

# National Study Highlights Student Growth in Tennessee Public Charter Schools

According to a 2023 national study by Stanford University’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), public charter school students experience more average growth in math and English language arts than their counterparts in noncharter schools. In Tennessee, this growth equals an additional month and a half of learning for public charter school students.

CREDO’s National Charter School Study assesses students’ academic growth in charter schools across the United States, including Tennessee. The study relies on state longitudinal data systems to track student outcomes over time and matches charter students to their “**virtual twin**” from noncharter schools. The academic gains are measured as additional days of learning, based on a 180-day school year.

### What Is A Virtual Twin?

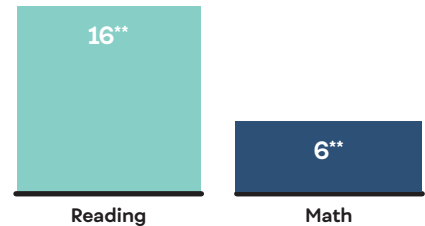
Using the virtual twin methodology, students are matched across six demographic characteristics and prior test scores and are enrolled in the traditional district school that the charter student would have attended if not at their charter school.

## Public Charter School Students Nationwide Demonstrate Additional Days of Learning in Math and English Language Arts

Nationwide, charter school students have an average of 16 more days of learning in reading and six more days in math in a school year compared to their matched peers in noncharter schools.

### Annual Academic Growth of Charter School Students, Nationally

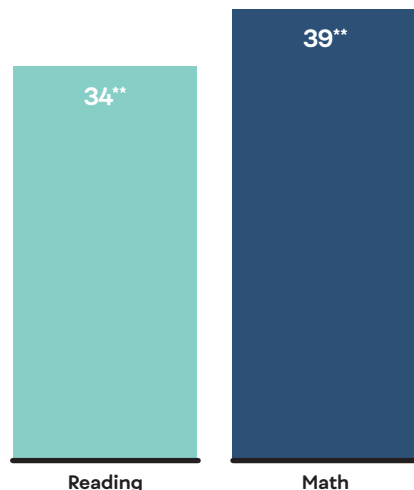
Additional Days of Learning



\*\*Highly statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$

### Annual Academic Growth of Charter School Students, Tennessee

Additional Days of Learning



\*\*Highly statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$

## Tennessee Public Charter School Students Demonstrate One of the Highest Average Growth Rates

As a sector, Tennessee’s public charter schools demonstrated impressive statewide results.

**Across Tennessee, public charter school students receive the equivalent of 34 extra days of growth in reading and 39 extra days in math compared with their matched peers at noncharter schools.**

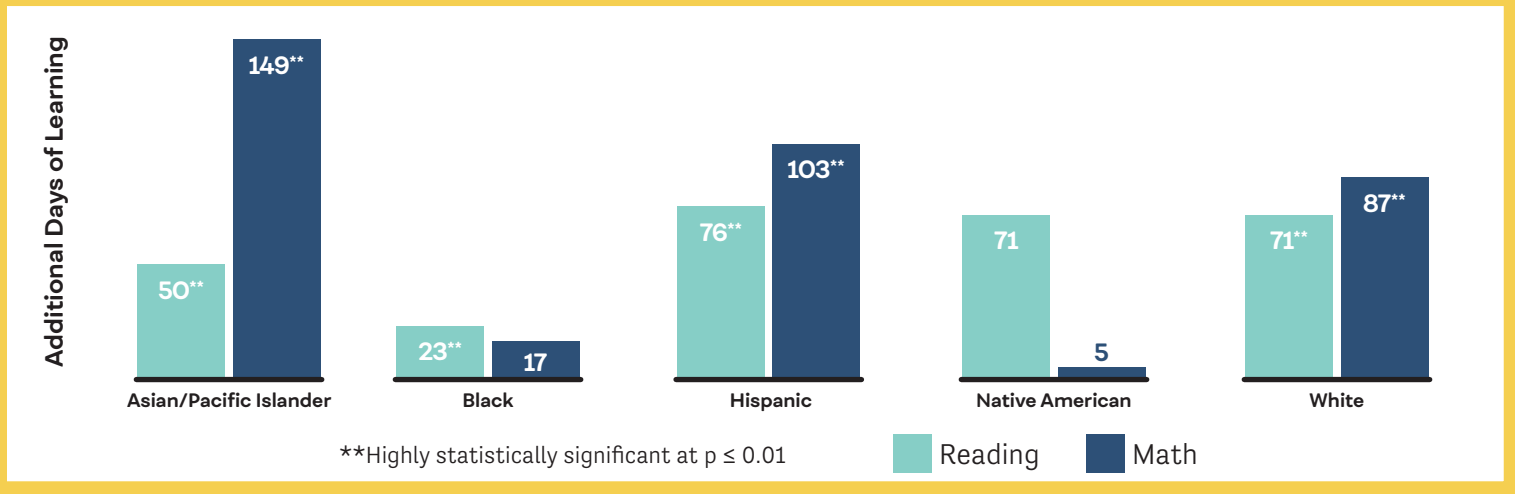
This growth is especially notable given that Tennessee charter schools are largely serving students with the greatest need. On average, Tennessee charter students have lower achievement when entering their charter school compared to the national charter sector overall — only three states enroll charter students with average entering achievement lower than Tennessee’s<sup>1</sup>. In spite of this, Tennessee public charter students also have one of the highest average growth rates in the nation — only three states have higher academic growth.

