

CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT & TRENDS: CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DOUBLES IN LAST 4 YEARS; 1 IN 3 STUDENTS IN KEY NEIGHBORHOODS ATTENDS A CHARTER

Student enrollment in New York City's public charter schools has doubled over the last four years, ranking NYC's charter sector second only to Los Angeles in terms of total charter enrollment.¹ In key neighborhoods — including Harlem, the South Bronx, and Bedford-Stuyvesant — 1 in 3 students currently attends a charter school. In fact, 1 in 10 students citywide will be enrolled in a charter school by the 2016-17 school year. The Charter Center's analysis of enrollment patterns and charter school expansion in NYC reveals robust growth that is difficult to ignore.

NYC Charter Sector Larger than Many Urban School Districts

Since 1999, when the first charter school opened for instruction, NYC's charter sector has grown to 205 schools currently operating in the 2015-16 school year.² In the same period, enrollment has increased from just a few hundred students to approximately 95,000, which amounts to 9% of student enrollment in NYC. To put this in context, NYC charter schools are educating more students than the school districts in Baltimore, Denver, San Francisco, Boston, and the District of Columbia.

SCHOOL DISTRICT	STUDENT ENROLLMENT ³
NYC Charter Schools	95,000
Denver Public Schools (CO)	92,000
Baltimore City Public Schools (MD)	81,000
Boston Public Schools (MA)	57,000
San Francisco Unified School District (CA)	53,000
District of Columbia Public Schools	49,000*

*Excludes the 38,000 students enrolled in charter schools (see www.dccpsb.org)

The Growth Pattern Continues

In September 2016, an additional 24 charter schools are slated to open and many dozens more will continue to scale into higher grades, increasing the number of students being educated in charter schools to an estimated 106,000 students — that projects to be 10% of student enrollment in NYC. And the trend only continues: by 2019-20, conservative estimates project an additional 20,000 charter school students.⁴ In just a few years, over 11% of students in NYC will be attending a charter school.⁵



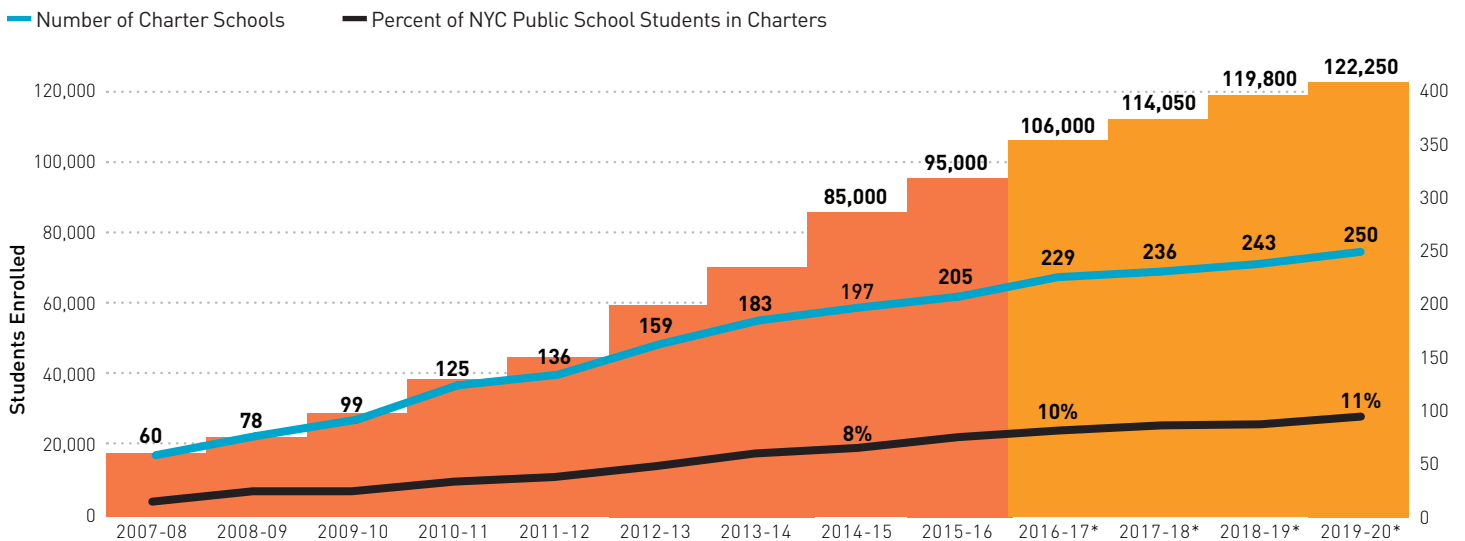
1 in 10

students citywide will attend a charter school in the 2016-17 school year

PARENTS DEMAND MORE CHARTER SEATS

Applications to charter schools have doubled — from 115,000 to 250,000 — since the 2011-12 school year, and the number of children on waitlists has consistently remained over 40,000. Notably, for the 2014-15 school year, 1 in 4 kindergarteners in NYC applied to a charter seat despite charter schools making up just one in nine kindergarten seats.

