

Tennessee Charter School Quick Facts

Tennessee Public Charter Schools:

- Are public and free to attend
- Are operated by a nonprofit organization
- Must enroll any student who applies, regardless of behavior, special need, or academic performance
- Are required to use a lottery if demand exceeds available seats
- Employ licensed educators
- Must meet the same academic standards and administer the same assessments as traditional public schools
- Are required by law to undergo an independent financial audit every year
- Can be closed if the school fails to meet academic or financial expectations

Public charter schools are concentrated in Tennessee's largest districts and are authorized by a variety of entities.

During the 2023-2024 school year, a total of **115** Tennessee charter schools were located within the geographic boundaries of four school districts across the state:



Six entities acting as local education agencies (LEAs) authorized charter schools in operation during the 2023-24 school year: Hamilton County Schools, Knox County Schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools, and Memphis-Shelby County Schools, along with the state's appellate authorizer (the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, or TPCSC) and the state's school turnaround district (the Achievement School District, or ASD).

Charter schools approved in Rutherford County opened in the Fall of 2024. A charter school approved in the Jackson-Madison County school district will open in the Fall of 2026.



Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

Since 2021 the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission has considered 31 appeals for charter schools seeking initial authorization to open.

The commission approved 13 of these charter applications and will serve as the authorizer for 12 of those new schools.

The commission affirmed 13 LEA decisions to deny, and five applications were withdrawn before a decision. The commission also received six applications for schools to transition from the ASD. The commission approved five of these ASD transitions.

Charter School Enrollment by Authorizer, 2023-24

	Number of Charters	Charter Only Enrollment	% Charter Enrollment of LEA
Achievement School District (ASD)	12	4,157	93%
Hamilton County Schools (HCS)	8	2,507	5.6%
Knox County Schools (KCS)	1	458	.78%
Memphis-Shelby County Schools (MSCS)	54	19,253	18%
Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS)	27	13,303	17%
Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (TPCSC)	13	4,796	100%
State of Tennessee	115	44,475	4.6%

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, 2024



On average, public charter schools serve a higher percentage of students of color and economically disadvantaged students than their district counterparts.

During the 2023-24 school year, Tennessee charter schools served over 44,000 students — roughly 5% of the student population statewide and about 9% of the state’s Black, Hispanic, and Native American student population.

Roughly half (44%) of the students served by Tennessee charter schools (non-ASD) are economically disadvantaged, and 87% identify as Black, Hispanic, or Native American. Compared with district-run schools in districts with charter options (non-ASD), on average, the enrollment of economically disadvantaged students is 8 percentage points higher and the enrollment of Black, Hispanic, and Native American students at charter schools is 22 percentage points higher.

Approximately 75% (86 schools) of Tennessee charter schools are elementary and middle schools, while only 25% (29 schools) are high schools and middle/high schools.

44%
Economically Disadvantaged

87%
Students Of Color

Demographics of Charter Schools by Authorizer, 2023-24

	HCS		KCS		MNPS		MSCS		ASD		TPCSC
	Charter	Noncharter	Charter	Noncharter	Charter	Noncharter	Charter	Noncharter	Charter	Noncharter	Charter
Black, Hispanic, Native American	74%	49%	86%	31%	81%	70%	95%	91%	96%	96%	83%
Economically Disadvantaged	49%	33%	47%	20%	33%	31%	52%	54%	68%	75%	42%
Students With Disabilities	14%	14%	18%	16%	13%	14%	8%	12%	14%	10%	13%
English Learners	17%	12%	9%	9%	27%	30%	15%	13%	8%	0%	22%

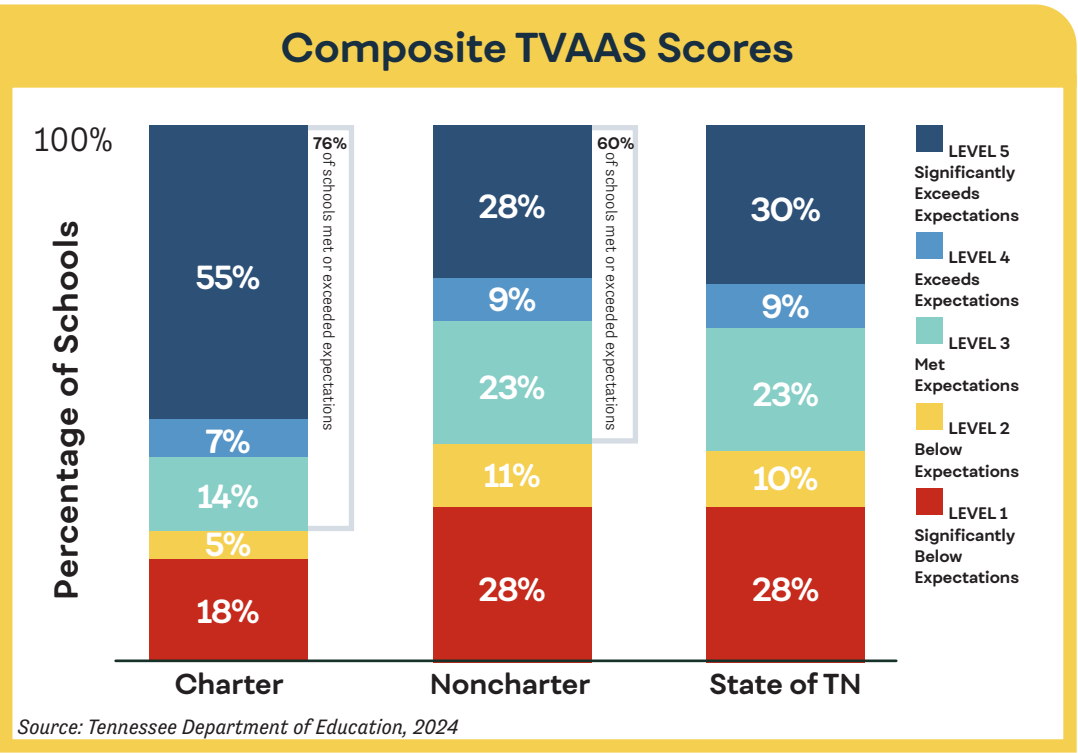
Source: Tennessee Department of Education, 2024

In 2024, public charter schools outpaced their district counterparts in academic growth and graduation rates.



55% of charter schools (non-ASD) earned a Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) Level 5 “Significantly Exceeding Expectations” score as compared to 28% of district-run schools in districts with charter options (non-ASD).

76% of charter schools met or exceeded student growth expectations (TVAAS levels 3-5) compared to 60% of noncharter schools in districts with public charter options.



The average charter high school (non-ASD) graduation rate (89.1 percent) was 7.6 percentage points higher than the average high school graduation rate (81.5 percent) at district-run schools in districts with charter options (non-ASD).

Percent of Students Proficient on 3-8 TCAP by Authorizer, 2023-24

	HCS		KCS		MNPS		MSCS		TPCSC
	Charter	Noncharter	Charter	Noncharter	Charter	Noncharter	Charter	Noncharter	Charter
Reading	21%	39%	27%	42%	31%	30%	20%	22%	28%
Math	24%	40	25%	41%	33%	29%	20%	22%	29%

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, 2024