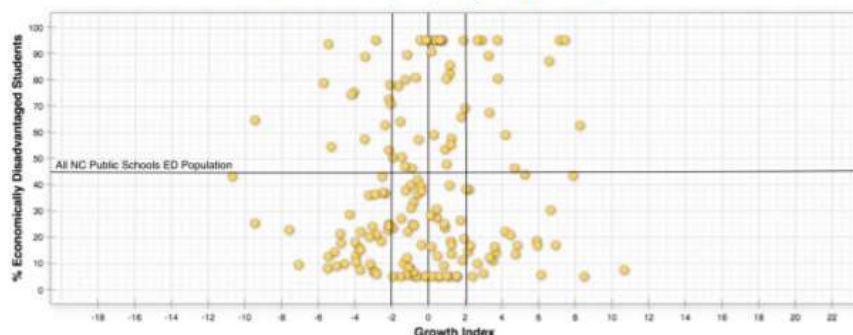**"One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education."**

--Vision of Teach For America

This year marks 27 years of partnership between Teach For America and the state of North Carolina. As a partner, Teach For America has committed to maximizing our contribution to the state by recruiting, training, and supporting excellent, diverse teachers and leaders and growing our number of alumni living and working in North Carolina. We are also committed to strengthening the North Carolina Teacher Corps.

Every day across North Carolina we see corps members, alumni, and students dramatically impacting North Carolina communities. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction recently released an annual report on charter schools for the general assembly. Of the eight schools listed with higher than 70 percent Econonmicaly Disadvantaged population and EVAAS scores greater than +2, five of them were founded or are led by a Teach For America alum, are staffed by many Teach For America trained teachers, and are models for other charter schools across the state (Maureen Joy Charter, KIPP Halifax, KIPP Charlotte, Gaston College

Figure 28. 2016-2017 Charter Schools Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students and Academic (EVAAS) Growth

Source: NCDPI School Report Card Online Platform

Based on this 2016-17 data, the following eight schools with an ED population over 70% exceeded expectations for student growth by achieving an EVAAS growth score of greater than +2:

- Maureen Joy Charter (32A)*

- Global Scholars Academy (32M)

- KIPP Halifax College Preparatory (42A)*

- Guilford Preparatory Academy (42C)

- KIPP Charlotte (60L)

- Gaston College Preparatory (66A)

- Henderson Collegiate (91B)*

- Torchlight Academy (92L)

> **BEST PRACTICES RESULTING FROM CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATIONS**
>
> *High Academic Growth with Disadvantaged Student Population*
>
> One measure of excellence for charter (and traditional) schools is achieving high academic growth, as measured by the Education Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) with a student population that is economically disadvantaged. As illustrated below, eight charter schools exceeded growth expectations with student populations that were 70% or greater Economically Disadvantaged, and 3 of these schools achieved extremely high growth.

*These schools achieved extremely high growth with indices of 6 or greater.

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[1]   "Charter Schools Annual Report." North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 15 Feb. 2018. See Appendix A

In the third quarter, Jennifer Haygood, president of the North Carolina Community College System was interviewed on the EdTalk podcast.[2] Haygood is a Teach For America alum and completed her corps service in 1997 in New Orleans, but moved back to her home state of North Carolina. In her interview, Jennifer discussed the role Teach For America has played in her professional career, saying, "I joined Teach For America […] and taught elementary school in New Orleans. I do believe that experience, which was extremely challenging, was the basis for my professional commitment to educational equity and wanting to help students regardless of their background."[3] We are proud to have diverse, innovative leaders at all points in the education continuum—from the charter schools listed above, to traditional public schools across the state, to the leader of the North Carolina Community College System and the state Superintendent.

We are thankful for the state's continued investment, which allows us to find promising leaders, develop and cultivate their leadership skills and mindsets through classroom teaching, and support them throughout their lifetime. We are pleased to update you on our progress in the third quarter.

Statewide Impact

Teach For America's greatest contribution continues to be the diverse, innovative, and courageous leadership force that we bring to North Carolina and support across our state. Our network of individuals continues to expand opportunity for children through working in classrooms, schools, and from every sector, field, and place where people shape the broader systems in which schools operate.

Today, 27 years since we began partnering with North Carolina, we are over 2,000 individuals strong living and working in nearly two thirds of the counties in our state. This year, we are committed to leveraging the scale and diversity of our network to make sure we are learning faster and smarter. In just four years, we have more than doubled the number of Teach For America alumni school leaders in the state and we have the seventh largest alumni body in the nation. Below is a spotlight on a few of the talented individuals in our network and the work they are leading in North Carolina.

- **Vichi Jagannathan (Eastern North Carolina 2011) and Seth Saeugling (Eastern North Carolina 2012)** are two former Teach For America teachers who recently founded Rural Opportunity Institute, a social innovation lab to design solutions for families who have untreated trauma in rural eastern North Carolina. As Teach for America corps members, Vichi and Seth saw that many of the challenges their students faced stemmed from deeper issues of poverty, abuse, and drug addiction. They shared a desire to do something more to address the adverse effects of trauma that followed their students into early adulthood.

    After working with Microsoft and the Tipping Point Foundation in the Bay Area, they raised seed funding, networked with other educators and nonprofits, and returned to eastern North Carolina, landing in Edgecombe County thanks to the public school district's openness to innovation. The pair

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[2] Granados, Alex. "Interview with Jennifer Haygood, President of the North Carolina Community College System." SoundCloud, soundcloud.com/edtalk/interview-with-jennifer-haygood-president-of-the-north-carolina-community-college-system.

[3] Grandos, Alex. "Interview with Jennifer Haygood, President of the North Carolina Community College System."

spent two months doing a design sprint where they interviewed more than 50 parents and childcare providers. These interviews led to useful insights about the challenges parents faced, but Vichi and Seth sensed a need to go a level deeper.[4]

In January, Texas A&M granted an $80,000 grant to a local Edgecombe non-profit. Jagannathan and Saeugling applied on behalf of the program:

> *"We, on a long shot, kind of applied on behalf of Edgecombe, with the hope that they would be excited about coming to a rural community," said Vichi Jagannathan, Rural Opportunity Institute co-founder. Jagannathan, who researches effects of trauma within the area along with co-founder Seth Saeugling, said the university team picked Edgecombe out of applicants from across the country. The Rural Opportunity Institute is housed within the North Carolina Public School Forum and has been holding meetings with community leaders to find solutions to cycles of poverty and trauma.[5]*

- **Courtney Samuelson (Charlotte 2009)** is one of nine teachers from across North Carolina to have been selected as the state's regional Teachers of the Year for her dedication, innovation and ability to inspire students to achieve. She, along with eight other accomplished educators, will compete for the title of 2018 Burroughs Welcome Fund North Carolina Teacher of the Year. Courtney teaches fifth grade at Capitol Encore Academy in Fayetteville.

- **Jackson Olsen (Eastern North Carolina 2009)** recently published his first book *Teaching For America: Life in the Struggle for 'One Day'* which documents his experience teaching and leading in Vance County. Olsen moved to Vance County in 2009 as part of TFA. The book is about his experience with Teach For America and his decision to stay in North Carolina. Olsen is now a high school principal in Henderson, the same community that he was first placed as a Teach for America corps member. Olsen reflects on his journey to education, saying:

> *I never meant to join Teach For America. I planned, like so many fervently enthusiastic sons who hero-worship their fathers, to follow his footsteps into law. But somewhere down the line, things changed, and instead I ended up as a teacher thousands of miles from home, doing teachery things—like intercepting flirtatious love notes, monitoring noisy cafeterias, and drying my hands with brown paper towels. I traded law school for middle school, lecture halls for lesson plans, and case studies for caseworkers. Above all, I traded a day job for a mission.[6]*

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[4] Ahearn, Amy. "Beyond Design Thinking: Why Education Entrepreneurs Need to Think in Systems - EdSurge News." EdSurge, EdSurge, 13 Mar. 2018, www.edsurge.com/news/2017-12-22-beyond-design-thinking-why-education-entrepreneurs-need-to-think-in-systems. See Appendix B

[5] Bell, Liz. "Texas A&M Gives $80,000 to Edgecombe Organizations for Teen Pregnancy Prevention." EducationNC, 11 Jan. 2018, www.ednc.org/2018/01/11/texas-gives-80000-edgecombe-organizations-teen-pregnancy-prevention/. See Appendix C

[6] Olsen, Jackson. "Teaching for America: Life in the Struggle for 'One Day'." EducationNC, 1 Feb. 2018, www.ednc.org/2018/02/01/teaching-america-life-struggle-one-day/. See Appendix D

We are proud to share the meaningful work our alumni are leading in partnership with communities across the state. We are excited to continue to share their stories in future reports.

North Carolina Teacher Corps (NCTC)

Teach for America is committed to partnering with the state to inspire more North Carolinians to teach and lead as educators here. While we know great teachers exist across the nation, we believe that teachers with personal ties to North Carolina can make a unique contribution to our state, bringing a special sense of urgency and commitment to educating North Carolina's children.

We know that personalized and individual, tailored contact with applicants is one of the strongest strategies in influencing applicants to preference a North Carolina region. As such, we have significantly increased our communication strategies on our regional end to match the support candidates are receiving from our national recruitment team. This year, we set a goal of establishing contact with 250 candidates with North Carolina ties. With two deadlines left in the year, we have had communication with 241 candidates and are on track to surpass goal. This time last year, we had established contact with 192 candidates. We have overhauled our communications and aligned our messages to our national recruitment team's brand. We are excited about the increased traction we are seeing, and are committed to refining our processes over time to get even stronger results.

We currently have 189 corps members who identify as part of the North Carolina Teaching Corps who are teaching in their first or second year in the classroom. One hundred and forty-seven of them graduated from a North Carolina college or university and 164 of them are North Carolina natives. Our NCTC corps members represent 28 different North Carolina colleges and universities including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, Duke University, Davidson College, and Wake Forest University. Our North Carolina connected corps members make up a diverse group of teachers and leaders across the state:

- The average GPA is 3.49
- 48% come from a low-income background[7]
- 52% are people of color
- 51% are teaching math or science
- 32% are the first in their families to graduate from college
- 4 served in the military
- 19 were taught by a TFA teacher when they were in grade school

Our North Carolina Teacher Corps initiative is continuously cited as a model for the entire organization, and we remain committed to improving our program year over year. Our strategies for the upcoming year include:

- **Alumni Outreach:** We are strategically matching our North Carolina alumni callers with final round applicants based on their interests and career paths. We have conducted over 120 calls over four recruitment windows. Alumni use these calls to inspire applicants to choose to teach in North Carolina rather than choosing to teach out of state.

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[7] As identified by receiving a full or partial PELL grant

- **NCTC Webinars:** We have hosted five webinars specifically for North Carolinians moving into the final round of interviews. These webinars highlight stories of current corps members, alumni, and students with North Carolina ties who choose to lead in our state. Over 115 applicants have joined our webinars.
- **Strategic Stewardship:** Our staff is calling and texting all applicants with North Carolina ties who are rated as the most competitive and highly likely to be admitted to the corps. These applicants often have competing offers and we plan to use these calls as an opportunity to share more about the education landscape in North Carolina and why their leadership is needed in our state.
- **Statewide Calendar of Events:** We built a statewide calendar of events across our regions that is shared with our national recruitment team. This allows recruiters to easily advertise our local events to prospective applicants.

Regional Updates

- **Eastern North Carolina**
  Teach For America's greatest contribution has always been diverse, courageous leadership. We are a network of individuals who expand opportunity for children, working from classrooms, from schools, and from every sector and field and place where people shape the broader systems in which schools operate. The Eastern North Carolina team is committed to maximizing this broad network of alumni across the region.

  Jerry Clyde (Eastern North Carolina 2016), a fifth grade teacher at Northeast Elementary School in Lenoir County, was nominated for the National LifeChanger of the Year award. Sponsored by the National Life Group and the National Life Group Foundation, the LifeChanger of the Year program recognizes 17 teachers for their work in and out of the classroom. Hundreds of teachers across the country get recommended for the award each year. Those recommendations are then narrowed down to a final list and winners are decided by a panel of previous award winners.[8]

  Clyde's nomination was made by an anonymous parent who was impressed with his ability to teach a fifth grade student with Academic Disadvantages.

  > *"Mr. Clyde looked beyond the bottom line number and found a wonderful boy who would have tried anything with the encouragement of one outstanding teacher," the nominator said. "His learning environment was a community with a village of learners. Students leaned in and used their strengths to help out their neighbor. They did it through genuine love and care."[9]*

  In the third quarter, *EdNC* ran an article on Lauren Lampron (Eastern North Carolina 2010). Lauren is the principal of W.A. Pattillo Middle School in Edgecombe County. Hurricane Matthew displaced many of her students in the 2016-2017 school year. *EdNC* explains her response, saying:

  > *After helping meet the immediate needs of the middle schoolers, Pattillo principal Lauren Lampron and her staff held a week of activities to help the students express what happened.*

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[8] George, Dustin. "Northeast Teacher Nominated for National Award." The Free Press, The Free Press, 27 Feb. 2018, www.kinston.com/news/20180226/northeast-teacher-nominated-for-national-award. See Appendix E

[9] George, Dustin. "Northeast Teacher Nominated for National Award." See Appendix E

"We have a community of individuals traumatized by the flood," Lampron said. "We were googling things and trying to figure out how to provide support for the kids."

They connected with Public School Forum of North Carolina, which uses evidence-based research and public policy analysis to improve education. The school also started participating in the N.C. Resilience and Learning Project, which aims to educate staff about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and how those affect a child's brain development and ability to learn.[10]

Armed with new knowledge about ACEs, Lauren, in partnership with her staff and students, has begun to make significant changes at Pattillo to meet the needs of her students. She is implementing procedures to help her students express their feelings and making modifications to their behavior policies.

- **Charlotte**
  In the third quarter, Molly Whelan (Charlotte 2009) and Erica Jordan Thomas (Charlotte 2008) were featured in *EdNC* about their work in Project LIFT as well as their work with Opportunity Culture. Whelan explains:

  My journey in education began in 2009 when I joined Teach for America and was placed in Charlotte as a seventh-grade math teacher. In 2011, I left teaching to go to graduate school in Boston for social work, but soon realized how much I missed teaching—so by February 2012, I was back at my old school. The next year, I joined Ranson IB Middle School as a math teacher, just as Project L.I.F.T (Leadership & Investment For Transformation) began. This new learning community of traditionally low-performing schools within Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools aimed to recruit and retain excellent teachers, increase access to technology, and increase in-school and out-of-school opportunities with the help of donor funding.

  Now under the leadership of Principal Erica Jordan-Thomas, Ranson is in its fourth year as an Opportunity Culture school, and I am a multi-classroom leader (MCL) for a three-teacher team. We MCLs wear many hats every day—we coach our team teachers using the Real-Time Teacher Coaching method from CT3 that involves live coaching through walkie-talkies, analyze assessment data, pull small groups, and plan lessons. At this high-needs school, we're successful in large part because of the support and professional development we MCLs get from Ms. Jordan-Thomas in our weekly meetings as the instructional leadership team.

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[10] Knopf, Taylor. "Low-Wealth Schools Find New Ways to Deal with Student Trauma." North Carolina Health News, 21 Dec. 2017, www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2017/12/21/low-wealth-schools-new-ways-deal-student-trauma/. See Appendix F

> *At Ranson, Opportunity Culture has helped us retain more teachers and filled most or all openings before the school year. However, as in all schools, sometimes the school must hire long-term substitutes when a teacher leaves midyear or takes extended leave.*[11]

- **North Carolina Piedmont Triad**
  The North Carolina Piedmont Triad team has been focused on strengthening their alumni board and movement. As a board, they have identified high school and college preparedness as their central issue. Currently, they are working to identify the components that allow a student to be fully prepared for high school and are dissecting the timeline and learnings that need to happen ahead of entering the ninth grade. They hope to expand to college/career preparedness as it relates to navigating the college application timeline (ie: ACT, FAFSA, AP courses, etc.). Currently, they are identifying schools that could act as proof points for implementing programs and isolating what the alumni board's role and capacity could be in increasing overall readiness.

Financial Reporting

Teach For America is steadfast in maximizing the state's investment through fiscal responsibility and investing donors in our important work in North Carolina. In 2016 (the most recent data available), we earned a perfect four-star rating from Charity Navigator for the fourteenth straight year for exemplary financial health (see appendix H). Less than one percent of all nonprofits nationwide have received this many consecutive four-star ratings, putting us in the 99th percentile among all nonprofits. We remain grateful for the state's investment and are committed to making every public and private dollar work hard for students across our state. We look forward to updating the state on our progress in our June quarterly report.

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[11] Whelan, Molly. "When Teachers Leave Midyear, Instructional Teacher-Leadership Keeps Classes Strong." EducationNC, 7 Feb. 2018, www.ednc.org/2018/02/07/teachers-leave-midyear-instructional-teacher-leadership-keeps-classes-strong/. See Appendix G

Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Charter Schools Annual Report

S.L. 2013-335; S.L. 2014-115

Date Due: February 15, 2018
Report # 46
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2016-2017

NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Mark Johnson, State Superintendent :: 301 N. Wilmington Street :: Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2825

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the first charter school was opened in North Carolina in 1997, the state has implemented a number of rules and regulations to ensure that charter schools were serving all students well. One such regulation was the requirement that the State Board provide an annual reporting of charter school performance, impact on traditional public schools, best practices, etc. The current year report describes the state of North Carolina's charter schools, and provides a more in-depth reporting of academic performance than in years past. OCS and the State Board of Education intend to continue in-depth investigation of charter school performance in future annual reports.