Charter School Growth in New York City, 2007-2020



Source: NY SED Enrollment Files (* denotes projections)

One in Ten Students in Charter Schools by 2016-17

	2007-08	2015-16	2016-17*
Charter	18,400	95,000	106,000
District	968,000	975,000	976,000
Charter%	1.9%	8.9%	9.8%

Source: NY SED Enrollment Files (* denotes projections)

Charter Schools Are Making an Impact in High-Needs Neighborhoods

A district-by-district analysis of enrollment patterns presents even more compelling evidence of the impact of charter schools. As reported elsewhere, NYC charter schools enroll a high proportion of students of color and students from low-income families.⁶ In community school districts located in Harlem, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx — neighborhoods where families have long faced the need for high quality school options — charter school enrollment, as a proportion of total public school enrollment, has increased significantly, and will continue to grow as existing charter schools in these neighborhoods scale up into higher grades, and new schools open.

- **24% of Children in East Harlem Attend a Charter School.** In community school district 4, which covers East Harlem, charter school enrollment was 6% in 2007-08. In the seven years since, expansion in the neighborhood has led to growth in charter enrollment that is now four times greater, which represents over 24% of the total public school enrollment. By the 2019-20 school year, charter enrollment is projected to grow to over 27% of total enrollment in the district.
- **Nearly Half of Students in Central Harlem Attend a Charter School.** In Central Harlem (community school district 5), where the city's very first charter school opened in 1999, charter enrollment has nearly quadrupled to meet the demands of parents, from 11% in 2007-08 to 41% in 2014-15. By 2019-20, nearly one in two students will be educated in a charter school.

CHARTERS' IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Why is charter demand so high? The proof is evident in student achievement.

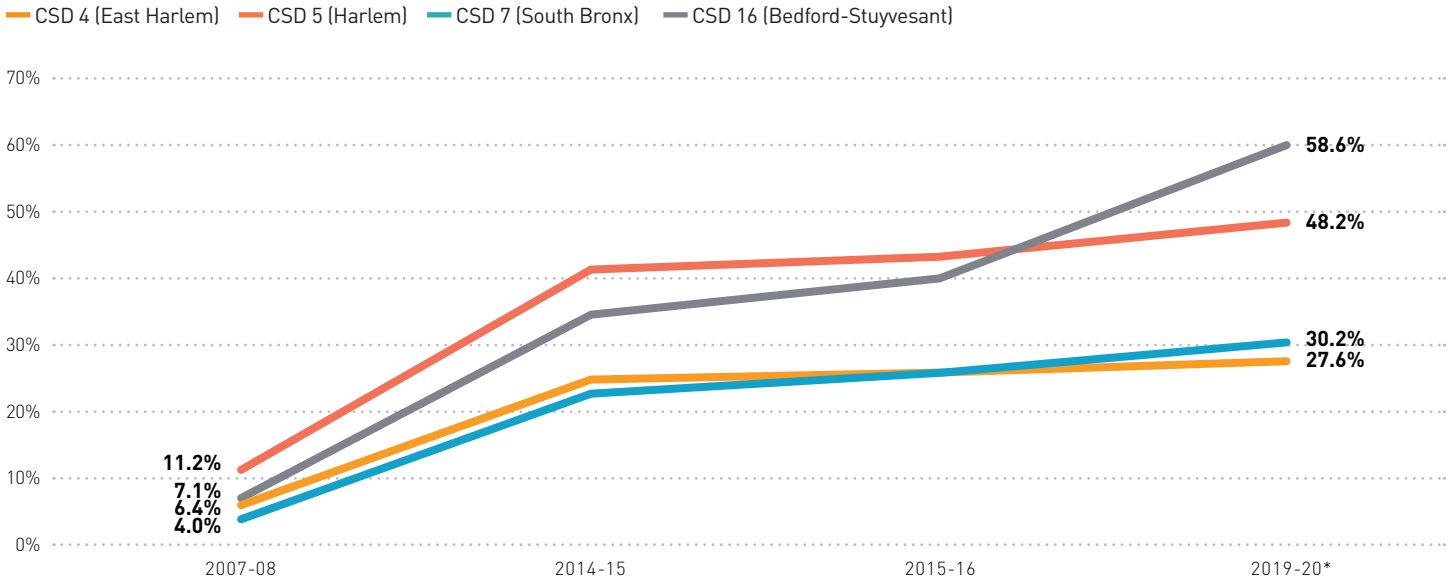
In 2014-15, African-American charter school students outperformed district peers by **24 (43% vs. 19%)** and **10 (29% vs. 19%)** percentage points in math and ELA, respectively.

