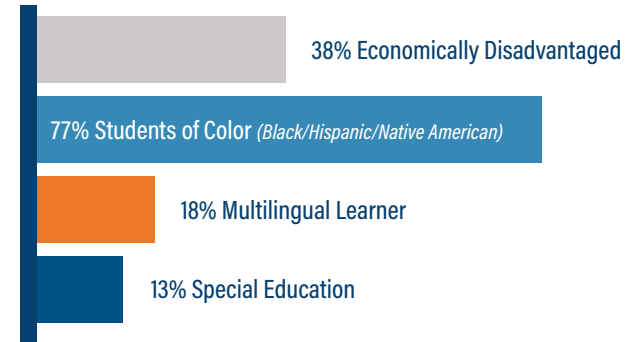
 **4**  
OPERATORS

 **2,243**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Assessment file, 2022-2023, and TVAAS Composite file, 2022-2023)

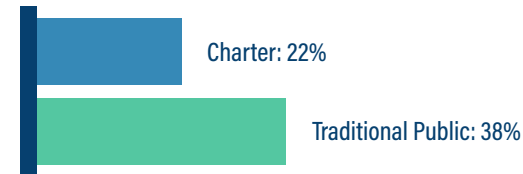
\*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY24. Assessment data only includes TNReady, grades 3-8.

## SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

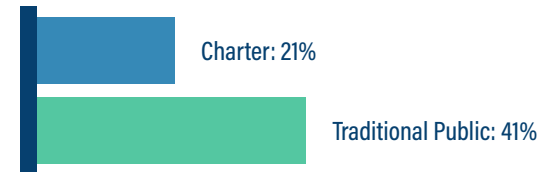


(Source: Hamilton County Schools, 2023-2024)

## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS - ELA - TNREADY



## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS - MATH - TNREADY



## PERCENT OF SCHOOLS EARNING TVAAS SCORES 1-5

	5	4	3	2	1
<b>CHARTER</b>	67%	17%	0%	17%	0%
<b>TRADITIONAL PUBLIC</b>	32%	10%	22%	8%	29%

# KNOXVILLE

Knox County Schools opened its first public charter school, Emerald Academy, in 2015 as community leaders turned to public charter schools as a way to expand education options for more families. The Emerald Youth Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting underserved youth in Knoxville, helped open the school to focus on promoting a college-going culture for students.

 **1**  
KNOX COUNTY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL\*

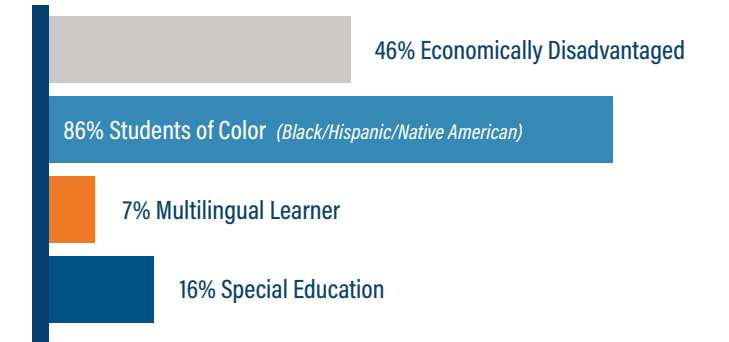
 **1**  
OPERATOR

 **458**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED

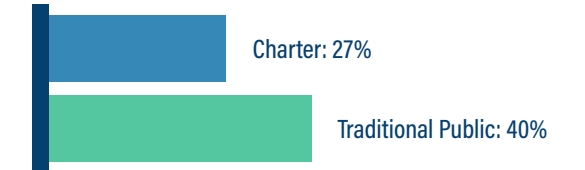
(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Assessment file, 2022-2023, and TVAAS Composite file, 2022-2023)

\*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY24. Assessment data only includes TNReady, grades 3-8.

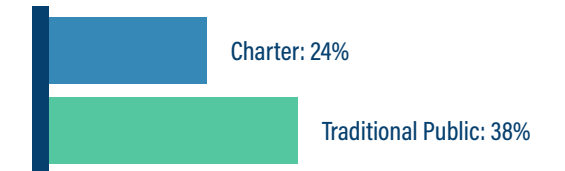
## SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS - ELA - TNREADY



## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS - MATH - TNREADY



## PERCENT OF SCHOOLS EARNING TVAAS SCORES 1-5

	5	4	3	2	1
<b>CHARTER</b>	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
<b>TRADITIONAL PUBLIC</b>	38%	4%	24%	12%	23%



# TN PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Established in 2019 to serve as an appellate authorizer for public charter schools in Tennessee, the Tennessee Charter School Commission now authorizes 15 schools in operation in cities across the state, with 6 more that have been approved but are not yet open. An appellate authorizer is an important mechanism to help ensure decisions approvals and denials of public charter schools are made based on quality alone.



**15**  
TENNESSEE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION  
AUTHORIZED PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS\*



**6**  
OPERATORS

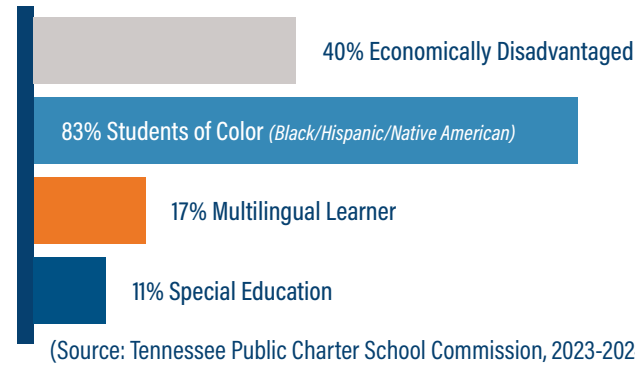


**3**  
SINGLE-SITE SCHOOLS

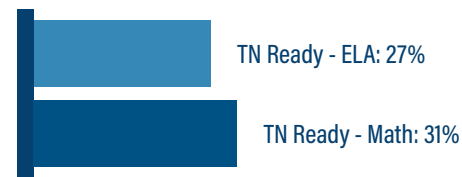


**4,790**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED

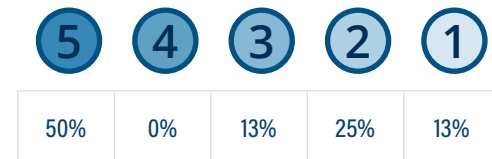
## SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS



## PERCENT OF SCHOOLS EARNING TVAAS SCORES 1-5



(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Assessment file, 2022-2023, and TVAAS Composite file, 2022-2023)

\*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY24. Assessment data only includes TNReady, grades 3-8.

# ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (ASD)

Established in 2011, the Achievement School District (ASD) is the state-run turnaround system implemented to intervene in the state's lowest-performing schools. With the goal of providing innovative supports and improving student achievement, the ASD leverages charter operators and directly operates a select few schools to support this work. Since its beginning, the district has seen both bright spots and noted challenges in its efforts to improve the quality of these local schools, but the ASDs most recent approach focuses on collaboration and partnership with local school districts to turn around schools together.



**13**  
ASD SCHOOLS\*

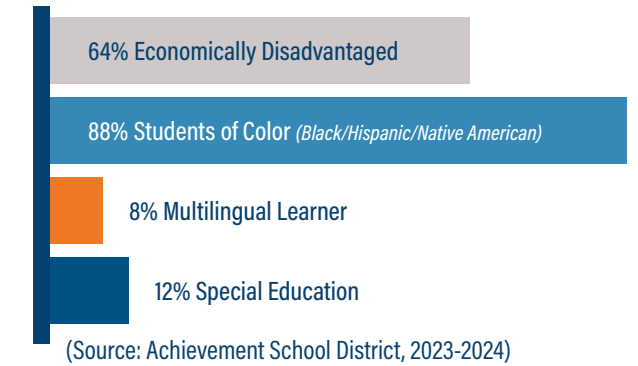


**6**  
OPERATORS

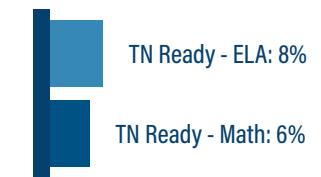


**4,376**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED

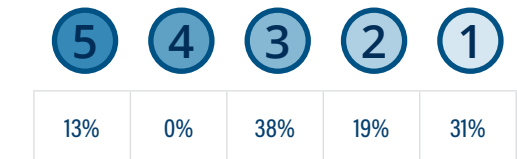
## SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



## PERCENT MEETING/EXCEEDING STANDARDS



## PERCENT OF SCHOOLS EARNING TVAAS SCORES 1-5



(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Assessment file, 2022-2023, and TVAAS Composite file, 2022-2023)

\*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY24.

# THE PATH FORWARD

Each year, the Tennessee Charter School Center team strives to ensure that every student in Tennessee has access to a high-quality, public school option. It is vital for the future of Tennessee's students to encourage innovation and student-focused practices.

1

ENSURING FACILITIES FUNDING AND EQUITABLE FACILITIES ACCESS FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS.

2

SUPPORTING CHARTER SCHOOL DIRECT FUNDING IN THE TISA FUNDING FORMULA.

3

ENSURING CHARTER SCHOOLS HAVE THE ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE PARENTAL LEAVE REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS.

4

SUPPORTING CHARTER SCHOOLS THAT WISH TO SERVE STUDENTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES THAT MAKE ATTENDING AND SUCCEEDING IN SCHOOL MORE DIFFICULT.

5

MAINTAINING TENNESSEE'S STRONG HISTORY OF ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY.



## Our Goal

THE TENNESSEE CHARTER SCHOOL CENTER'S GOAL IS THAT WITHIN THIS DECADE, TENNESSEE WILL BE THE BEST PLACE IN THE COUNTRY TO LAUNCH A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL .

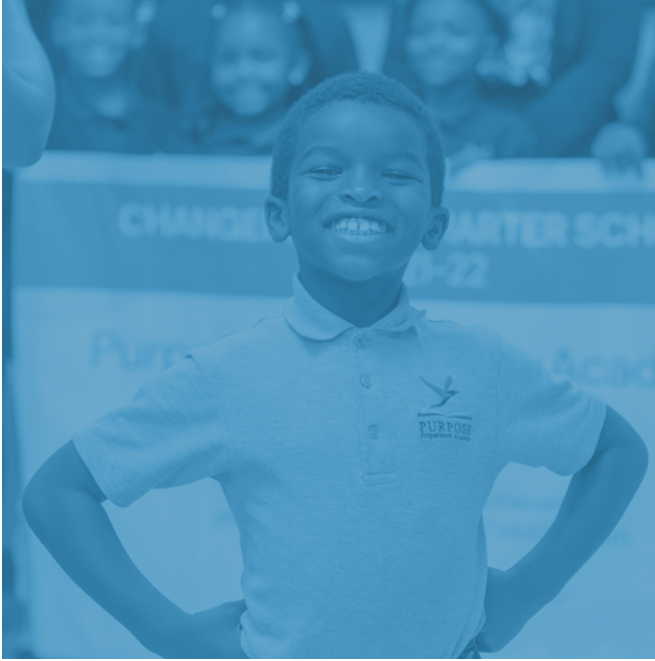


### OUR OFFICE

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Nashville, TN 37203

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