The State Board is pleased to report that, overall, charter schools are becoming more racially diverse, and the overall percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolling in charter schools has increased from the previous year. In addition, the percentage of charter schools earning Ds or Fs has decreased over the past four years. With continued monitoring and oversight, and strong authorization processes, OCS is confident that the strength of the charter sector will continue to grow. To that end, the Charter Schools Advisory Board has implemented a number of measures to increase transparency and rigor in the charter school application process. These changes, and others, are discussed in greater detail in the body of the report.

LEGISLATION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1996, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Charter School Act, thereby authorizing the establishment of "a system of charter schools to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils, and the community to create and sustain schools that operated independently of existing schools, as a method to accomplish all the following:

1. Improve student learning;

2. Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as at risk of academic failure or academically gifted;

3. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;

4. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning at the school site;

5. Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public-school system;

6. Hold the schools established under this Part accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results, and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.

Codified in NC General Statute as Article 14A of Chapter 115C (115C-218, *et al.*), the charter schools law assigns the State Board of Education the sole authority to grant approval of applications for charters.

Statute originally capped at 100 the number of charter schools that could operate in the State in each school year, but the General Assembly removed that ceiling in August 2011. Thirty-four charter schools opened in the inaugural year of 1997. There are 173 charter schools operating in the 2017-18 school year, including 20 of the original 34 schools. Since 1997, 44 schools that have been open at some time have closed.

Current statute sets the parameters for how the system of charter schools must operate. The law includes the following sections:

- Purpose of charter schools; establishment of North Carolina Charter Schools Advisory Board and North Carolina Office of Charter Schools

- Eligible applicants, contents of applications; submission of applications for approval

- Final approval of applications for charter schools

- Charter school exemptions

- Charter school operation

- General requirements

- Accountability; reporting requirements to the State Board of Education

- Charter School Facilities

- Charter School Transportation

- Admission Requirements

- Employment Requirements

- Funding for charters

- Causes for nonrenewal or termination; disputes

Finally, G.S. 115C-218.110 directs that the State Board "shall report annually no later than January 15 to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the following:

1) The current and projected impact of charter schools on the delivery of services by the public schools.

2) Student academic progress in the charter schools as measured, where available, against the academic year immediately preceding the first academic year of the charter schools' operation.

3) Best practices resulting from charter school operations.

4) Other information the State Board considers appropriate.

This report addresses this legislated reporting requirement.

CURRENT STATE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN NC

School & Student Population

Schools

Between 1997 and 2011, the number of charter schools in NC first grew rapidly, then slowly, but steadily until it reached the legislative maximum of 100 schools. Since the restriction on the number of charter schools allowed was lifted in 2011, 367 applicants have submitted complete applications for charters, and the State Board has approved 110.

Over the past several years, the Charter Schools Advisory Board and the Office of Charter Schools have implemented many processes through which to provide additional supports for charter applicants. This includes an initial review of applications for completeness by OCS, and notification for any applicants whose applications have been deemed incomplete. These applicant groups are then given five business days to make necessary additions prior to being forwarded to external reviewers. Previously, incomplete applications were automatically disqualified from consideration for the current application cycle.

In 2016-17, the CSAB made additional significant changes to the application review process to increase transparency and rigor in recommending applicants for State Board approval. An additional opportunity for in-person clarification was established for applicants, thereby removing the unwelcome burden of responding in writing to external reviewers. In addition, initial application reviews were divided into two committees to allow CSAB members to focus deeply on a subset of applications during the first review.

In 2016, 38 applications were submitted to open schools in 2018-2019. Of those, 15 were approved by the State Board. Pending completion of a successful planning year, these schools will open in 2018-19.

In the most recent application cycle, 29 nonprofit boards submitted complete applications. Of those 29, twenty were applications for schools to open in 2019-2020, five were for Acceleration and one for Fast Track Replication (to open in 2018), three were new or repeat applicants requesting an accelerated open, and two were conversion applicants requesting an accelerated open. These applications are currently under review.

173 charter schools are operating in 2017-18.

Students

The charter schools' student population has grown steadily since 1997, with larger annual increases occurring in the years since the cap on schools was lifted in 2011. The graph below illustrates the increase in allotted charter school student enrollments from 1997 to 2017. According to second month Average Daily Membership (ADM) figures certified in December 2017, 100,508 students are now being served by charter schools. This represents 6.56% of the total public-school population (1,533,180).

Figure 1. Allotted Average Daily Membership 1997 – 2017
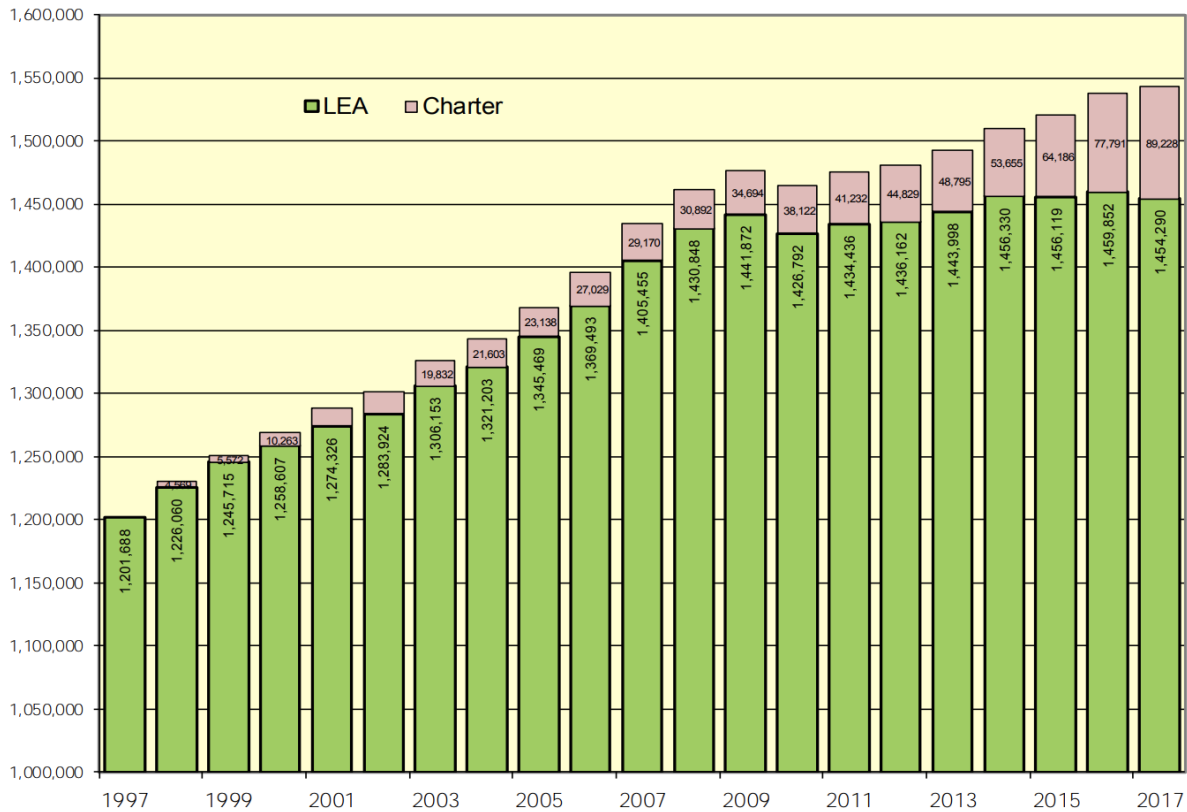
Data Source: Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget, February 2017, Information Analysis, Division of School Business, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

In addition to current charter schools' student population, many students have applied to enroll in charter schools, but have not be able to enroll due to limited space. The NCDPI Office of Charter Schools surveys charter schools annually to gather data regarding the number of students on "waitlists" statewide. In the 2017 survey (closed December 2017), 134 charter schools (77.5% of the 173 schools in operation) responded and indicated that a total of 55,165 students are on waitlists. This figure reflects a point in time (waitlists could change daily), and cannot be verified as an unduplicated count of students (as a student could be on multiple school waitlists), but is the best information available regarding the number of students who have indicated interest in attending charter schools but are not currently enrolled.

Admissions and Student Demographics

Background

NC's charter schools are not subject to school district geographic restrictions and often have student populations drawn from multiple local school districts. Charter schools are directed in G.S. 115C-218.45(e) to "make efforts [to have] the population of the school reasonably reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the general population residing within the local school administrative unit in which the [charter] school is located or the racial and ethnic composition of the specific

population that the school seeks to serve residing within the local school administrative unit in which the [charter] school is located." There is no mechanism by which schools can guarantee racial and ethnic balance, however, nor is there an official consequence for not achieving it.

Charter schools may target certain students through admissions set-asides, if the student population being given priority for admission is identified as such through the school's State Board-approved mission and admissions process. As of this writing, four charter schools have received approval to institute weighted lotteries to work towards a more diverse student body:

- Central Park School for Children, located in Durham County;

  - 2014-15: 15.2% ED
  - 2015-16: 15.83% ED
  - 2016-17: 22.11% ED
  - 2017-18: 23.4% ED

- Community School of Davidson, located in Mecklenburg County;

  - 2017-18: <5% ED

- GLOW Academy, located in New Hanover County; and

  - 2017-18: 71% ED

- Charlotte Lab School, located in Mecklenburg County

  - 2017-18: 6.6% ED

The ability to conduct a weighted lottery was codified in the 2015 long session in HB 334 and provides for charter schools to have additional controls to enroll underserved populations if supported by the school's mission.

Charter schools may not discriminate in their admissions process based on race, creed, national origin, religion, or ancestry. Charter schools may target certain students through their marketing, but "any child who is qualified under the laws of [NC] for admission to a public school is qualified for admission to a charter school." General Statute does offer a provision for single-gender schools. The Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington (GLOW), approved for operation beginning in 2016, was the first single-gender charter school.

Each charter school has an authorized maximum funded enrollment. If a school receives more applications from qualified applicants than there are funded slots at the school, the school must conduct a lottery and establish a waitlist. Students who are not enrolled through the lottery must re-apply for admission each year. Students who are enrolled do not need to re-apply and may retain enrollment in subsequent years.

Demographics: Race, Ethnicity, Sex

Based on data from 2016-17, overall student populations in the NC charter schools and traditional public schools remain largely like trends established in the past several years. In terms of overall percentages, charter school demographics largely mirror those of traditional public-school districts. As has been reported in previous annual reports, there remains a larger discrepancy between the percentage of White and Hispanic students in charter and traditional public schools. The percentage of male and female students enrolled in charter schools is quite similar to the percentage enrolled in traditional public schools.

In 2016, a task force was created by Lieutenant Governor Dan Forest to examine charter school outreach to Hispanic families. A poll of several hundred Hispanic parents across the state found that only 12% knew what a charter school was or were aware that they existed, and only 5% had attempted to enroll their student in a charter school. The task force concluded that this is not an issue unique to North Carolina, and suggested that charter school officials consult with states such as Florida- who have larger enrollments of Hispanic students- for solutions. The task force also found that many charter schools do not have applications in Spanish, and there exists no English to Spanish translation for the term "charter school." To increase Hispanic participation, charter schools should be referred to as "public charter schools." The percentage of Hispanic students served by charter schools in 2016-17 increased .8% from the previous year, and the percentage of White students served by charter schools decreased by 1.3%.

Figure 2. Overall Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools Racial Demographics
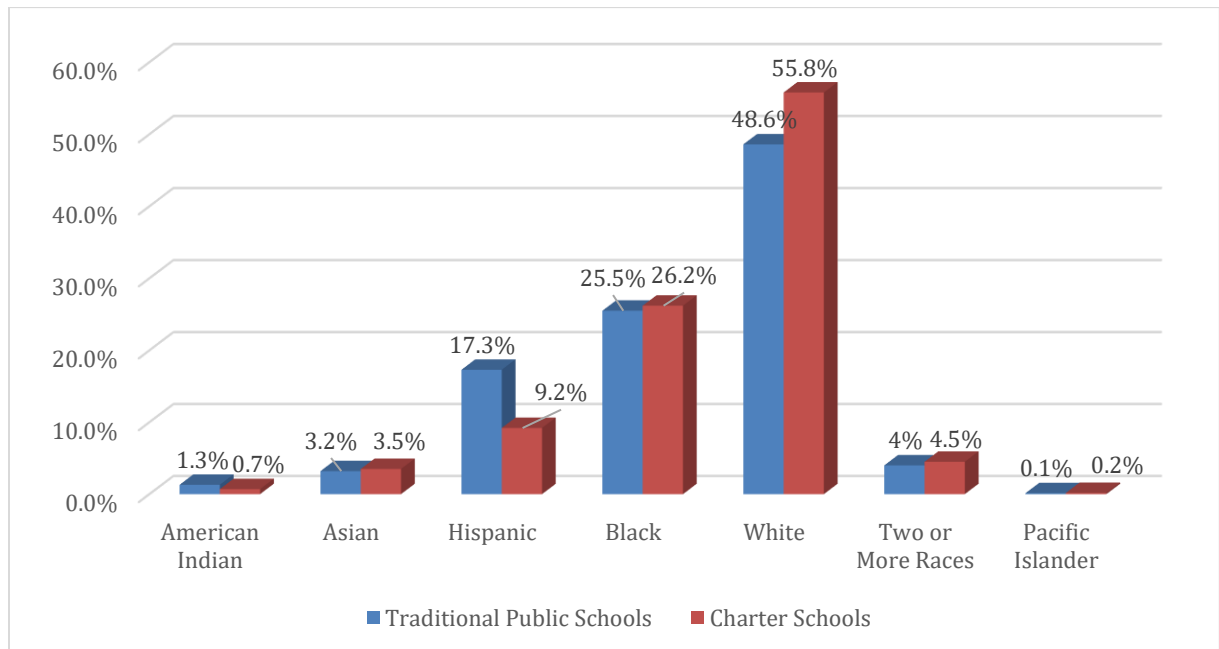
Figure 3. Overall Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools Sex Demographics

Source: 2016-17 Grade, Race, Sex Report http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/fbs/resources/data/

Demographics: Socioeconomic Status

In previous years, ED student data was self-reported by charter schools and concerns regarding the accuracy of the data arose. To mitigate these concerns, improvements to the data collection process were implemented, and ED student data for the 2017-18 school year was compiled via collaboration between the National School Lunch Program and the Direct Certification System.

Overall, NC's charter schools and traditional public schools differ in terms of the percentage of Economically Disadvantaged (ED) students (e.g., students from families with lower income) they serve. As illustrated in the chart below, the percentage of ED students in traditional public schools and charter schools has fluctuated over the past three years, but the overall percentage of ED students in charter schools in 2016-17 increased 1% from the previous year. The percentage of ED students in charter schools was approximately 19.8% lower than in traditional schools.

Figure 4. Percentage of Overall Student Population that is Economically Disadvantaged
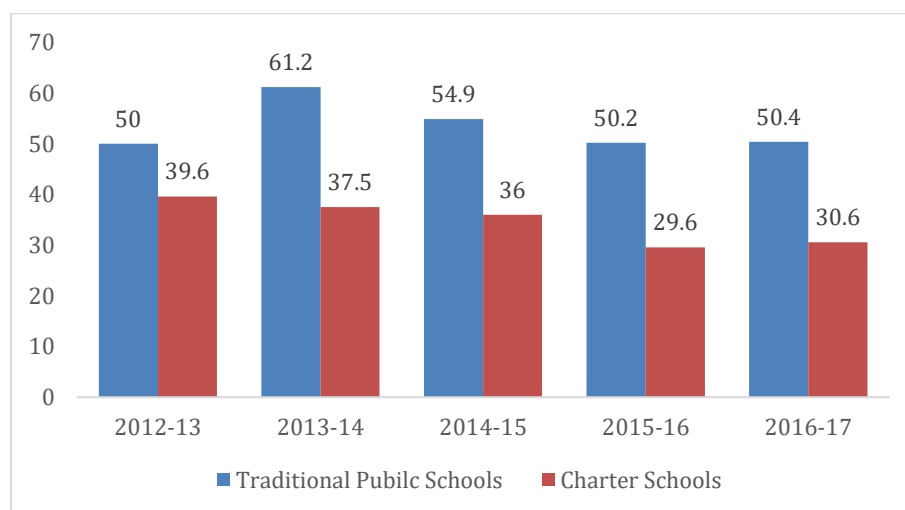
Source: 2016-17 Annual Report, NCDPI Accountability Services Division

The chart on the following page displays the distribution of charter schools based on percentage of ED students served in 2017.