Similarly, Hispanic charter students outgained district peers by **18 (42% vs. 24%)** and **7 (27% vs. 20%)** percentage points in math and ELA, respectively.

- **One-Third of Students in Bedford-Stuyvesant Attend a Charter School.** In community school district 16 covering Bedford-Stuyvesant, just over 7% of students attended a charter school in the district in 2007-08. In the seven years since, charter enrollment has increased five-fold — over one-third of students in the district attended a charter school in 2014-15. In four more years, nearly 60% of students will be in a charter school.
- **One in Four Students in the South Bronx Attends a Charter School.** Charter school growth in the South Bronx (community school district 7) has followed a similar pattern — as demand continues to increase, charter enrollment has increased more than five-fold since 2007-08. In 2014-15, over 22% of students attended a charter school, and will continue to increase to 30% in four years.

1 in 2
 kindergarten students in Harlem attends a charter school (includes community school districts 4 & 5)

Charter Enrollment as % of Total District Enrollment



Source: NY SED Enrollment Files [* denotes projections]

More Than a Quarter Million Charter School Supporters in NYC

Student enrollment is but one way to measure the sector’s growing impact — the extended charter school constituency includes the parents, staff, and Board members who have chosen to enroll their child in, work at, and lead charter schools throughout NYC.

Given the estimated 95,000 students enrolled in charter schools, over 130,000 parents and guardians are choosing charter schools for their children over traditional district schools.⁷ Delivering the instruction to those students are more than 5,400 teachers being supported by 1,700 network and administrative staff, and 1,100 Board members who provide critical guidance and oversight.⁸ Nearly a quarter of a million New Yorkers are contributing to the viability of the charter school sector on a daily basis.

Additionally, the general public’s support for charter schools has grown over the years as well. In a recent poll conducted by Quinnipiac University, 62% of New York City voters supported the expansion of charter schools.⁹

New York City’s charter school sector continues to show robust growth and increasing influence while delivering results. It’s time that New York City’s leadership not just accept charter schools, but openly embrace them as full partners in a shared vision of making our public schools work for all children.

Footnotes

¹ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, *A Growing Movement: America's Largest Charter School Communities* (Washington, DC, 2014).

² Nine charter schools in NYC have had their charters revoked or otherwise non-renewed since 1999.

³ Student enrollment for NYC, DPS, BCPS, and DCPS estimated for the 2015-16 school year.

Sources: Charter Center calculations based on historical and chartered enrollment; <http://planning.dpsk12.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/2015-16-Final-Projections.pdf>; <http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/Domain/8784/PDF/2015CEFMP/20150721-CEFMP-ch3.pdf>; [http://web.sfusd.edu/Services/research_public/rpa_student_enrollment/SFUSD%20School%20Site%20List%20and%20Summary-%20Student%20Enrollment%20\[Most%20Current\].pdf](http://web.sfusd.edu/Services/research_public/rpa_student_enrollment/SFUSD%20School%20Site%20List%20and%20Summary-%20Student%20Enrollment%20[Most%20Current].pdf); <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/domain/238>; http://dcpsdata-center.com/budget_process.html.

⁴ The Charter Center projections assume seven new charter schools opening in each of the 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20 school years. In 2015, the NYS Legislature approved an additional 50 charter schools for NYC. The Charter Center estimated an average of 125 students in a charter schools first year of operation—this estimate was derived from new charter schools opened over the past five years. In each subsequent year of operation, the Charter Center estimated an average of 100 additional students enrolled.

⁵ Projections for NYC DOE student enrollment were derived from historical enrollment from 2005-06 through 2014-15.

⁶ Raymond Domanico, *School Indicators for New York City Charter Schools: 2013-2014 School Year* (New York City Independent Budget Office, 2015).

⁷ The estimated number of parents assumes 1.75 parents per child. Additionally, the estimate of the number of parents assumes that one-quarter of the estimated 95,000 students are siblings—among applicants using the Charter Center's common application, roughly 23% reported having siblings either attending or applying to a charter school. For the 2015-16 school year, 75% of all charter schools participated in the Charter Center's common application.

⁸ Data collected from 2013-14 Annual Reports, and school websites (see <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/csdirectory/CSLaunchPage.html>).

⁹ Quinnipiac University Poll, June 4, 2015. In a November 2014 Quinnipiac University poll, 43% of NYC voters supported charter school expansion.