<sup>1</sup>This is likely because Tennessee charters are concentrated in underserved urban areas and the stated purpose of Tennessee charter schools is “to close achievement gaps and provide quality educational options for all students.” TCA 49-13-102; TCA 49-13-106

## Additional Days of Learning for Tennessee Public Charter School Students Is Consistent Across Student Groups

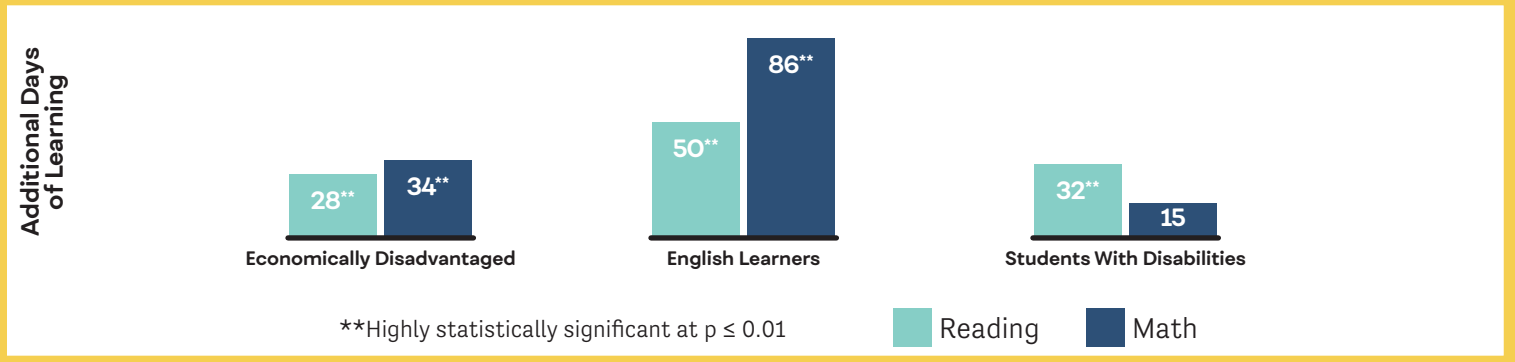
Compared to their noncharter school peers, Black students attending public charter schools in Tennessee had 23 days more growth in a school year in reading and 17 days more growth in math. The results were even more significant for Hispanic students. Relative to their noncharter peers, Hispanic students in Tennessee’s public charter schools grew an extra 76 days in reading and 103 additional days in math. This is comparable to the students attending an additional four to five months of schooling each year.

### Performance of Tennessee Public Charter School Students by Race/Ethnicity



The CREDO study also examined academic growth for charter school students in special populations. Of note for Tennessee, economically disadvantaged students in public charter schools had stronger growth equal to 28 additional days of learning in reading and 34 days in math than their noncharter peers. English language learners who attended public charter schools also had stronger growth in reading (50 days) and math (86 days). While the national study results found students receiving special education services had significantly weaker growth in both reading and math than their noncharter peers, that was not the case in Tennessee. In Tennessee, public charter school students with disabilities had stronger growth than their noncharter peers equal to 32 additional days of learning in reading and 15 additional days in math.