Figure 5. Distribution of Charter Schools by Percentage of ED Students Served in 2017-18
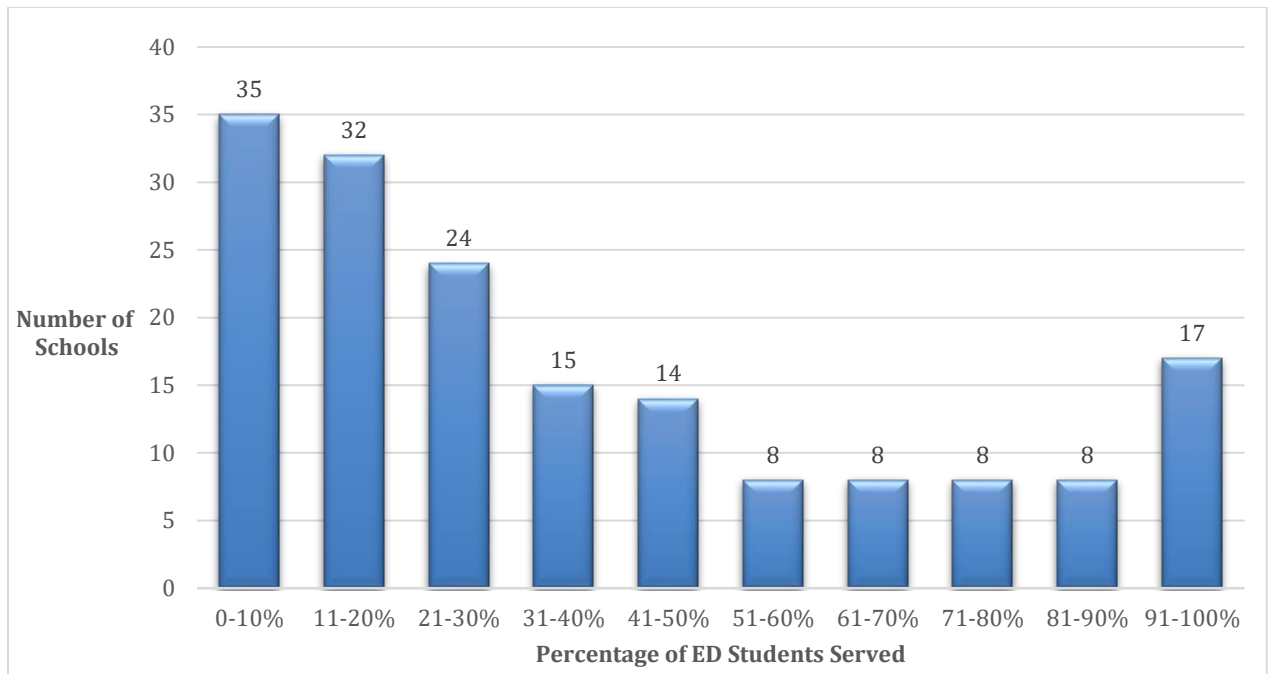
Data Source: NCDPI Accountability Services, 2017-2018. Chart includes 169 of 173 schools; 4 schools did not report ED student numbers and therefore are not included in this distribution.

Demographics: Exceptional Children

The Exceptional Children's Division collects exceptional children headcount data twice annually. The last reported headcount was April 2017. The median percentage of charter school students requiring Exceptional Children's services was 11% (almost one percentage point higher than 2016), compared to 13% of traditional public-school students. The overall median percentage of EC students served is 2% lower than the percentage served in traditional public schools, compared to a difference of 2.4% in 2016.

School-level data indicates that the median percentage of EC students served in charter schools is 11%, with most of charter schools serving between 7-12% EC students.

Figure 6. Distribution of Charter Schools by Percentage of EC Students Served in 2016-17
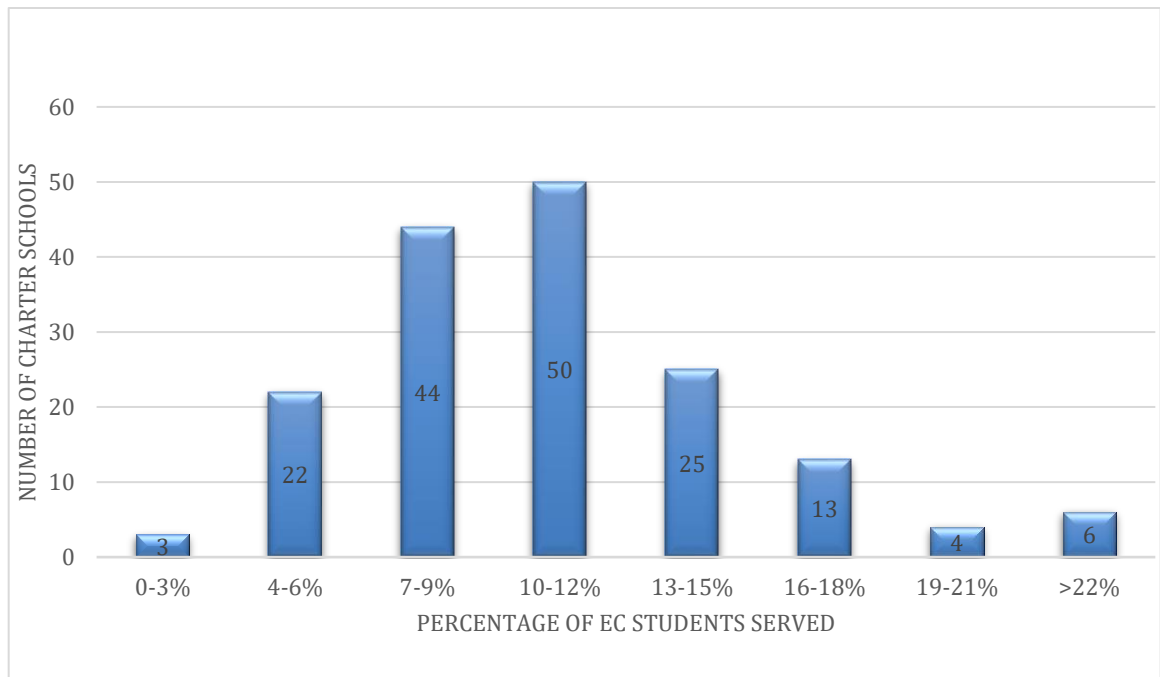
Includes two virtual charter schools; NC Connections Academy serves 10.94% EC students, and NC Virtual Charter serves 11.27% EC students.

Charter Schools Operating Requirements

Charter schools, once approved, must complete a planning year and meet "Ready to Open" criteria that focus on ensuring quality charter board-approved policies to guide the following:

- Sound fiscal management

- Effective governance and operations

- Hiring of high quality staff

- Ensuring student health and safety

- Compliance with Testing and Accountability requirements

- Compliance with Exceptional Children's requirements

Each charter school has significant flexibility in how it operates, however, once opened, the school must meet financial, governance, and academic standards set by the State through statute, State Board of Education policy, its approved charter application, and the terms of the Charter Agreement signed by each school when the State Board grants final approval of the charter. The

14

Office of Charter Schools helps the State Board monitor each school's financial, academic, and operational performance annually, and does a comprehensive review, assisted by the Charter Schools Advisory Board, as part of considering whether to grant charter renewals.

In addition to these monitoring mechanisms, each individual charter school undergoes a yearly audit in compliance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act (LGBFCA). This external audit is extremely comprehensive in nature and required of every charter school. While individual traditional public schools are not required to produce an audit, each LEA is required to produce an audit on behalf of the entire district.

Charter Schools Performance

Academic Performance: School Performance Grades

Because of G.S. 115C-83.15, beginning with the 2013-2014 school accountability data, all public schools are assigned School Performance Grades (A-F) based on test scores, and, for high schools, additional indicators that measure college and career readiness. School Performance Grades (SPG) are based on student achievement (80%) and growth (20%). In 2014-2015 a letter grade of A^{+NG} was added to represent schools that received an A rating and that did not have significant achievement and/or graduation gaps.

The NC Report Card website was recently redesigned to provide a more user-friendly platform, and now separates charter school performance data for the general public in a more efficient and easy-to-use manner.

2016-2017 School Performance Grades for All Public Schools

Figure 7. Performance Grades by Public Schools and by Public Charter Schools*

Overall Grade	District Schools		Charter Schools	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
A^{+NG}	76	3.3	11	6.7
A	89	3.8	5	3.1
B	651	28.1	55	33.7
C	979	42.3	51	31.3
D	435	18.8	28	17.2
F	85	3.7	13	8.0
Total	2,315		163	

*Due to rounding, the percent of schools may not total 100%.

**Figure 7 includes performance grades for North Carolina's two virtual charter schools

Figure 7b. Performance Grades by Public Schools and by Public Charter Schools*

Overall Grade	District Schools		Charter Schools	
	Number	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
A^{+NG}	76	3.3	11	6.8
A	89	3.8	5	3.1
B	651	28.1	55	34.1
C	979	42.3	51	31.7
D	435	18.8	26	16.1
F	85	3.7	13	8.1
Total	2,315		161	

*Figure 7b does not include performance grades for virtual charter schools.

Figure 8. Performance Grades for District Schools and Charter Schools

Data Source:
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/2017/documentation/exsumm17.pdf
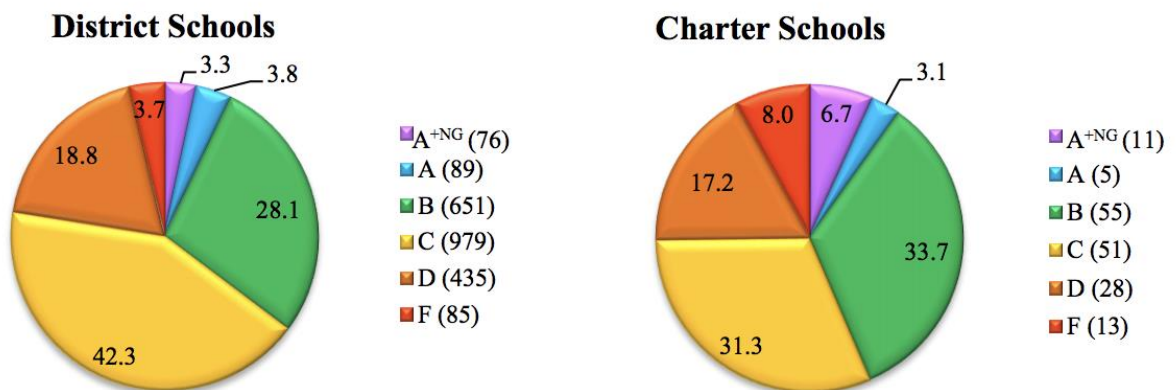
Figure 8b. Performance Grades for Charter Schools, Excluding Virtual Charters
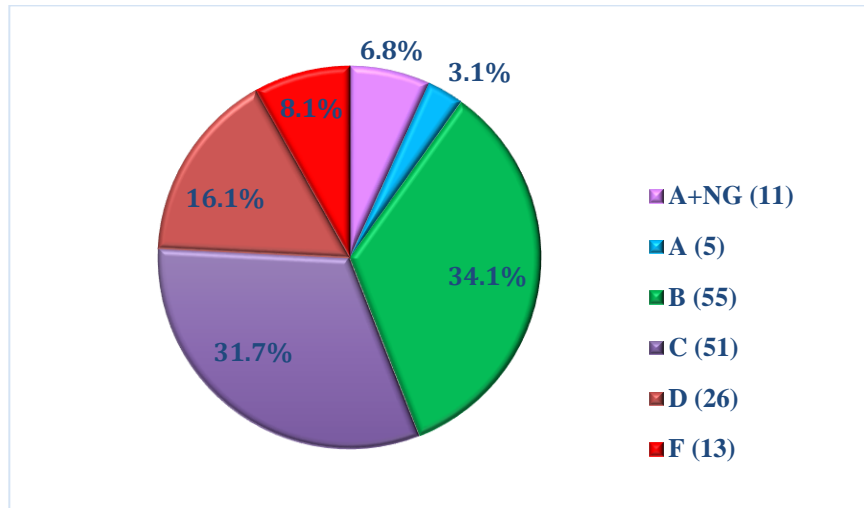
The 2016-2017 data indicate that charter schools had higher percentages of both A/A^{+NG} and B ratings, and D and F ratings than traditional public schools. 43.5% of charter schools earned an A/A^{+NG} or B, compared to 35.2% of district schools. 25.2% of charter schools earned a D or F, compared to 22.5% of district schools.

With virtual charter school grades eliminated, the statistics change slightly. The number and percentage of charters earning Ds decreases to 26 and 16.1%. The percentage of charter schools earning a D or F decreases to 24.2%, compared to 22.5% of district schools.

Charter schools appear to be strengthening in performance overall, with more schools earning As or Bs than the prior year, and fewer schools earning Ds or Fs than the prior year. In 2015-2016, 39.9% of charter schools earned an A/A^{+NG} or B, while 43.5% of charters earned an A/A^{+NG} or B in 2016-2017. 27.7% of charter schools earned a D or F in 2015-2016, while only 25.2% of charter schools earned Ds or Fs in 2016-2017. As demonstrated in the chart below, the percentage of charter schools earning grades of D or F has decreased for the past four consecutive years.

Figure 9. Percentage of Charter Schools Earning D or F from 2013-2014 to Present*
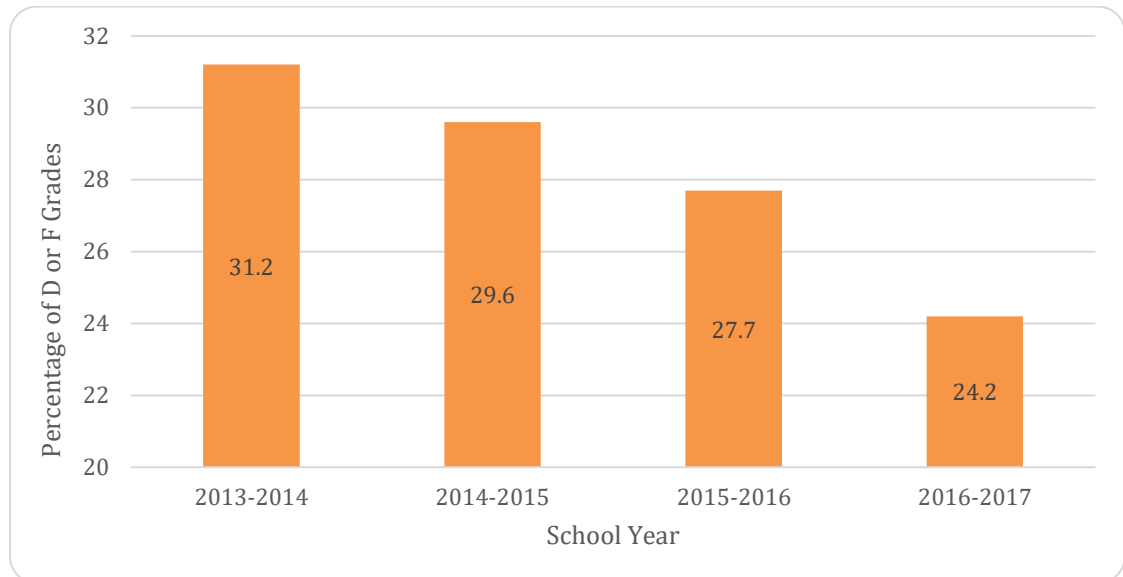
*2016-17 percentage does not include performance grades from virtual charter schools. With virtual charter school performance grades included, 25.2% of charter schools earned a D or F in 2016-2017

Figure 10. EVAAS Growth Status

Growth Category	Number of Charters 2016-17	Percent of Charters 2016-17
Exceeded Expected Growth	36	22.4%
Met Expected Growth	77	47.8%
Did Not Meet Growth	48	29.8%
Total	161	

Figure 10 illustrates the overall EVAAS growth status of North Carolina's public charter schools. As the chart shows, more than 70% of public charter schools met or exceeded expected growth.

Academic Performance: Performance by Subgroup

Preliminary data indicates that some charter school subgroups may be outperforming their traditional public school peers on certain performance measures. Analyses should be conducted to determine whether or not these differences in averages are statistically significant. In addition, more in-depth analysis using student-level data should be conducted in order to make definitive assertions or comparisons regarding subgroup performance.

The following graphs depict Math and English Language Arts performance overall as well as in subgroup comparisons, and were created using publicly available LEA-level data from NCDPI

Accountability Services. English Language Arts proficiency is not represented for students with Limited English Proficiency due to a lack of data.

