

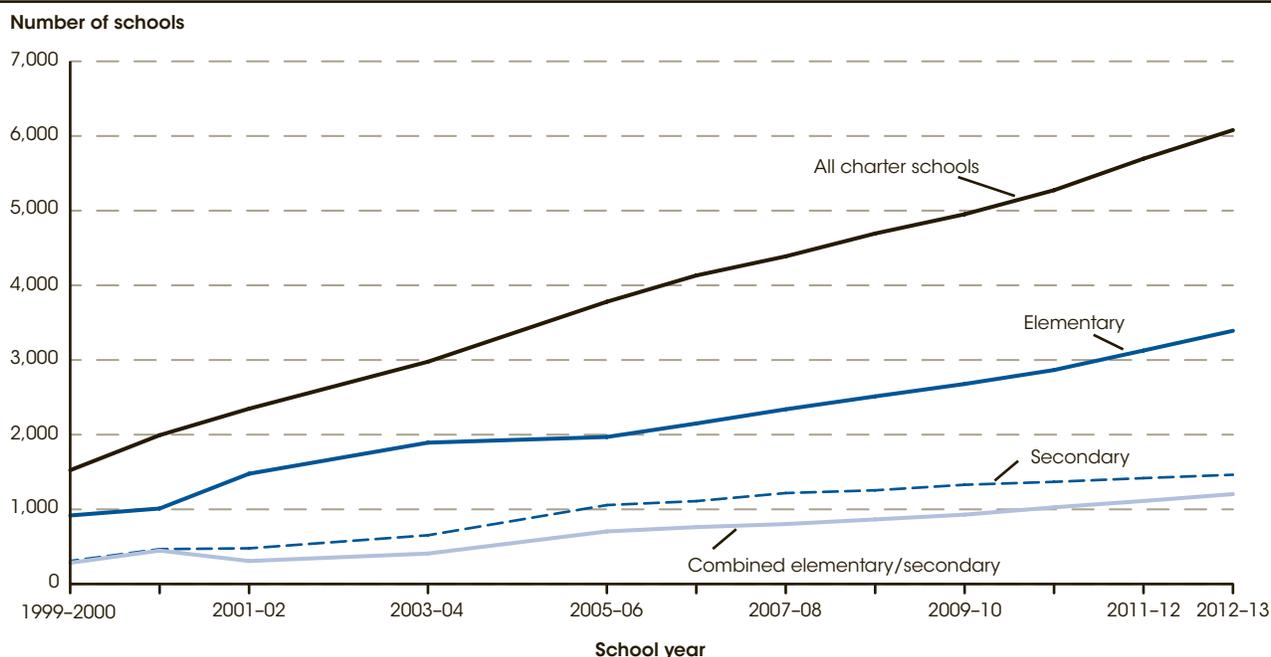
Charter School Enrollment

From school year 1999–2000 to 2012–13, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools increased from 0.3 million to 2.3 million. During this period, the percentage of public school students who attended charter schools increased from 0.7 to 4.6 percent.

A public charter school is a publicly funded school that is typically governed by a group or organization under a legislative contract (or charter) with the state or jurisdiction. The charter exempts the school from certain state or local rules and regulations. In return for flexibility and autonomy, the charter school must meet the accountability standards outlined in its charter. A school’s charter is reviewed periodically (typically every 3 to 5 years) by the group or jurisdiction that granted it and can be revoked if guidelines on curriculum and management are not followed or if the standards are not met.¹

The first law allowing the establishment of charter schools was passed in Minnesota in 1991.² Charter school legislation had been passed in 42 states and the District of Columbia as of school year 2012–13.³ Charter school legislation has not been passed in the following states: Alabama, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia. Despite legislative approval in Mississippi and Washington, no charter schools were operational in these states in 2012–13.

Figure 1. Number of public charter schools, by school level: Selected school years, 1999–2000 through 2012–13