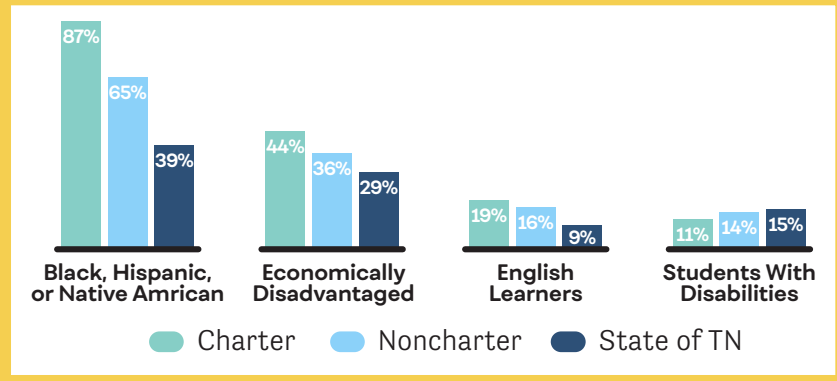
### Performance of Tennessee Public Charter School Students by Student Characteristic



# Public Charter Schools Serve More Students From Historically Underserved Groups Compared to District and State Peers

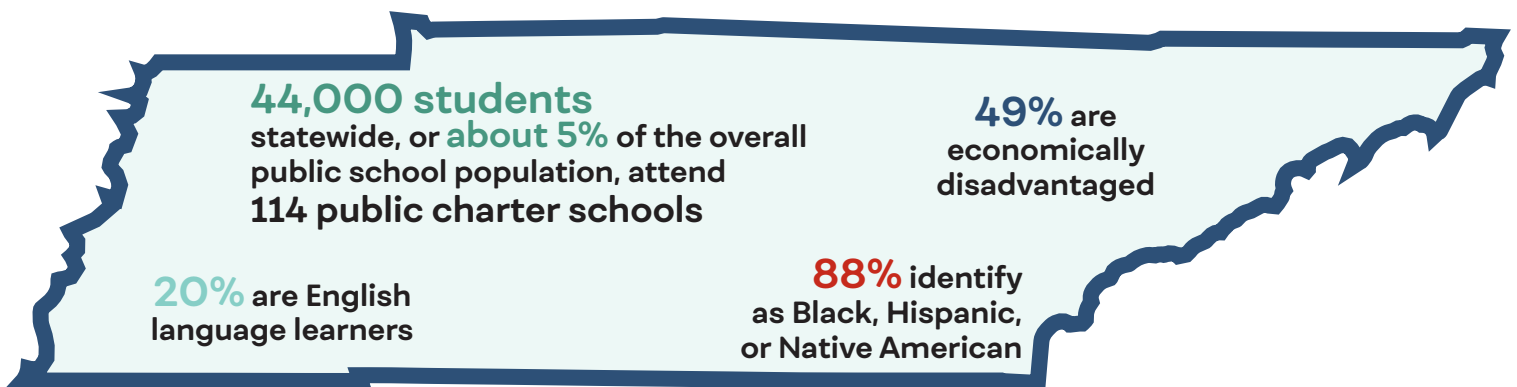
This growth data is especially important for Tennessee’s public charter school sector as public charter schools in Tennessee serve a greater proportion of students of color and economically disadvantaged students than noncharter schools across the state. In 2023, nearly 90% of all students in public charter schools were Black, Hispanic, or Native American — 50% more than the state average. Additionally, economically disadvantaged students make up roughly 20% more of the student population in public charter schools compared to state and district peers.

## Charter and Noncharter Enrollment of Students From Historically Underserved Groups Across Tennessee



It is also important to note that despite this strong growth for charter school students, there is still work to be done to equitably serve all students across the state. As CREDO shares in their report, for the historically underserved student groups mentioned above, the noncharter peer groups often have growth weaker than the average 180 days per year that anchors these analyses. This means that even those subpopulations with positive growth may experience less than 180 days of growth per school year.

## Who Are Tennessee Charter School Students?



## Methodology

The third installment of the study, released in June 2023, includes 81% of tested public school students across the country — one of the largest student-level datasets to date. The study uses student-level and school-level administrative data from 29 states, Washington, D.C., and New York City, and includes data from 2014-19. Using CREDO’s Virtual Control Record (VCR) protocol, the report matches charter school students with a “virtual twin” who is enrolled in the traditional public school the student would have attended if they were not at their charter school. These students are matched across demographic characteristics including grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, free or reduced lunch eligibility, English language learner status, special education status, and prior test scores.

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