EOG/EOC Mathematics
Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools

All Students Comparisons 2016-17

Figure 10. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on Math
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
All Students
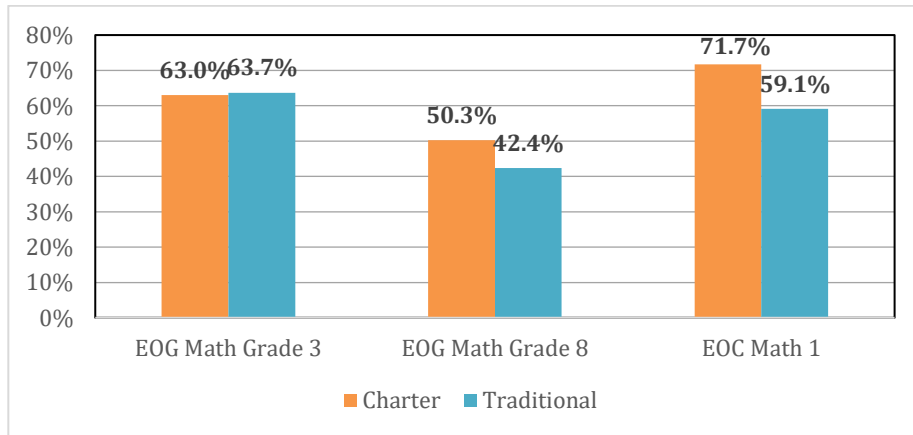
Subgroup Comparisons 2016-2017

Figure 11. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on Math
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
White Students

Figure 12. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on Math
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
African-American Students

Figure 13. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on Math
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
Hispanic Students

Figure 14. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on Math
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
Economically Disadvantaged Students

Figure 15. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on Math
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
Students Receiving Exceptional Children Services
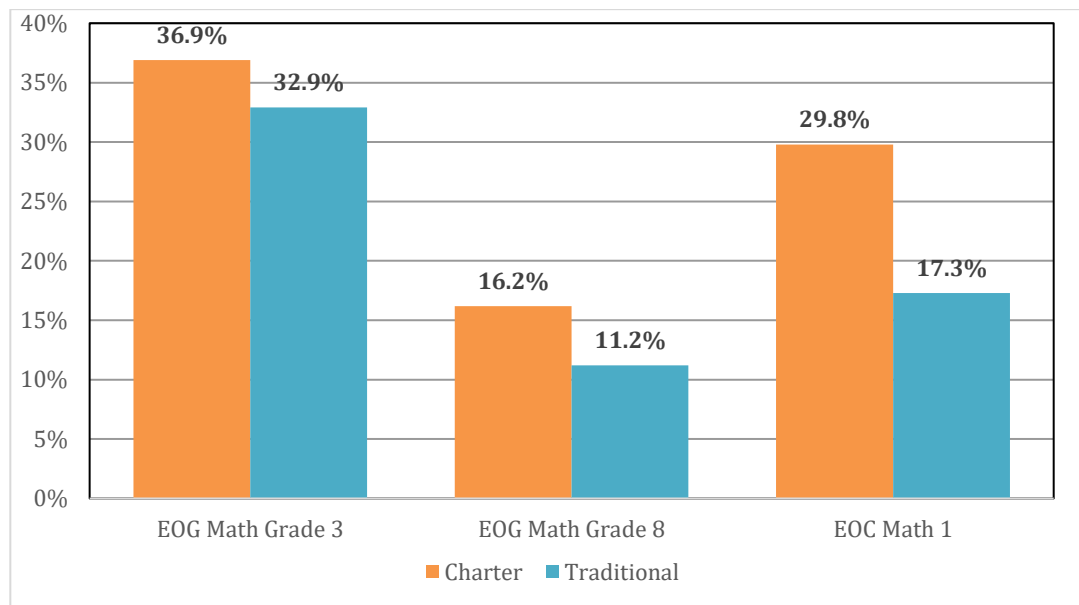
Figure 16. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on Math
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
Students with Limited English Proficiency
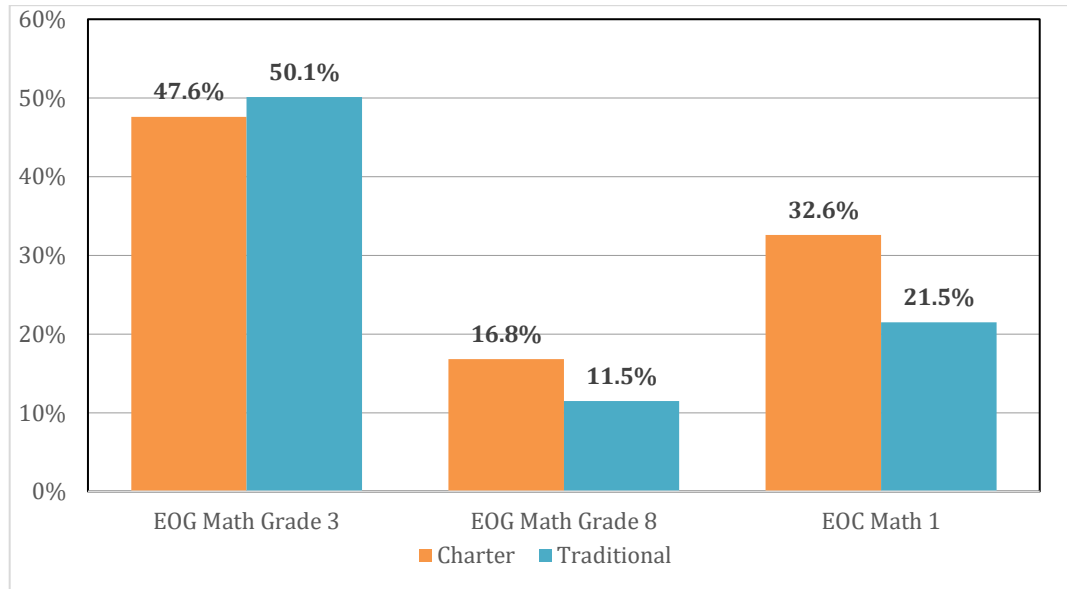
EOG/EOC English Language Arts
Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools

All Students Comparisons 2016-17
Figure 17. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on English Language Arts
(ELA)
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
All Students
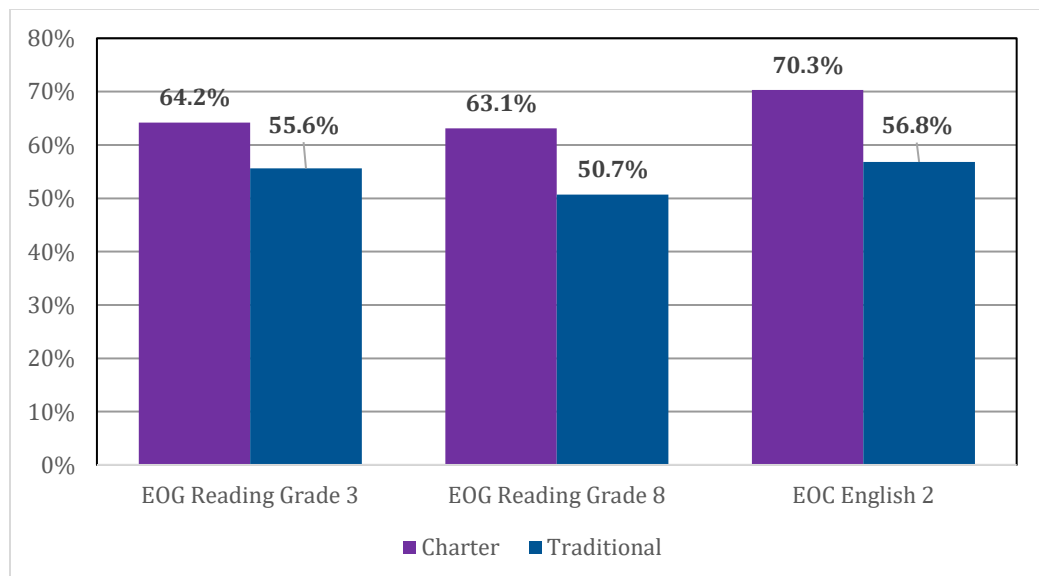
Subgroup Comparisons 2016-2017
Figure 18. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on ELA
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
White Students
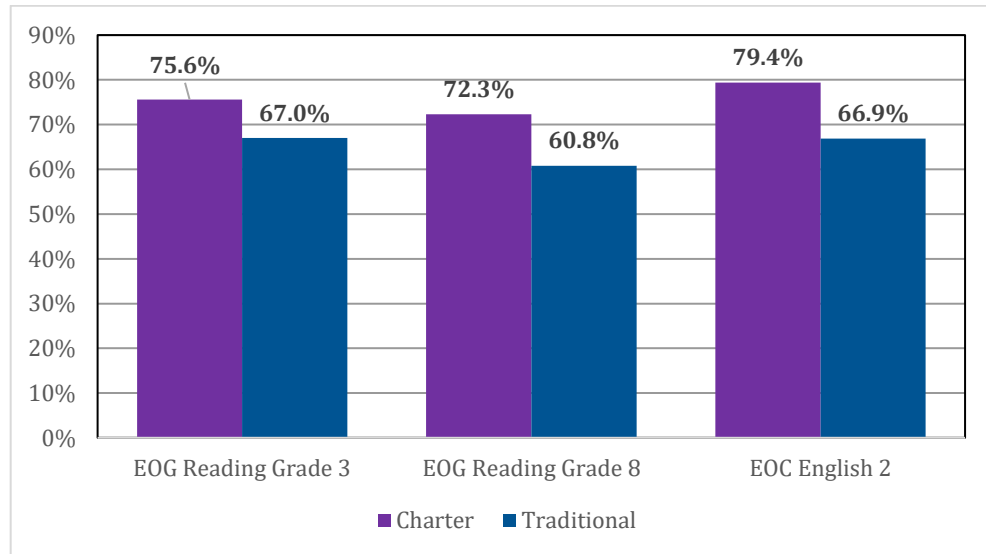
Figure 19. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on English Language Arts
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
African-American Students
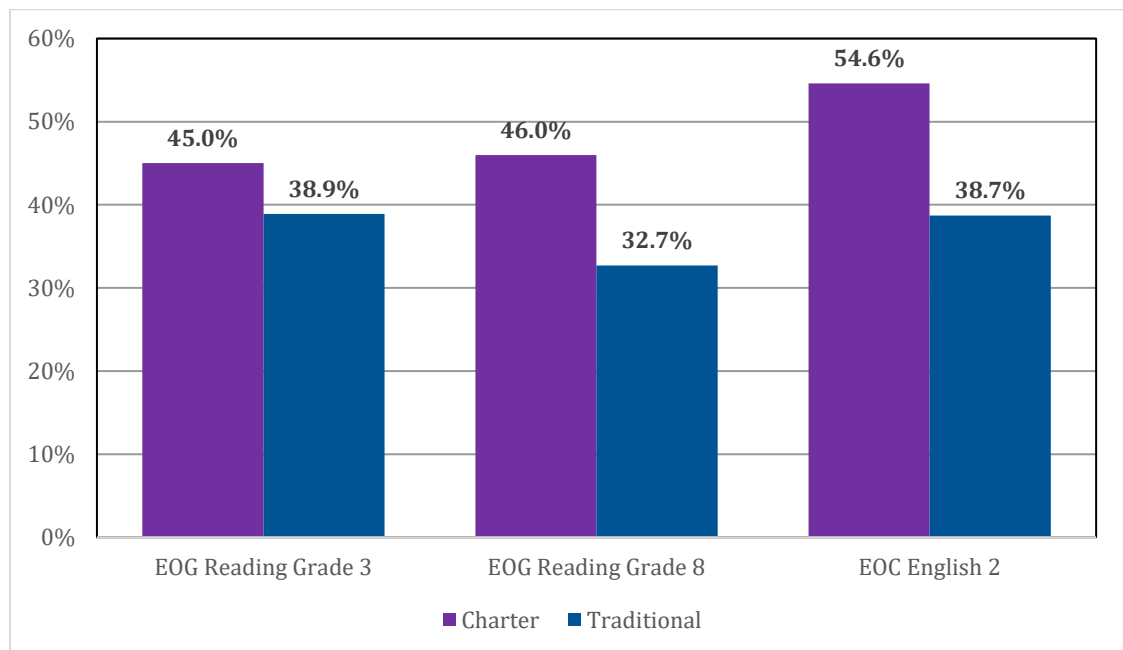
Figure 20. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on English Language Arts
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
Hispanic Students
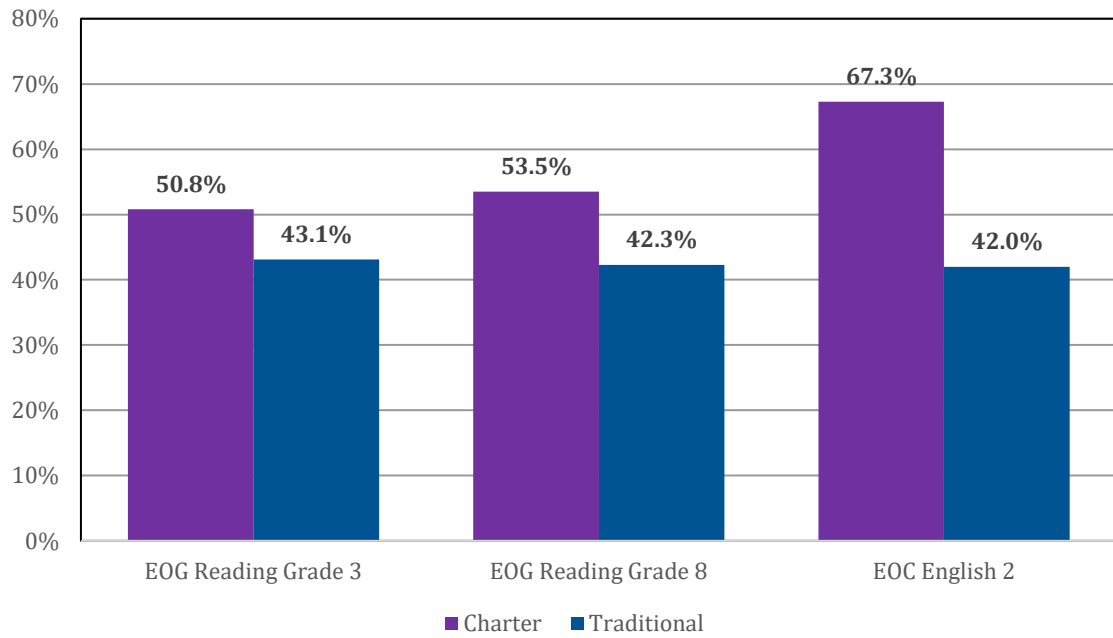
Figure 21. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on English Language Arts
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
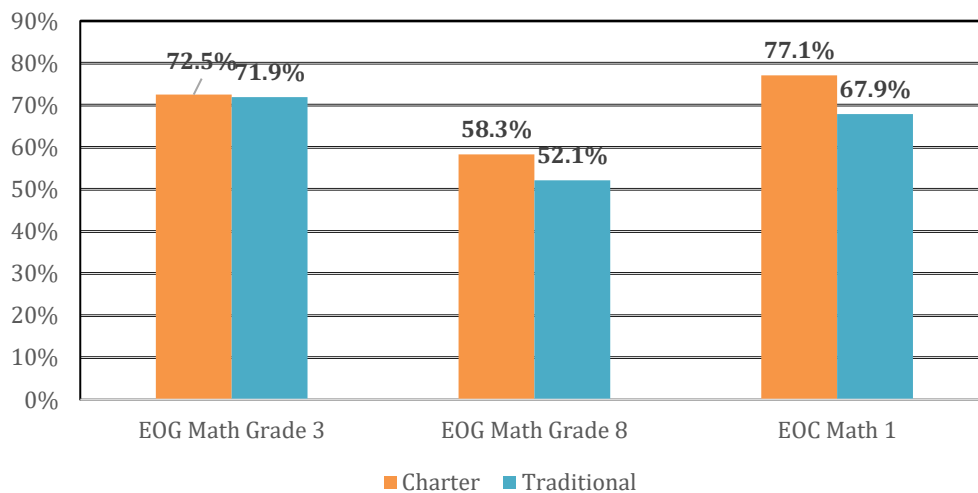Economically Disadvantaged Students
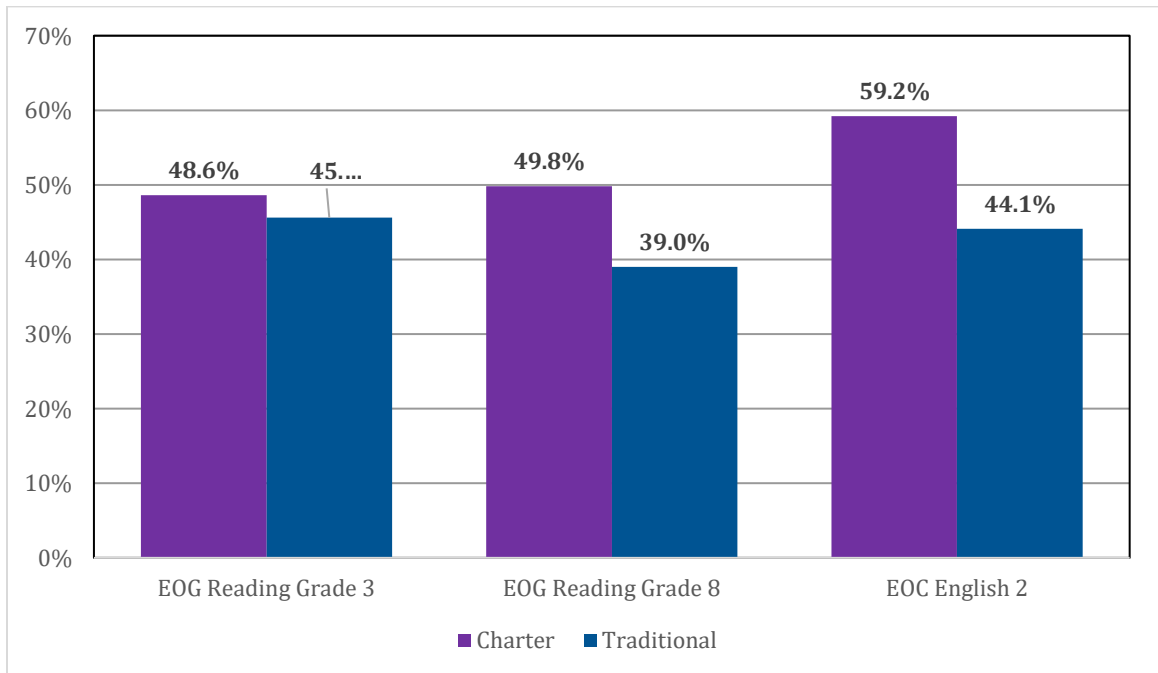
Figure 22. Average Percentage of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on English Language Arts
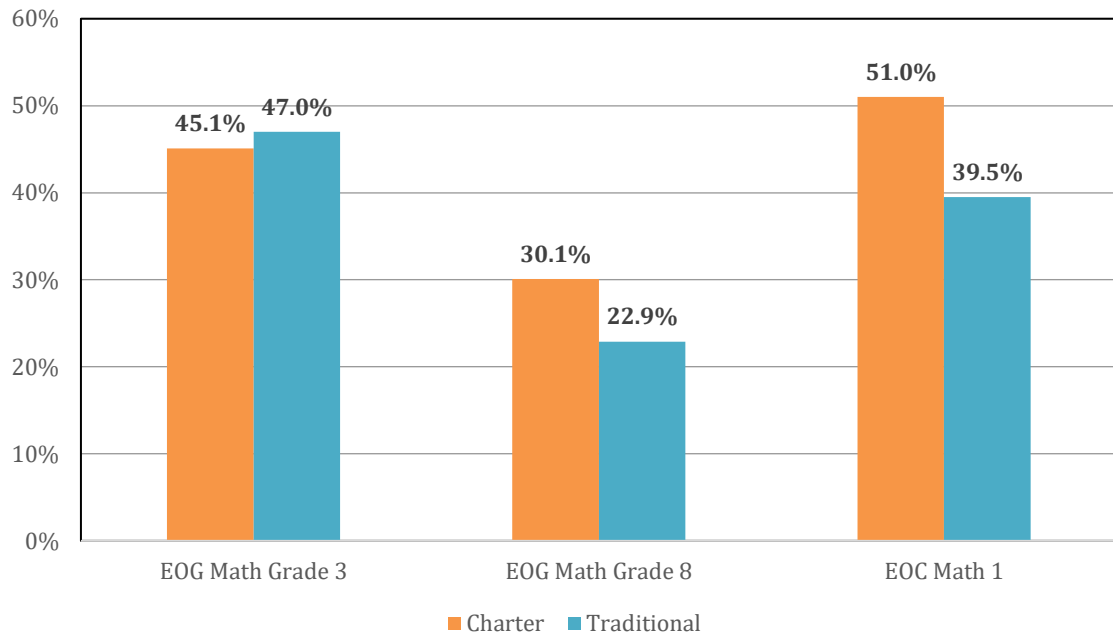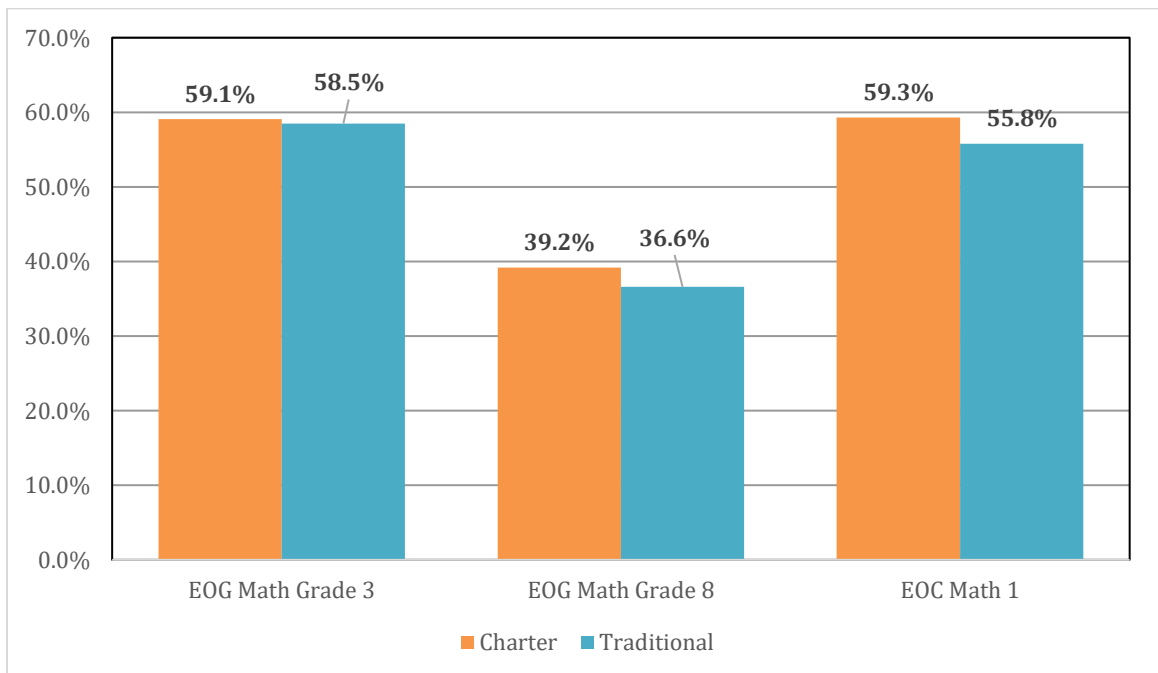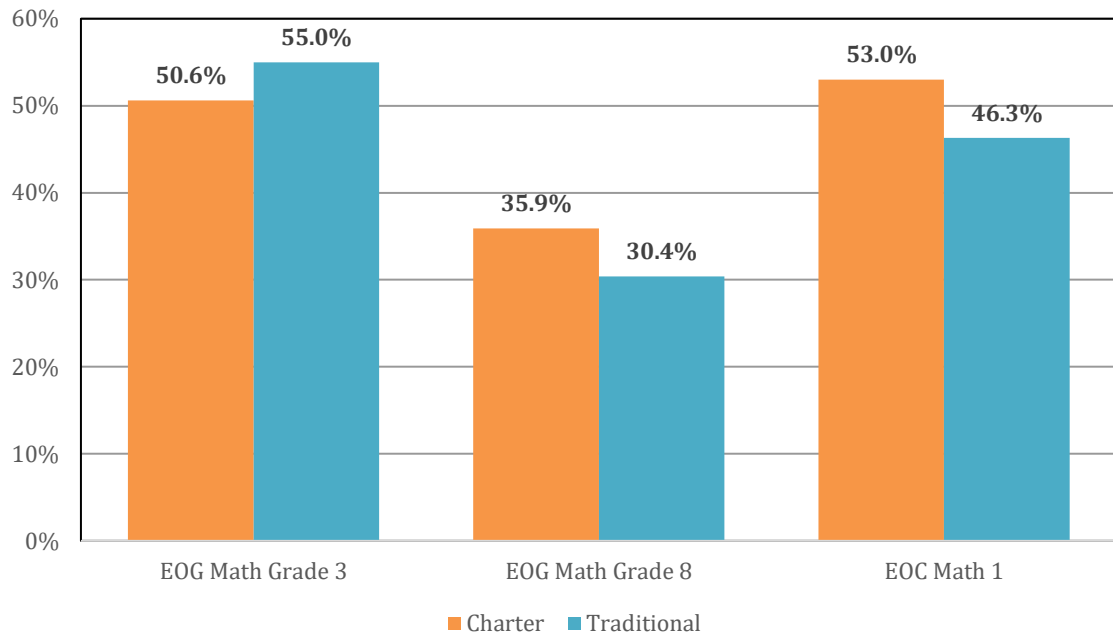Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools (LEA)
Students Receiving Exceptional Children Services
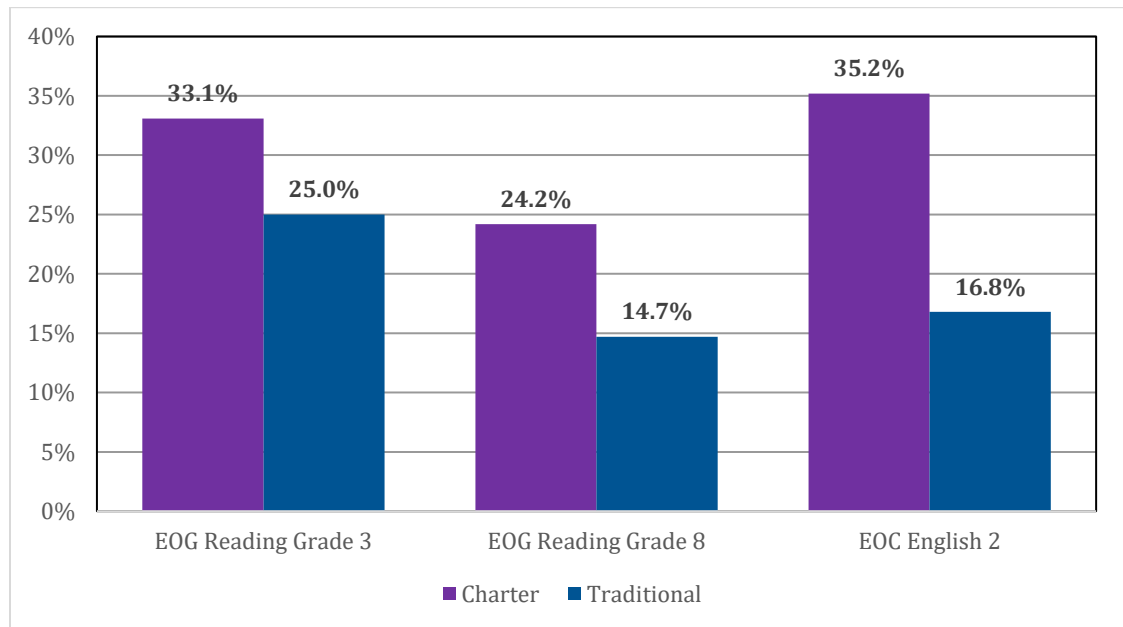
As part of its strategic planning initiative, the State Board of Education created a series of goals for charter school performance over time. Specifically, Goals 2.4.1a, 2.4.1b, and 2.4.2 set targets for charter school academic performance, as measured through percentage of students proficient on State tests, and school growth, as defined by the Education Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS). The following chart shows the charter schools' actual results relative to the State Board's goals and targets:

Figure 23. State Board of Education Strategic Plan: Goals and Measures for Charter Schools

	Measure	**2013-2014**		**2014-2015**		**2015-2016**		**2016-2017**	
		Targeted	*Actual*	*Targeted*	*Actual*	*Targeted*	*Actual*	*Targeted*	*Actual*
2.4.1a	Percentage of charter schools at or above 60% on EOG and EOC assessments (Students scoring Levels 4 & above: College-and-career- ready (CCR) standard)	49.2%	32.0%	51.7%	39.9%	43.0%	38.3%	45.0%	33.7%
2.4.1b	Percentage of charter schools at or above 60% on EOG and EOC assessments (Students scoring Levels 3 & above: Grade Level Proficiency (GLP) standard)	49.2%	54.4%	51.7%	55.9%	58.0%	59.7%	60.0%	58.4%
2.4.2	Percentage of charter schools meeting or exceeding expected annual academic growth	73.0%	75.6%	75.0%	73.4%	75%	70.1%	75.0%	70.1%

Data Source: State Board of Education Strategic Plan (http://stateboard.ncpublicschools.gov/strategic-plan/strategic-plan-full.pdf)

It is important to note that these State Board measures, which align with statutory language delineating a floor for "academic adequacy," are above and beyond what the Board uses to measure school performance for *all* public schools (see Objective 1.5/measures 1.5.1a-b, 1.5.2, and 1.5.3 in the State Board Strategic Plan, linked above). The charter schools' performance on

additional measures 2.4.1a and 2.4.1b that are only for charter schools (illustrated above), while not reaching the State Board's targets, is higher than the average school performance against these measures and higher than the average for traditional schools only. The chart below illustrates this comparison.

Figure 24. Number and Percentage of NC Public Schools scoring above 3 or 4 on EOG/EOC Assessments

Percent of NC Public Schools At/Above 60% CCR (Level 4 or 5) on 2016-2017 EOG and EOC Assessments				
Type of School	# LEAs/Charters Under 60%	# LEAs/Charters Over 60%	% Over 60%	SBE Target
Charter	110	56	33.7%	45.0%
Traditional	110	5	4.3%	N/A
Percent of NC Public Schools At/Above 60% GLP (Level 3, 4, or 5) on 2016-2017 EOG and EOC Assessments				
Type of School	# LEAs/Charters Under 60%	# LEAs/Charters Over 60%	% Over 60%	SBE Target
Charter	69	97	58.4%	60.0%
Traditional	65	50	43.5%	N/A

Data Source: NCDPI Accountability Services Division
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/2017/documentation/exsumm17.pdf

__Academic Performance: Low-Performing and Continually Low-Performing Schools__

House Bill 242 approved in 2016 removed the language defining academic inadequate schools from 60% or growth in two of three years. The new language defined Low-Performing and Continually Low-Performing Charter Schools.

- Low performing charter schools are those that received a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth."

- A continually low-performing charter school is a charter school that has been designated by the State Board as low-performing for at least two of three consecutive years.

- In October 2017, 37 schools were on academic notice.

  o 1 closed at the end of the 2016-17 school year. (Community Charter School)

  o 17 were designated as Low-Performing
    - 12 within first 5 years of charter
    - 5 have been operating >5 years

  o 19 designated as Continually Low-Performing
    - 13 within first 5 years of charter

- 6 have been operating >5 years

Charter School Closure

Between 1997 and 2017, 60 charter schools closed. This total number includes schools that were not able to open, schools that relinquished their charters, and schools that either had their charters revoked or not renewed by the State Board of Education.

Most of charter school closures have been the result of financial or financially-related issues – low enrollment, fiscal noncompliance, excessive debt, etc. Out of the 46 schools that opened for operation, but then closed, 35 (or 80%) of those schools closed due to financial reasons.

Since 2011, 16 schools have closed. These 16 schools account for 26.7% of all school closures since the charter school law was first instituted in North Carolina. Since August of 2014, 12 charter schools have closed. Two of those schools relinquished the charter prior to opening and five schools were in the first year of operation. One of those schools was revoked due to non-compliance with requirements for services for Exceptional Children. Since 2012, four schools have closed due to low academic performance.

IMPACT OF CHARTER SCHOOLS ON THE PUBLIC-SCHOOL SYSTEM

Historical Overall Fiscal Impact

Growth in the number of charter schools combined with increased population at existing charter schools has increased the financial impact charter schools have on the overall system of public schools. The growing enrollments in charter schools mean an increase in State Public School Fund dollars allotted to them. As the chart on the next page shows, State funding for charter schools has increased from just over $16 million in 1997 to more than $513 million in 2016-2017.

Figure 25. Charter Schools Status Report 1997 – 2017

Year	Total in Operation	Planning Allotted ADM	% of Total ADM	Total of State Funds Allotted to Charters	Total State Funding (Charters and TPS)
1996-97	0				
1997-98	33	4,106	0.3%	$16,559,947	$4.7b
1998-99	56	5,572	0.4%	$32,143,691	$5.1b
1999-00	75	10,257	0.8%	$50,104,210	$5.5b
2000-01	86	14,230	1.1%	$64,213,491	$5.74b
2001-02	91	19,492	1.5%	$77,177,902	$5.8b
2002-03	93	19,832	1.5%	$87,233,744	$5.92b
2003-04	93	21,578	1.6%	$94,286,726	$6.1b
2004-05	97	24,784	1.8%	$110,888,050	$6.52b
2005-06	96	28,733	2.1%	$132,089,910	$6.86b
2006-07	93	29,170	2.0%	$144,299,621	$7.37b
2007-08	98	30,892	2.1%	$169,871,326	$7.91b
2008-09	97	34,694	2.3%	$191,751,412	$8.19b
2009-10	96	38,449	2.6%	$187,726,898	$7.35b
2010-11	99	41,314	2.8%	$200,058,046	$7.15b
2011-12	100	44,829	3.0%	$228,291,552	$7.5b
2012-13	107	48,795	3.3%	$255,396,318	$7.74b
2013-14	127	53,655	3.6%	$304,459,644	$7.81b
2014-15	148	64,186	4.2%	$366,455,982	$8.09b
2015-16	159	81,943	5.3%	$444,131,335	$8.44b
2016-17	167	92,112	6.0%	$513,450,126	$8.64b

Data Source: Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget, February 2017, Information Analysis, Division of School Business, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2017highlights.pdf

Current School Year (2017-2018) Specific Fiscal Impact

For the current academic year, over half of the 115 local school districts in North Carolina have charter schools located within them. Even though a charter may be located in a specific school

district, charter schools are not bound to only serve students from the district in which they are located. Many charter schools serve students from multiple school districts, in which cases the charter schools' impact extends across school district boundaries. The specific fiscal impact of a given charter school on its "home district" and those around it will vary, depending on the number of students from the various districts who attend the charter school.

Figure 26. 2017-2018 Currently Operating Charter Schools

Data Source: http://www.ncpublicschools.org/charterschools/schools/map
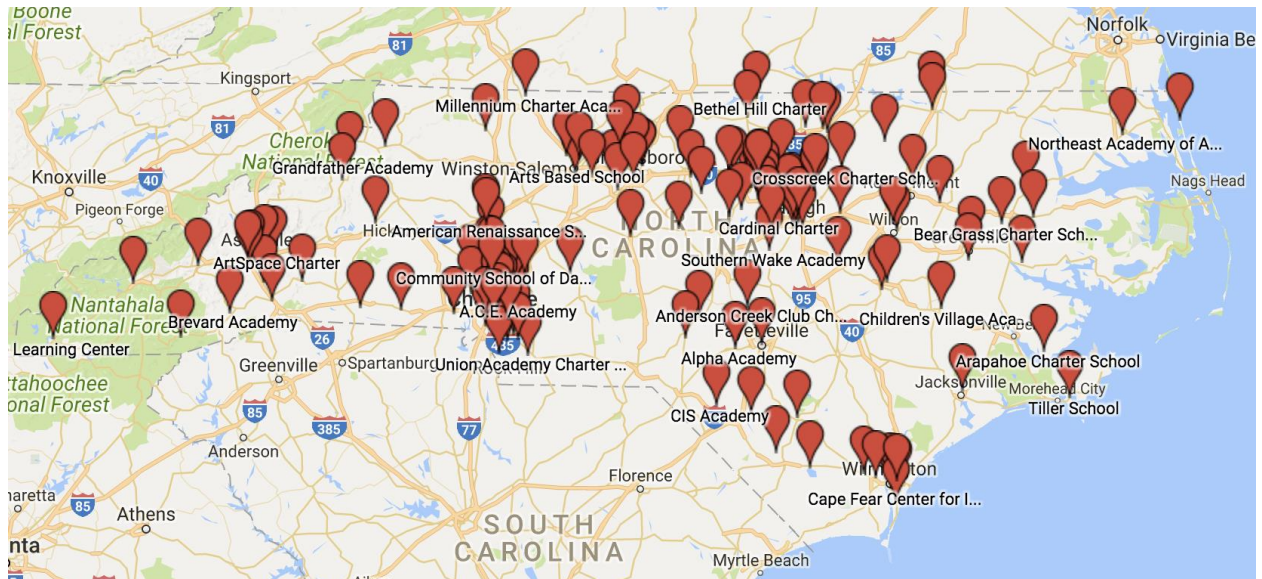
173 charter schools, located in 62 school districts and 60 counties, are currently open and serving 100,508 students (second month ADM for 2017 – 2018). The projected enrollment for 2017-2018 was 101,689 students. Statewide, charter schools are at 100% of projected enrollment for 2017 – 2018.