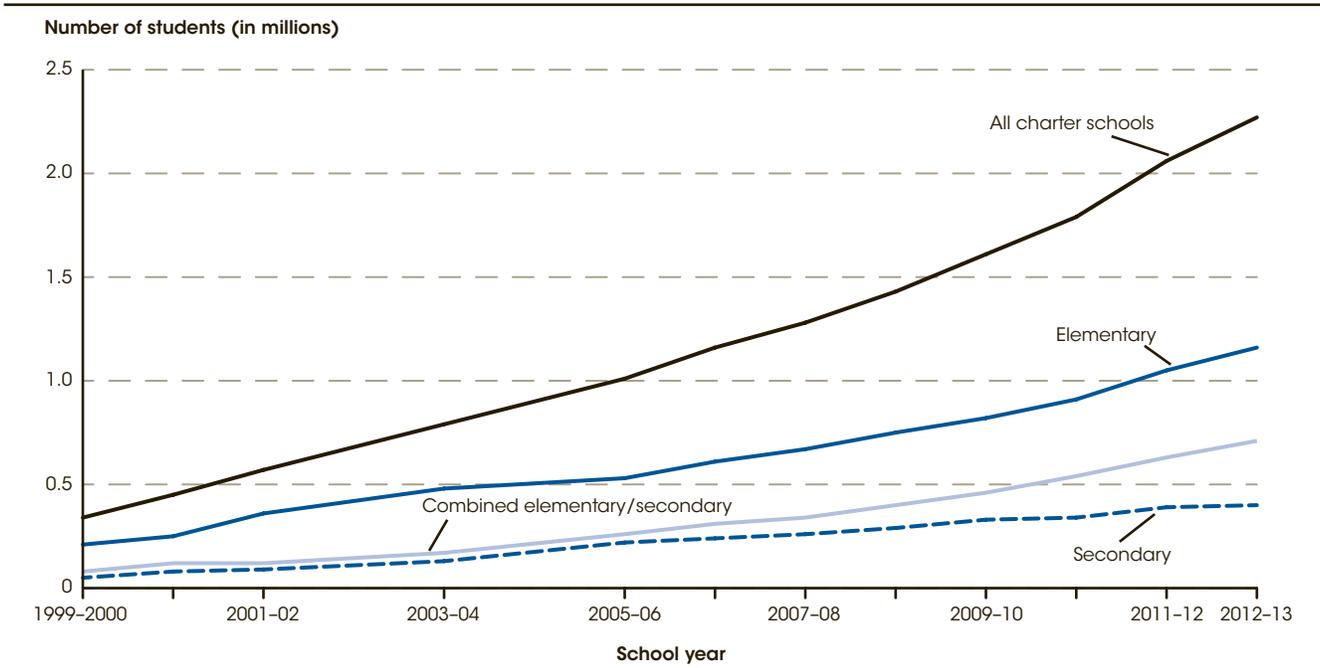


NOTE: "Elementary" includes schools beginning with grade 6 or below and with no grade higher than 8. "Secondary" includes schools with no grade lower than 7. "Combined elementary/secondary" includes schools beginning with grade 6 or below and ending with grade 9 or above. Other schools not classified by grade span are included in the "All charter schools" count but are not presented separately in the figure. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," selected school years, 1999–2000 through 2012–13. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, tables 216.20 and 216.30.

From school year 1999–2000 to 2012–13, the percentage of all public schools that were public charter schools increased from 1.7 to 6.2 percent, and the total number of public charter schools increased from 1,500 to 6,100. During the most recent period from 2011–12 to 2012–13, the percentage of all public schools that were charter schools increased from 5.8 to 6.2 percent, and the total number of public charter schools increased from 5,700 to 6,100. In addition to increasing in number,

charter schools have generally increased in enrollment size over time. For instance, the percentages of charter schools with the largest enrollment sizes (500–999 students and 1,000 or more students) increased from 1999–2000 to 2012–13 (from 11 to 22 percent), and the percentage of charter schools with the smallest enrollment size (under 300 students) decreased from 77 to 54 percent. Similar patterns were observed during the most recent period from 2011–12 to 2012–13.

Figure 2. Number of students enrolled in public charter schools, by school level: Selected school years, 1999–2000 through 2012–13

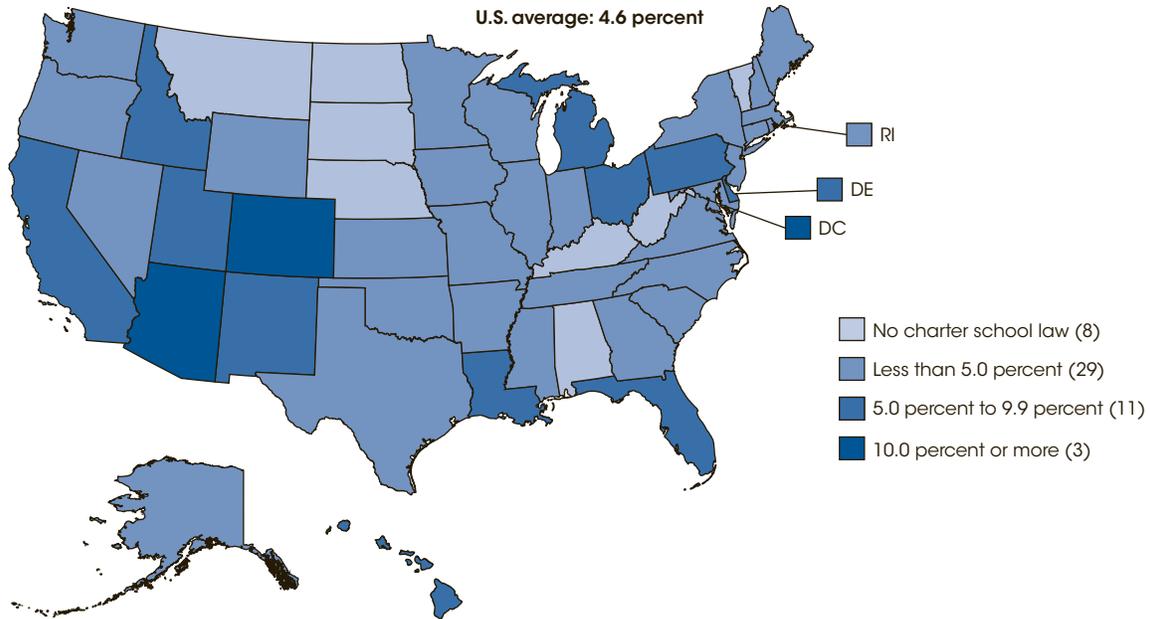


NOTE: "Elementary" includes schools beginning with grade 6 or below and with no grade higher than 8. "Secondary" includes schools with no grade lower than 7. "Combined elementary/secondary" includes schools beginning with grade 6 or below and ending with grade 9 or above. Other schools not classified by grade span are included in the "All charter schools" count but are not presented separately in the figure.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," selected school years, 1999–2000 through 2012–13. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, tables 216.20 and 216.30.