Prior to 2013, the State Board of Education was required by legislation to solicit impact statements from LEAs when new applications for charters were being considered or when existing charter schools wanted to grow beyond what was normally allowed within the statute. The General Assembly removed the requirement that LEAs submit impact statements, but the State Board has continued to consider comments from school districts in situations involving charter school enrollment growth.

Other Considerations: Other Fiscal and Non-Fiscal Impact

Discussion of the impact of charter schools upon the overall system of public schools typically focuses on the amount of operational (also known as "current expense") funding shifting from each school district to charter school(s) in or near the district; however, there are several other impacts, though perhaps harder to document, that are worth considering. For example, another

potential fiscal impact in urban school districts facing overcrowding is that they might have less immediate needs to expand facilities if significant numbers of students choose charter schools instead.

Charter schools may also have non-fiscal impacts on the system of public schools. Where charters exist, they typically do create alternative education options for parents to consider for their students, though the accessibility of these alternative options may be limited for some families in cases where a charter does not provide the same level of transportation or school nutrition services as the local school district. Presence of "competitive" charters in a district may create greater urgency and/or focus for all the schools – traditional and charters — to experiment in order to find what will work best to improve student outcomes for their particular student populations. Similarly, the presence of charter school options for parents may lead parents to engage more deeply with the public schools – traditional or charter – in order to better understand the options available for students.

In addition to these considerations, there is much to be said for inequity in charter school funding. For example, students attending public schools in low-wealth counties receive low-wealth county funding. If a child living in a county with low-wealth funding attends a charter school in a different county, the low-wealth funding does not follow the child to their school. State policymakers may want to consider these and other state funding allotments that do not follow students to their respective charter schools. Moreover, charter schools do not receive funding for facilities nor are they eligible to participate in lottery facility funding. Facilities costs must be paid from each school's operations budget, and this may consume a considerable share of the school's available funds.

BEST PRACTICES RESULTING FROM CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATIONS

High Academic Growth with Disadvantaged Student Population

One measure of excellence for charter (and traditional) schools is achieving high academic growth, as measured by the Education Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) with a student population that is economically disadvantaged. As illustrated below, eight charter schools exceeded growth expectations with student populations that were 70% or greater Economically Disadvantaged, and 3 of these schools achieved extremely high growth.

Figure 28. 2016-2017 Charter Schools Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students and Academic (EVAAS) Growth

Source: NCDPI School Report Card Online Platform

Based on this 2016-17 data, the following eight schools with an ED population over 70% exceeded expectations for student growth by achieving an EVAAS growth score of greater than +2:

- Maureen Joy Charter (32A)*

- Global Scholars Academy (32M)

- KIPP Halifax College Preparatory (42A)*

- Guilford Preparatory Academy (42C)

- KIPP Charlotte (60L)

- Gaston College Preparatory (66A)

- Henderson Collegiate (91B)*

- Torchlight Academy (92L)

*These schools achieved extremely high growth with indices of 6 or greater.

The following four charter schools with an ED population over the state average (all public schools) of 45.3% similarly exceeded expectations for student growth:

- Williams Academy (06B)

- Columbus Charter (24N)

- CIS Academy (78A)

- Sallie B. Howard School for the Arts (98A)

Charter Schools Receiving Special Awards and Recognition

North East Carolina Preparatory School, located in Edgecombe County, was awarded $36,000 via the new Coding and Mobile App Development Grant Program. The grants support partnerships with local businesses to help students develop computer science, coding, and mobile app development programs for middle and high school students.

Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy was named a 2017 National Blue-Ribbon School by the U.S. Secretary of Education. The school was selected as an Exemplary High Performing School, as it was among the state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests.

Raleigh Charter High School was ranked #56 in *US News and World Report's* Best High Schools National Rankings. Additionally, twelve charter schools in NC were ranked in the top 50 high schools in the country by *US News and World Report*.

Envision Science Academy was named the 2017 STEM School of the Year at the second annual STEMmy Awards. This event was sponsored by STEM in the Park, and honorees were recognized for outstanding achievements in the STEM fields.

OTHER INFORMATION

NCDPI Support of Charter Schools

As discussed in the Academic Performance section above, the State Board of Education has set a goal of increasing the number of charter schools that meet or exceed all operational, financial, and academic performance expectations. To this end, NCDPI, through the Office of Charter Schools (OCS) and other areas of the agency, provides a broad range of services to charter schools to help ensure that they understand how to meet all State and federal laws and policies and the promises they have made in their charter applications/agreements. In addition, though charter schools are not required to use the curricular, instructional, and technological resources provided for all public schools, NCDPI works to ensure that charter school leadership is fully informed about State-provided resources that could provide charters with cost effective, high quality materials and infrastructure if they so choose. OCS has implemented many initiatives to support charter school efforts and to monitor performance, including training camps for low performing charter schools, charter school regional huddles, an annual charter schools Leadership Institute, Ready-to-Open and Planning Year sessions, renewal site visits, quarterly reviews of school board minutes, quarterly compliance reviews, and other mechanisms through which struggling schools are identified and receive additional support. Finally, NCDPI responds almost daily to requests from charter school leaders and their contractors, charter school advocates, parents, and public officials for information about charter schools and/or technical assistance.

Highlights of the services that NCDPI provides to NC charter schools include the following:

- Office of Charter Schools (OCS)

    o Conducts Application Process training for prospective applicants for charters;

    o Hosts Planning Year training for new charter school boards and school leaders on topics including governance, state and federal law, SBE policies, and the Charter Agreement;

    o Delivers periodic refresher training for charter school board members and school leaders;

    o Maintains efficient, user-friendly online Application, Renewal, and Grade Enrollment & Expansion Request systems;

    o Maintains a website with OCS- and NCDPI-created resources, and links to externally created resources (such as those provided by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers);

    o Provides daily technical assistance through phone and email communication with school staff, parents, charter advocacy organization representatives, vendors, et al;

    o Processes individual schools' amendments to their charters (some amendments can be approved by OCS, while many require approval through State Board deliberations);

    o Staffs the State Board of Education's Education Innovation and Charter Schools Committee (to present charter school policy items and amendments that schools have requested) and the Charter Schools Advisory Board;

    o Meets with groups of charter school leaders periodically to hear their concerns and identified needs and discuss with these leaders how OCS can better serve them; and

    o Hosts annual charter school leadership institute where charter leaders can receive technical assistance from a variety of NCDPI experts and share with other charter school leaders.

- Academic Support Services and Curriculum & Instruction Divisions

    o Provide a range of training, technical assistance, and both face-to-face and online professional development opportunities, including the following:

        ▪ Inviting all charter schools to participate in Summer Institutes and other statewide and regional professional development gatherings supported with Race to the Top funding between 2010-11 and 2015-16;

- Inviting all charter schools to participate in the Principal READY meetings (professional development specifically for principals and assistant principals) across the State;

- Inviting all charter schools to participate in regionally-delivered professional development regarding standards and curriculum (i.e., instructional strategies);

- Encouraging all charter schools to use the online professional development modules available through Home Base (and providing training for how to do so); and

- Offering webinars on a variety of topics (such as how to use Home Base tools and the Statewide Educator Evaluation System) specifically targeted to charter school administrators.

- K-3 Literacy Division

  o Provides charter schools statewide with a dedicated consultant to conduct professional development for teachers and principals regarding literacy instruction and the State's formative, diagnostic assessment system (required for use as part of the Excellent Schools Act/Read to Achieve legislation); and

  o Trains master literacy trainers (including charter schools' representatives) across the state to provide ongoing support regionally to schools regarding early literacy instruction.

- Exceptional Children's Division

  o Assists charter schools in accessing federal funds for students with special learning needs;

  o Provides a range of technical assistance services to help charter schools meet the needs of children with special learning needs;

  o Invites all charter schools to annual conference designed to provide professional development across a broad range of topics related to serving students with special learning needs;

  o Provide support in the new charter application evaluation process;

  o Provides support staff specific to Charter Schools; and

  o Supports the Office of Charter Schools and the Charter School Advisory Board by providing detailed school compliance information.

- Finance and Business Divisions

    o Advocate for adequate funding for State Public School Fund, which is the source of funds for both traditional and charter school funds (which rise and fall in concert, as the State funds for each charter are based on the funding to the district in which the charter is located);

    o Allot State funds to charter schools;

    o Provide efficient, user-friendly online Charter School Average Daily Membership (CSADM) system for schools to enter their projected enrollments;

    o Monitor and reports on charter school expenditures (in response to oversight by the General Assembly);

    o Process (with OCS) schools' requests for school enrollment and grade expansion;

    o Provide support in the new charter application evaluation process; and

    o Supports the Office of Charter Schools and the Charter School Advisory Board by providing detailed school compliance information.

- Information Technology Area and Digital Teaching & Learning Division

    o Enable charter schools to benefit from State economies of scale for technology solutions to set up to serve every school – traditional and charter – Statewide;

    o Provide all charter schools with cloud-based accounting system with many school management features, including scheduling and producing customized student transcripts;

    o Provide all charter schools with opportunity to use cloud-based professional development and instructional/classroom management tools (through Home Base); and

    o Provide charter schools with the opportunity to participate in and earn grant opportunities.

- Child Nutrition Division

    o Assists charter schools in accessing federal funding to support free and reduced price lunch; and

    o Provide technical support to ensure compliance with reporting requirements.

- Transportation Division

  - Provides free inspections and detailed reports regarding safety of charter school buses; and
  - Provides free replacement of school buses at retirement threshold when school has purchased a new bus.

Update on Legislation Affecting Charter Schools

Appropriations Bill (S.B. 257/S.L. 2017-57)

Charter School Transportation Grant $2,500,000 (R)

- Grant program for charter school transportation to reimburse up to 65% of transportation costs;

- Eligible schools shall have at least 50% of the students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch;

- DPI shall establish the criteria by Aug 1;

- Maximum award $100,000, and

- DPI shall report on the details of the grant by March 15, 2018.

Office of Charter Schools/Web-based Record and Data Management

- Mandated that up to $200,000 per year from 2017-2019 be used to support the purchase of a Web-based electronic records and data management system to automate and streamline reporting and accountability requirements to assist OCS in complying with annual reporting obligations.

House Bill 800/S.L. 2017-173: Various Changes to Charter School Laws

- Allows education management organizations and charter management organizations to employ and provide teacher staffing for charter schools;

- Mandates that decisions on fast-track replication applications be made less than 120 days from the application submission date;

- Stipulates that enrollment growth of greater than 20% be considered a material revision of the charter if the charter is currently identified as low-performing. The State Board will not approve material revisions for enrollment growth of greater than 20% for charters currently identified as low-performing;

- Stipulates that, effective July 1, 2017, enrollment growth of greater than 25% will be considered a material revision for any charter school not currently identified as low-performing. Effective July 1, 2018, this enrollment threshold will increase to 30%;

- Allows charter schools to give enrollment priority to any student who was enrolled in another charter school in the state the previous year as well as to any student who was enrolled in a preschool program operated by the charter school in the prior year;

- Tasks the Office of Charter schools with assisting certain charter schools seeking to participate in the NC Pre-K program; and

- Allows charter schools to apply to a local contracting agency to participate in the NC Pre-K program.

House Bill 159/S.L. 2017-98: Charter School TSERS Election

- Extends the amount of time a charter school has to elect to participate in the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System

Senate Bill 599 / S.L. 2017-189: Excellent Educators for Every Classroom

- Mandates that charter school boards must indicate the reason of an employee's termination or dismissal, upon inquiry by any other local board of education, charter school, or regional school in the state; and

- Charter school boards must indicate if an employee's criminal history was relevant to the employee's resignation or dismissal. If a teacher's criminal history is relevant to a teacher's resignation, the board must report the reason to the State Board of Education.

Update on 2017 Charter Renewals

Thirty-two charter schools completed the renewal process in 2017. The Charter School Advisory Board utilized the same framework for determining recommendations for the number of years for each renewed charter terms from 2015. The State Board of Education approved all of the CSAB's 2017 renewal recommendations. Of the 32 renewals, 22 received a ten-year term, 2 received a seven-year term, 2 received a five-year term, and four received a three-year term.

One school, Community Charter, was recommended for assumption and ultimately closed, and another, Kestrel Heights, received a three-year renewal with highly specific recommendations due to reporting issues in its high school.

The State Board of Education approved 100% of the CSAB's 2017 renewal recommendations.

Update on 2016 Charter Applications

Thirty-eight charter applicants submitted applications for the 2018 – 19 school year through NCDPI's automated system in September 2016. The Office of Charter Schools reviewed the

applications, and the applicant groups with incomplete applications were given five days to submit or clarify incomplete items. Of the seventeen applicants whose applications were deemed incomplete, fourteen submitted missing information within the five days stipulated by law. Two applicants submitted information after the five-day period, and one applicant failed to respond. Of the 38 total applicants, 24 (63%) were recommended for a full interview with the CSAB. Of the 24 applicants who received full interviews with the CSAB, fifteen were recommended as Ready to Open, and all fifteen were approved for a charter by the State Board of Education.

Trends in the 2016 applications included the following:

- Continuing the trend from previous years, Mecklenburg County and surrounding counties continued to be the area with the most applicants.

    o Mecklenburg County (6 applicants)
    o Union County (3 applicants)
    o Gaston County (1 applicant)

- Urban areas received a significant proportion of charter applicants. Including Mecklenburg and surrounding counties, almost 2 out of 3 applications were for schools in urban districts.

    o Wake County (7 applicants)
    o Guilford County (6 applicants)
    o Durham (2 applicants)

Updates on 2017 Charter Applications

Twenty-nine applicants submitted applications in September 2017 for schools to open in 2019-20. Eight applicants submitted incomplete applications, and five submitted missing information by the legislatively-mandated deadline of five business days. Twenty-six applications were deemed complete and moved forward for substantive review. Applicant groups are currently being interviewed by the CSAB as part of the formal review process. The CSAB will then make recommendations to the State Board of Education for applications to move into the Planning Year/Ready to Open process. The SBE will make final decisions regarding approval by August 15. Due to legislative changes mandating that fast track replication decisions be made within 120 days from the application submission deadline, the State Board has already voted on (and approved) one Fast Track Replication for Cardinal Charter Academy West Campus.

Eighteen of the 29 applicants were for schools in urban districts and surrounding areas.

- Mecklenburg County (7 applicants)
- Gaston, Union, and Iredell Counties each had one applicant (3 total applicants)
- Wake County (4 applicants)
- Guilford County (2 applicants)
- Forsyth County (2 applicants)

Charter School Teacher Absentee Rates

A report released by the Fordham Institute found that approximately 13% of charter school teachers and 35% of traditional public-school teachers in North Carolina missed more than ten days of school due to sick or personal leave. The views and findings expressed in this report are those of the Fordham Institute, and have not been verified or validated by the Office of Charter Schools or NCDPI Office of Accountability Services.

The State Board of Education is in the process of defining "chronic absenteeism" among students and considering adding this metric to the strategic plan. Nationally, 37 states have added this metric to their Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reporting plan and now report numbers of chronically absent students. OCS hopes to report the percentages of chronically absent students in charter schools and traditional public schools in future annual reports.

APPENDIX B

EdSurge

BEYOND DESIGN THINKING: WHY EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURS NEED TO THINK IN SYSTEMS

By Amy Ahearn (Columnist) / December 22, 2017

For the last few years, design thinking has been in vogue. I've worked for three years as a member of the team designing and running +Acumen courses. In 2013, we launched an "Introduction to Human-Centered Design course" with IDEO.org which has since enrolled over 100,000 people.

Yet, we're also increasingly seeing a complementary methodology—systems thinking—gain traction among educators, entrepreneurs and investors. Systems thinking offers a necessary antidote to some of design thinking's blind spots by taking a holistic view of complex social challenges—rather than just building new solutions that address symptoms of a problem, but not root causes.

Side-by-Side:
Design Thinking & Systems Thinking

Design Thinking

USER-FOCUSED: prioritizes deeply understanding the problems of a core group of users

SOLUTION-ORIENTED: culminates in a prototype for a solution that can be tested with real people

ASPIRES FOR DELIGHT and USE: works to build solutions that meet the needs of real users

BOTH!

THOUGHTFUL: both emphasize understanding problems before building solutions

NON-LINEAR: both prioritize gaining input from people and then iterating upon your ideas in a cyclical fashion

INNOVATIVE: both look for new approaches based on previously undetected needs or patterns

Systems Thinking

SYSTEM-FOCUSED: prioritizes understanding the factors and dynamics that make up a complex problem

PROBLEM-ORIENTED: focuses on developing a nuanced understanding of a problem through the creation of a systems map

ASPIRES FOR HEALTH: works to build solutions that do not create unintended consequences but instead foster healthy dynamics

Image Credit: IDEO.org

Image Credit: The Omidyar Group

Image Credit: The Omidyar Group

Chart by Amy Ahearn

In 2017, +Acumen co-developed a new online course on Systems Practicewith The Omidyar Group. After observing over 7,000 people work through the course over the last few months, I've come to sense that the education sector is ripe for these methods. Any entrepreneur or funder working in education can tell you that designing solutions that actually work and gain traction with teachers and schools can be incredibly complicated. If you don't tread carefully, you can introduce new apps, tools or programs that have unintended consequences—or worse, exacerbate a problem you intended to solve.

Take the case of the One Laptop Per Child project that shipped sturdy laptops to schools around the world, but failed to address other dynamics—like the need to train teachers, create locally relevant curricula, and address electricity shortages in rural schools.

Systems thinking is not a silver bullet to prevent these kinds of flops, but it is an approach that can help educators, funders and entrepreneurs think more strategically and holistically about the challenges they're treading into from the outset. It's a participatory method for developing a collective and nuanced articulation of how factors come together to create persistent problems—so that people can better identify the right opportunities for well-designed solutions.

Using Systems Thinking to Address Early Childhood Trauma in Rural North Carolina

Vichi Jagannathan (ENC 11') and **Seth Saeugling (ENC 12')** are two former teachers who recently founded Rural Opportunity Institute, a social innovation lab to design solutions for families who have untreated trauma in rural eastern North Carolina.

Jagannathan shares initial "loops" with a local parent and gets feedback on what assumptions are incorrect and what stories are missing.

As Teach for America corp [sic] members, Vichi and Seth saw that many of the challenges their students faced stemmed from deeper issues of poverty, abuse, and drug addiction. They shared a desire to do something more to address the adverse effects of trauma that followed their students into early adulthood.

After working with Microsoft and the Tipping Point Foundation in the Bay Area, they raised seed funding, networked with other educators and nonprofits, and returned to eastern North Carolina, landing in Edgecombe County thanks to the public

TEACHFORAMERICA

school district's openness to innovation. The pair spent two months doing a design sprint where they interviewed more than 50 parents and childcare providers. These interviews led to useful insights about the challenges parents faced, but Vichi and Seth sensed a need to go a level deeper.

"We believed in the human-centered design process and had seen positive results in the past, but we sensed the outcome could easily become a 'touchpoint solution' that might address a particular facet of trauma, but wouldn't take into account the deeper reasons why these problems existed," Seth explained.

"We are lucky to have support to do this crucial research & development work to understand our local context deeply before we have to 'build' solutions. We understand how rare this is, and feel a sense of responsibility. Most organizations, especially nonprofits, are stuck in a grant cycle that does not allow for the time and resources to really understand root causes," Jagannathan said.

Vichi and Seth held multiple community workshops where they collectively mapped the factors involved in perpetuating cycles of intergenerational trauma in rural communities. They brought together everyone from the local school principal to the sheriff to pastors to grandparents to gain a more complete picture of all the dynamics that sustained intergenerational trauma.

Saeugling sharing context with the local "design team." Over 45 community members showed up to the most recent meeting to give their input on the rough draft of the systems map.

"Through this work, we saw that a vicious cycle was emerging where the community was over-punishing people in trauma—specifically young males," Seth found, "Systems thinking helped us understand that trauma is literally showing up everywhere in our rural community. Parents in trauma have a really hard time building a strong, secure attachment with young kids. Then preschool kids who experience trauma and toxic stress end up showing signs of what appears to be ADHD but is not when they get to school. Kids in K-12 have problems with executive functioning and lack the skills to be strong learners. As teenagers, kids who have experienced trauma have higher stress levels and so turn to negative coping behaviors like drugs, gang activities, and sex in attempts to lower those stress levels. These coping behaviors are actually solutions to unaddressed trauma. So trauma becomes interwoven into so many of the health and educational challenges that people in our community face."

All of this may sound logical, but pulling these factors together into a nuanced narrative that a diverse array of people agree on is no small feat. Importantly, a systems thinking process is anchored by the design of a visual systems map, which everyone involved can react to and use as a launchpad for conversation—rather than pointing at people in the room and attributing blame, they can point to factors on the map to tell a more complex and accurate story of how well-intentioned actions sometimes perpetuate negative results.
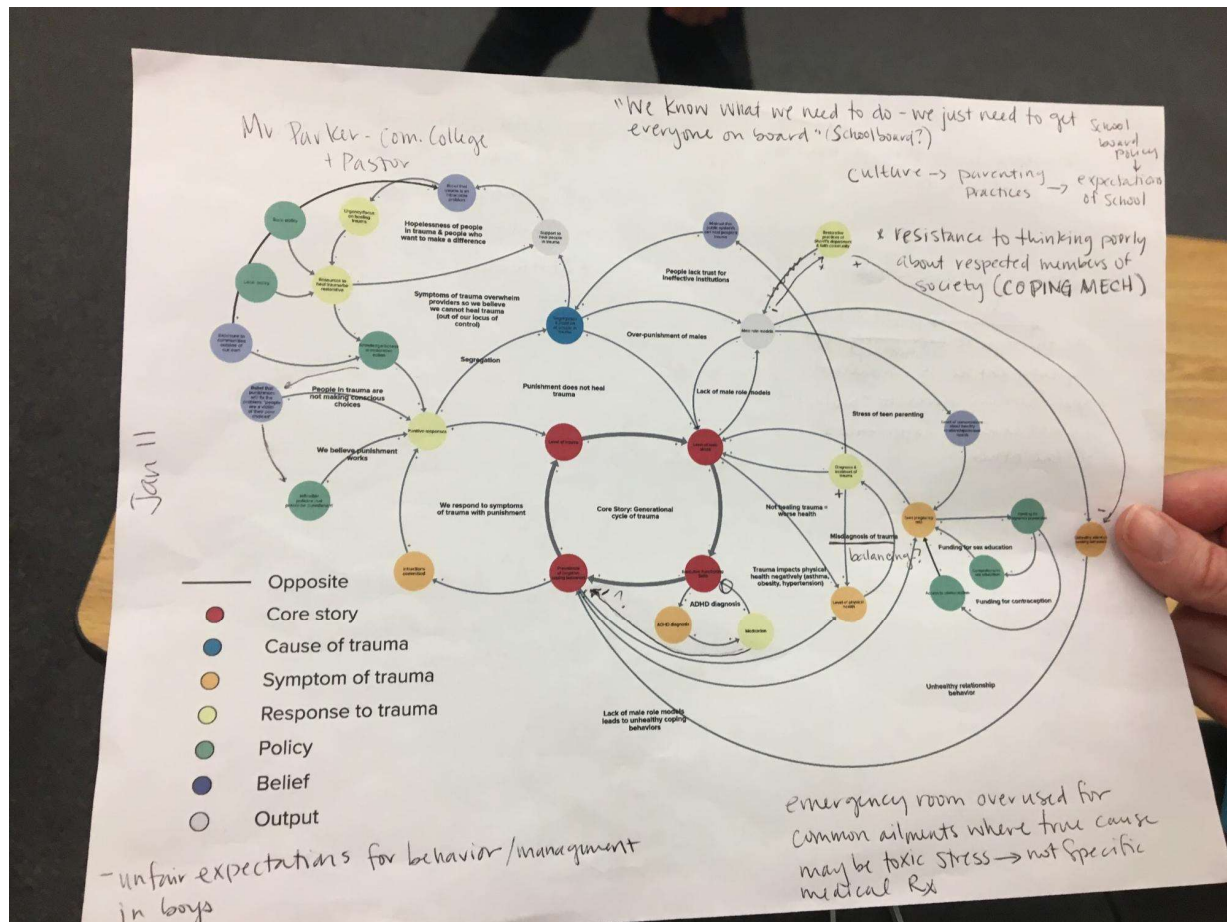
A rough first draft of their systems map, oriented around the "core story" of intergenerational trauma.

Ultimately, Vichi and Seth will use the map to identify "bright spots" in their system where positive change is already occurring, or where small interventions could have the most significant potential to change dynamics. For example, two pilots they're considering are a restorative justice program that could be implemented with the local sheriff's office, or a new screening program for students who seem to suffer from ADHD, but might in fact have experienced trauma.

Community members, including parents and community college students, reacting and responding to a rough draft of the systems map.

"If we just used design thinking from the outset, we could have built a new program and new services and improved them indefinitely," Seth explains, "We would have crossed our fingers and hoped they would lead to long-term changes and improvements. Instead, systems thinking is helping us put a thoughtful, intentional, and rigorous strategy around our work to attack a complex problem that shows up in a lot of different places in a lot of different ways."

Jagannathan leading an "upstream/downstream strategic analysis" where community members identify the root causes and impacts of different themes that were identified during interviews. Above, for example, Jagannathan is talking through the generational cycle of teen pregnancy.

Systems thinking is not an easy process. It requires patiently collecting input from stakeholders and time to synthesize how individual factors tie together into larger dynamics. Many organizations and entrepreneurs might feel like having the time and energy to step back and engage in this big picture work is a luxury they can't afford. Ultimately, however, to unlock solutions to some of education's thorniest challenges like segregation, inequity, and digital divides, it may pay off to find new methods to work not just harder, but smarter, from the outset.

TEACHFORAMERICA

Texas A&M gives $80,000 to Edgecombe organizations for teen pregnancy prevention

By Liz Bell   January 11, 2018

With tens of thousands of dollars in new funds, Michael's Angels Girls Club of Edgecombe County will train trusted adults already connected to teens in the community on healthy relationships, teen pregnancy prevention, and sexual health.

The organization, along with three other community groups, went through four intensive days of training in December to address teen pregnancy. Facilitators from Texas A&M University's iTP3 project, at the end of the "design thinking" workshop, allocated $80,000 between the groups for projects on awareness and prevention work in the area. Edgecombe County is among the worst in the state for unwanted teen pregnancies.

"We, on a long shot, kind of applied on behalf of Edgecombe, with the hope that they would be excited about coming to a rural community," said Vichi Jagannathan, Rural Opportunity Institute co-founder. Jagannathan, who researches effects of trauma within the area along with co-founder Seth Saeugling, said the university team picked Edgecombe out of applicants from across the country. The Rural Opportunity Institute is housed within the North Carolina Public School Forum and has been holding meetings with community leaders to find solutions to cycles of poverty and trauma.

Michael's Angels Girls Club and Project Momentum won $30,000 each through pitching their ideas to a panel of community representatives. The Boys and Girls Club of the Tar River Region and North East Carolina Prep each received $9,000. An extra $2,000 went to Project Momentum to fund a coordinator between the university and all of the groups.

Shanell Knight, director of Michael's Angels, said the training taught her problem-solving techniques that will extend beyond this project.

"It's been very intense, very enlightening, very good training," Knight said. "I'm just glad that we had the opportunity to be here."

Project Momentum's pitch was centered around communication between parents and children. The organization's initiative will train facilitators from the community to talk to groups of parents and their teenagers — separately and then together — on communication skills,

abstinence, peer pressure, and preventative measures. The meetings, the group said, will encourage practice at home by giving activities to do together that facilitate open conversations around sex.

The Boys and Girls Club and a group from local charter school North East Carolina Prep are receiving funding to work together in teen pregnancy prevention programing. Kelly Wilson, iTP3's principal investigator, said the two groups have already started a conversation on how they can best help each other. Wilson said design thinking helps the creation of ideas and programs that are innovative and useful.

"We think that the activities and strategies allow for a lot of fluid and quick program development that changes the frame of the way that a traditional program developer would approach educational and public health programming overall," she said. "The concept of design thinking really allows the teams that are working on the programs to get insights from the target population and really develop empathy and a human-centered approach to the program."

The groups interviewed stakeholders who would be affected by their work, came up with user personas to think about needs of individuals, and learned brainstorming and mapping techniques to think of innovative approaches.

Jagannathan was excited for the design thinking approach to come to the area where she has been working and building relationships. After being trained with the same mindset, she previously designed a mobile application in San Fransisco to promote conversations around sexual health among teens.

"What's cool about all of these organizations is they work I think in closest proximity to actual people," Jagannathan said. "They all directly serve kids, a lot of them directly serve teen parents or parents. So, what design thinking does is gives specific tools and activities so that they can find ways to learn from those users about what they're actual challenges are, and their situations, and what they want."

Amy Robinette, a counselor at North East Carolina Prep, said she was grateful to meet and team up with other organizations doing important work.

"We've lived here our entire lives and not known about some of these programs," Robinette said. "So, the first day, we actually had the conversation about these programs that target specific races or that target specific genders, and how we were missing elements of our county by not acknowledging that this was a very diverse issue. And so the collaboration came immediately."

Edgecombe County News

Teaching for America: Life in the struggle for 'one day'

By Jackson Olsen   February 1, 2018

Teaching, at its best, is the most noble of all professions. While all teachers aren't made of the same stuff as Jaime Escalante, I'd bet the proverbial farm that you still remember the name of that *one* teacher who ignited your curiosities, inspired your passions, or quite literally changed your entire life's trajectory. It is in the wake of teaching — be it good or bad — that all of the world's events unfold.

Teachers operate today in a turbulent world of limited resources, soaring expectations, and enough pressure to turn coal into diamonds. While politicians preach about their education platforms and the Common Core without knowing the first thing about either of them, teachers are carefully caring for our nation's most precious commodities. It is their privilege to spend their days with the future: shaping minds, interrogating history, and building character. Most return home weary each day, exhausted in the service of our children, laboring for the soul of our nation. Then they grade papers until they pass out in front of the television, a half-eaten meal before them on the coffee table.

Their task is daunting. Students from low-income communities are roughly three years behind their more affluent peers in reading, with about half at risk of not completing high school. African Americans, American Indians, and Latinos are disproportionately affected by the culture of poverty and are statistically more likely to drop out than white students. High school dropouts create an economic vacuum by earning less over their lifetime, which amounts to billions of dollars lost each year in unrealized tax revenue. Add the fact that dropouts are more likely to receive government assistance in the form of welfare, food stamps, or Medicaid, and you've got yourself a two-pronged national crisis of education and economics. The third prong is criminal in nature: in all of the American prisons and correctional facilities, approximately 70 percent of the inmates are high school dropouts. All told, the American taxpayers spend over $300 billion each year on high school dropouts.

Upon closer inspection, you'll find that there is a substantial achievement gap dividing students of affluent communities, which are disproportionately white, and students living in low-income communities, which are disproportionately minority. While the term "achievement gap" has evolved into a tired buzzword used by policy wonks and superficial educators, the truth is the achievement gap is really an *opportunity* gap in which minority students and students in poverty-stricken communities are expected to do more with less. You can get a slap-in-the-face idea for the gap by simply walking through a public school in Chapel Hill, North Carolina,

and then touring a comparable school in neighboring Henderson, Tarboro, Weldon, or Windsor. Then you will see it. Then you will feel it. The haves and the have-nots. The affluent boosterism, with its abundance of volunteers and donor checks, juxtaposed against schools that don't have classroom maps that reflect the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The difference is tangible. The gap is wide.

The opportunity gap is a ubiquitous predator. It has penetrated every state in the union and preys mostly on children of color. It is a national affliction that has lingered as a residual symptom of two and a half centuries of slavery and a century of Jim Crow, and has remained stubbornly intact despite the billions of dollars we throw at it each year. Per student, the United States spends more money than most industrialized nations, yet in the Program for International Student Assessment, which measures student performance from over sixty countries around the world, Americans lagged behind their international peers:

PISA Results (US Ranking)	Math	Science	Reading
2009	31st	23rd	15th
2012	36th	28th	24th

While American schools are undoubtedly responsible for producing some of the world's best and brightest, we continue to victimize the students born into the inner-city projects of our urban metropolises, the communities forgotten in rural obscurity, or the coal-dusted shacks of Appalachia. We have yet to provide an excellent education for *all* of our children, which means that many of our poor and minority students are left behind. We ask them to do the same work and perform at the same level as a rich kid with two parents and a paid tutor, but with fewer resources, less support, and teachers often scraped from the bottom of the talent barrel.

Why lower quality teachers? Because it takes a special kind of person to want to teach in a poverty-stricken or perpetually low-performing school where they would be more likely to encounter fights, drugs, sexual misconduct, disrespect, and a generally apathetic attitude towards education. In the case of rural schools, finding excellent teachers who are willing to stay in the classroom and in the communities where they are so badly needed is often even harder. These rural teachers often get paid less thanks to property taxes or the absence of local supplements, and they do it hundreds of miles from the nearest shopping mall, airport, or Starbucks.

Generally, students of poverty are also more likely to face lack of community support, absentee parents, hunger, limited access to adequate health care, and a litany of other social ills. In the long run, students on the wrong side of the gap are statistically less likely to graduate from high school, go to college, pay taxes, vote, perform community service, or

maintain a steady job. Instead, they are more likely to abuse drugs, turn to violence, rear children out of wedlock, and know the cold loneliness of a prison block. We ask them to run the same race, but chain anchors to their feet at the sound of the gun.

I never meant to join Teach For America. I planned, like so many fervently enthusiastic sons who hero-worship their fathers, to follow his footsteps into law. But somewhere down the line, things changed, and instead I ended up as a teacher thousands of miles from home, doing teachery things—like intercepting flirtatious love notes, monitoring noisy cafeterias, and drying my hands with brown paper towels. I traded law school for middle school, lecture halls for lesson plans, and case studies for caseworkers. Above all, I traded a day job for a mission.

It should also be said at the outset that as a white male and member of a historically hegemonic social class, the perspective of my experience is certainly affected by my white privilege. Indeed, it was through this experience that I first came to terms with white privilege and its subtleties that often go unnoticed by the mainstream. As such, I know that my story could be criticized as "missionary work" by critical race theorists who see progressive whites invading low-performing predominantly black schools as a poor excuse for a modern-day Civil Rights Movement. While this criticism is not totally without merit, it would ignore the earnest desire in my heart to carry the torch of justice and do my part to bring about social and racial equality in America. A critic ought also to consider the fact that truth is influenced by the lens we bring to the moment, and in the moment of embarking on a two-year journey with Teach For America, my lens was both nascent and shortsighted. This book is one person's experience; a journey of understanding educational inequity and expanding knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs about achieving racial and social justice.

I'm no Jaime Escalante. Compared to some of the teachers I met along my journey, I can tell you with certainty that I am nothing special. I'm honest enough to admit that as a teacher, there were days where I pulled lessons right out of my rump, and human enough to admit that there were days when I sat in the school parking lot, not wanting to get out of my car. I was not a perfect teacher or an expert in curriculum or pedagogy. There are many things about my first year of teaching that I am ashamed of; things I would do differently (or not at all). There are things about my time in the classroom that I can't redo or have back, and that haunts me even now. I imagine it haunts most teachers who reflect soulfully and honestly on their early missteps. But it is not for me to edit them or rewrite my own history with glittering generalities. I endeavor only to tell my story in the harsh light of day, exposed and vulnerable and honest, so that the ignorance surrounding educational inequity that blinded me for most of my life may no longer darken another's view.

Editor's Note: To read more of Olsen's book or to purchase it, click here.

Perspective

KINSTON.COM

Northeast teacher nominated for national award

By Dustin George
Staff Writer, The Free Press
Posted Feb 26, 2018 at 5:03 PM
Updated Feb 27, 2018 at 9:46 AM

Sometimes to reach a student, a teacher has to go the extra mile, and maybe even some more after that.

For Jerry Clyde, fifth-grade math teacher at Northeast Elementary School, that takes him from school to the basketball court to football games and occasionally to scholars' – Clyde's preferred term for his students – homes.

Many of those students have some kind of behavioral profile with the school – either a condition like ADD or ADHD or some sort of personal issue that necessitates giving them extra attention – but Clyde said those aren't issues that can be addressed by the school alone.

"I see my students as more than what's in these four walls," he said. "I try to understand where they are coming from by talking to them with private check-ins and having conversations with them – what do you like, do you play any sports?"

If a student does have a sports schedule or some other kind of extracurricular activity, Clyde makes it a point to show up to those events and support his students. He'll even sacrifice his own personal appearance for a student.

It's a method that Clyde learned from one of his mentors when he was younger.

"When he came to my first basketball game and I was like what are you doing here he was like I'm here to watch you, you told me and I'm going to show up. That made me feel some type of way, like I was excited about that and I was excited to talk to him other than at school. So when I go the extra mile for them, it's for them to be excited," he said.

By spending time at sporting events, after school activities and even at students' homes, Clyde said he is able to build relationships with students and parents that show he wants them to succeed.

"I talk to them and say you see I'm here right now. The same way how I'm showing you respect and showing interest in what you are interested in, I need you to do the same thing in the classroom. Once they see that I'm invested in them more than just in this classroom they start opening up to me," he said.

For his efforts, Clyde has been nominated for the National LifeChanger of the Year award.

Sponsored by the National Life Group and the National Life Group Foundation, the LifeChanger of the Year program recognizes 17 teachers for their work in and out of the classroom. Hundreds of teachers across the country get recommended for the award each year. Those recommendations are then narrowed down to a final list and winners are decided by a panel of previous award winners.

Nominations typically come from students or their parents.

Clyde's nomination, which was made by an anonymous parent who was impressed with his ability to teach a fifth grade student with AD.

"Mr. Clyde looked beyond the bottom line number and found a wonderful boy who would have tried anything with the encouragement of one outstanding teacher," the nominator said. "His learning environment was a community with a village of learners. Students leaned in and used their strengths to help out their neighbor. They did it through genuine love and care."

A webpage for Clyde on the LifeChanger of the Year website boasts roughly 60 comments that are similarly positive towards him.

"I was excited because for me, to see a parent to see that and I don't ask for anything, I truly enjoy that. That's what I do this work for. I do this for the kids and I like to see the kids grow. At the end of the day we want to make sure we are providing the right tools for the future leaders of America," Cylde said.

Later this year, one teacher will be selected as a grand prize winner of the LifeChanger of the Year award and get $10,000 to share with their school. Four other finalists will get $5,000 for their school and 10 other winners will get $3,000 for their school.

Dustin George can be reached at 252-559-1077 or

....:

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Low-wealth Schools Find New Ways to Deal with Student Trauma - North Carolina Health News

northcarolinahealthnews.org/2017/12/21/low-wealth-schools-new-ways-deal-student-trauma/

Taylor Knopf

By Taylor Knopf

As Hurricane Matthew stalled over the eastern part of North Carolina in October 2016, large parts of Edgecombe County were inundated.

The storm damaged about 3,500 buildings across the county and at least 250 filled with more than four feet of water. Thousands were displaced from their homes and forced into makeshift shelters. When the Tar River peaked, it drowned the town of Princeville.

Edgecombe residents young and old were caught in the disaster. The flooding displaced many students at W.A. Pattillo Middle School through the end of the 2016-17 school year.

After helping meet the immediate needs of the middle schoolers, Pattillo principal Lauren Lampron and her staff held a week of activities to help the students express what happened.

"We have a community of individuals traumatized by the flood," Lampron said. "We were googling things and trying to figure out how to provide support for the kids."

They connected with Public School Forum of North Carolina, which uses evidence-based research and public policy analysis to improve education.

The school also started participating in the N.C. Resilience and Learning Project, which aims to educate staff about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and how those affect a child's brain development and ability to learn.
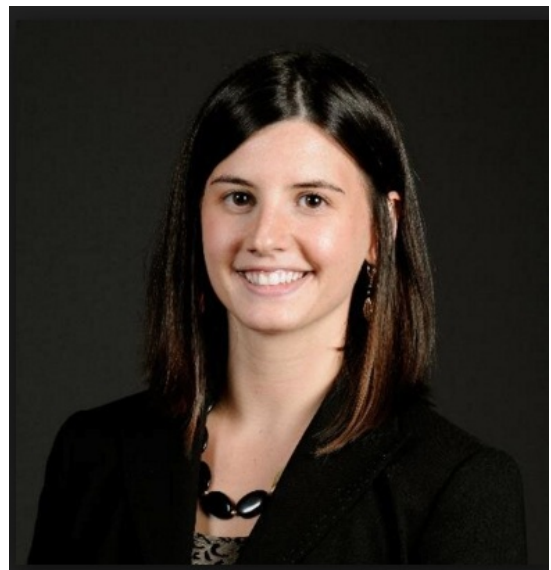
W.A. Pattillo Middle School Lauren Lampron. Photo courtesy: Twitter

Understanding adverse experiences

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began a study on Adverse Childhood Experiences in the 1990s, which included surveying more than 17,000 children about emotional and physical abuse or neglect.

 What experiences qualify as Adverse Childhood Experiences?

The <u>questionnaire</u> that helps screen for ACEs is a one-page, 10-question form which asks about:

Physical abuse
Harsh physical discipline
Sexual abuse
Emotional abuse
Physical or emotional neglect
Parental depression, drug or alcohol use, or incarceration

After decades of follow-up with those children, the study found that the more ACEs a person experienced as a child, the more likely they were to have mental health problems later in life. The study, interestingly, also found that children who had more ACEs were also more likely to grow into adults with physical health problems such as cancer, high blood pressure or liver disease. A subsequent <u>Florida study</u> found the higher a child's ACE score the more likely they are to be incarcerated.

With this knowledge, the Public School Forum team started a one-year pilot project this school year with three North Carolina schools in high poverty areas — Stocks Elementary and Pattillo Middle in Edgecombe and Koontz Elementary in Salisbury.

The program aims to help schools create a "trauma-sensitive" environment, where students can share and process fears and emotions. Similar projects in other states have been found to increase school learning and decrease the number of suspensions.

Ways to handle trauma

In Edgecombe County, many students are behind academically, said Pattillo principal Lauren Lampron.

Many don't know how to regulate their emotions and so get carried away by fear, sadness or anger. This makes it hard to be an active learner in class.

Lampron said learning about ACEs and the effects of trauma has opened her eyes to a different philosophy of teaching.
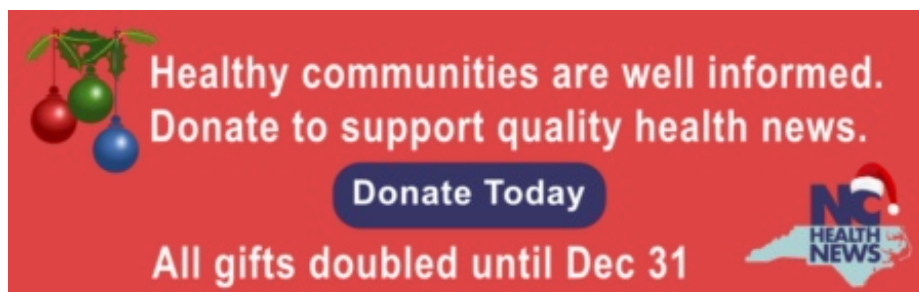
"I use to think that kids need to come to a structured environment and need to learn every day," she said. "But this experience has taught me that sometimes it's OK if they just come through the door."

For example, she had a student last month who came to school and was quiet all day, which was out of character for her. When brought to the office and asked if there was a problem, the girl immediately started crying. Lampron learned that her house burned down the day before. There was no option of staying home, so she was at school.

"Sometimes it feels like maybe we aren't doing enough," Lampron said. "But the first part is a mindset change. Instead of blaming a child, now we ask, 'What happened to you to make you react that way?'"

With the assistance of Public School Forum of North Carolina, Lampron has lead Pattillo Middle to make some changes this school year.

The school day starts with homeroom, a chance for students to bond with the same trusted adult each day. This is a new addition to the school schedule. During this time, students have activities to help express complicated feelings. One activity involves pictures of people displaying different emotions. The students pick one that best expresses their feelings that day.

Lampron said the staff is working with students on self-regulation.

"If you bump into someone in the hallway, a mentally well person would say 'Excuse me' and move on," said explained. "If you have a lot of stress in your life, you might see that as an act of aggression.

"Our kids will go from zero to 100 quickly," she added.

Discipline at Pattillo looks very different now. Often, someone sits down with the child and they map the incident leading up to the problem. Then they identify where a change could have been made.

Staff and students have roundtable discussions about how incidents happened and how it made people feel.

What started with fears and trauma from the flood led to much deeper issues, Lampron explained.

"It was multilayered, with feeling neglected, having a parent incarcerated or a single parent," she said.

Many of her students come from low-income households and are expected to take on adult responsibilities at home. Then they come to school and are expected to transition their role to being a kid and learning.

"I'm always surprised by the honesty of the kids," Lampron said.

Once the emotional floodgates opened, it was overwhelming for the staff, who experienced secondary trauma from listening to the kids and feeling helpless, she said.

Some reports have been filed with the county Department of Social Services.

Lampron encourages her staff to make sure they are caring for themselves along the way.

"I tell my staff, like in an airplane, put the oxygen mask on yourself before helping others," she said. They have a self-care thermometer in the office to track and celebrate staff getting proper amounts of sleep or enjoying time with their families.

Sustainability

Elizabeth DeKonty is the Resilience and Learning Project leader at Public School Forum of North Carolina. She drives out to the schools on a biweekly basis to meet with the resilience team, provide resource support and help them brainstorm trauma-sensitive strategies.

There is a resilience team within each school comprised of the principal, counselor, administrators and teachers to be the boots-on-the-ground core of the project. The hope is that there will be a team of people to continue educating new staff even after the school year is over.

DeKonty held a shorter training session with all staff in the school, from bus drivers to cafeteria workers.

"Our hope is that it's not seen as just another program, but a culture change," she said. "We want to shift how teachers think about trauma."

She said teachers and faculty across the three schools are really embracing the new program.

"Most of them had an idea of what trauma is being from high poverty schools," she said. "I don't think they had much background on the ACEs study. The majority had not heard about the physical impact on the brain, nerve development, and then how that affects ability to learn."

The Public School Forum of NC's Elizabeth DeKonty. Photo courtesy: ncforum.org

When teachers leave midyear, instructional teacher-leadership keeps classes strong

By Molly Whelan   February 7, 2018

MCL Whelan: **Is there a specific part of the Opportunity Culture model that stands out to you?**

Principal Jordan-Thomas: I think just the innovative approach to expanding the impact of great teachers like yourself. We have about 50 percent of our staff that's in years one through four, and it's honestly disappointing that [most educators] still haven't changed the reality of a first-year teacher. Why are we putting the burden of figuring out how to break down standards, create an exemplar lesson plan, on a first-year teacher, in addition to managing a classroom, contacting parents, turning in the blue cards to the front office—there's this long to-do list, and we know that there are certain things that great teachers have to do; why aren't we scaffolding that over their tenure as a teacher? That's what Opportunity Culture allows us to do—have great teachers in the building who know what great teaching looks like. We are rethinking what responsibilities [for beginner and veteran teachers] look like, creating something that's sustainable in terms of teaching in an environment that just has so many high demands. We are progressing towards making this something that you can do for more than two years, or three or four years—we're creating that pathway.

MCL Whelan: **With all this greatness comes challenges, like the issue of long-term subs or teachers leaving in the middle of the year for a variety of reasons. How does the MCL model help?**

Principal Jordan-Thomas: There are some times where I've learned as a principal that I'm okay with losing a staff member that's not a fit, before June. So the reality of that is, as a multi-classroom leader you have to shift your responsibilities and shift your support, because now you might be dealing with a content gap, when before you may not have had that because it might have been a certified teacher. I think the way that Opportunity Culture allows us to be able to get in front of that challenge is being able to step into a classroom with kids who have a long-term sub and seeing them online, hearing the voice of an MCL [through online instruction developed just for them]. So they're still receiving quality instruction, and this long-term sub, they don't have to carry this burden by themselves of figuring out the content and lesson plans —that's where the MCL can lean in and support.

MCL Whelan: What are some supports that are put into place for the MCL when teachers leave?

Principal Jordan-Thomas: Even though you guys [MCLs] are master teachers, we try not to default to you going into the classroom and being the teacher, because it's limiting your impact with your pod of teachers as a whole. We've leveraged online learning and blended learning—it might be you pushing in for half of the block and the other half of the block the kids are online doing practice. Then, the long-term sub can go around and assist scholars. So I think that's a huge part, getting innovative with some of the instructional planning.

I was in this situation my first two years as an MCL, and again this year, so I know firsthand the frustration and challenges it creates. While it puts a greater burden on MCLs and increases their work load, having an MCL is what allows a team to still succeed. My team would not have been able to exceed our expected student growth those two years had I not have been there as an MCL to help close gaps. "Finding the third way," a core Ranson value, was one I lived out every day. I used blended learning and made daily videos for those scholars, tailored to what they would have received if they had a full-time teacher. If I had not put in the extra work and hours, we (I) would have failed our scholars—and I could not have let that happen.

MCL Whelan: When teachers leave or we have long-term subs the whole year, where would the teachers and the scholars be if Opportunity Culture was not here at Ranson?

Principal Jordan-Thomas: I think we would still be spinning our wheels. Opportunity Culture allows for a teacher [or a team with a vacancy] to have the support that they deserve, because the structure of a school should not prevent a teacher in growing professionally.

MCL Whelan: For other principals interested in this model, and policymakers, what would you say to them about being a principal with Opportunity Culture at your school?

Principal Jordan-Thomas: It is something that every principal should consider from a people standpoint, of 'how are we expanding the opportunities that teachers have to continue to grow in the profession?' I say this is in the best interest of kids, because you're ensuring that every kid has access to high-quality instruction. People who are great teachers though are not necessarily great coaches, and so what does that look like from the interview process, what does that look like in terms of ongoing professional development? It requires more than just creating the position. As much as this lives and breathes the philosophy of ongoing professional development for teachers, that same philosophy has to exist through every level —so MCLs need ongoing professional development, too, and there has to be a strategic system in place for that.

View a video of our conversation here.

To learn more, watch a TEDxCharlotte talk by Jordan-Thomas about her work at Ranson; see also the findings of a new study by the American Institutes for Research and the Brookings Institution of the effect of Opportunity Culture on student academic gains.

Perspective

October 1, 2016

Elisa Villanueva Beard
Teach For America
25 Broadway
12th Floor
New York, NY 10004

Dear Elisa Villanueva Beard:

On behalf of Charity Navigator, I wish to congratulate Teach For America on attaining the coveted 4-star rating for demonstrating strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.

The nonprofit sector is advancing and expanding. As our organizations evolve, so do the desires and interests of our supporters. Astute donors are yearning for greater accountability, transparency, and for concrete results from us. With more than 1.5 million American charities, Charity Navigator aims to accentuate the work of efficient and transparent organizations. The intent of our work is to provide donors with essential information to give them greater confidence in both the charitable decisions that they make and the nonprofit sector.

Based on the most recent information available, we have issued a new rating for your organization. We are proud to announce Teach For America has earned our fourteenth consecutive 4-star rating. This is our highest possible rating and indicates that your organization adheres to sector best practices and executes its mission in a financially efficient way. Attaining a 4-star rating verifies that Teach For America exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in your area of work. Less than 1% of the charities we evaluate have received at least 14 consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that Teach For America outperforms most other charities in America. This exceptional designation from Charity Navigator sets Teach For America apart from its peers and demonstrates to the public its trustworthiness.

Forbes, *Business Week*, and *Kiplinger's Financial Magazine*, among others, have profiled and celebrated our unique method of applying data-driven analysis to the charitable sector. We evaluate ten times more charities than our nearest competitor and currently attract more visitors to our website than all other charity rating groups combined, thus making us the leading charity evaluator in America. Our data shows that users of our site donated more than they planned to before viewing our findings, and in fact, it is estimated that last year Charity Navigator influenced approximately $10 billion in charitable gifts

Your achievement and the 4-star rating will enhance your organization's fundraising and public relations efforts. Our favorable review of Teach For America's financial health and commitment to accountability & transparency is now visible on our website.

We wish you continued success in your charitable endeavors.

Sincerely,

Michael Thatcher
President and CEO