From school year 1999–2000 to 2012–13, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools increased from 0.3 million to 2.3 million. During this period, larger numbers of charter school students were enrolled in elementary schools than in any of the following types of charter schools: secondary, combined, and other types that were not classified by grade span. Since the increase in the number of charter school students (1.9 million)

was larger than the increase in the number of traditional public school students (0.9 million), the percentage of public school students who attended charter schools increased from 0.7 to 4.6 percent during this period. Between school years 2011–12 and 2012–13, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools increased from 2.1 million to 2.3 million.

Figure 3. Percentage of all public school students enrolled in public charter schools, by state: School year 2012-13

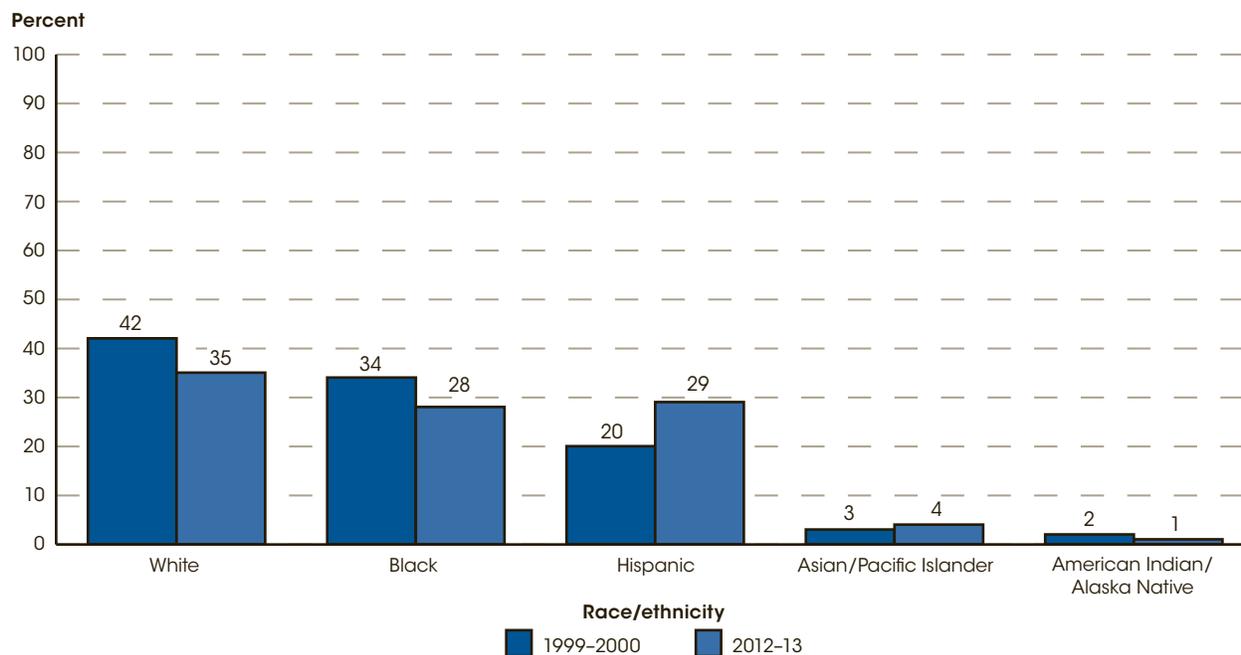


NOTE: Categorizations are based on unrounded percentages.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2012-13. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, table 216.90.

Among all states in school year 2012–13, California enrolled the largest number of students in charter schools (471,000, representing 8 percent of total public school students in the state), and the District of Columbia enrolled the highest percentage of public school

students in charter schools (42 percent, representing 31,600 students). After the District of Columbia, Arizona had the highest percentage (14 percent) of charter school enrollment as a percentage of total public school enrollment.

Figure 4. Percentage distribution of public charter school students, by race/ethnicity: School years 1999–2000 and 2012–13



NOTE: Data for the “Two or more races” category were not available prior to 2009–10; therefore, estimates for this category are not presented in the figure and the 2012–13 percentages for all racial/ethnic groups will not sum to 100 percent. In 2012–13, some 3 percent of students were of Two or more races. The 1999–2000 percentages will not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 1999–2000 and 2012–13. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, table 216.30.

From school year 1999–2000 to 2012–13, charter schools experienced changes in their demographic composition similar to those seen at traditional public schools. The percentage of charter school students who were Hispanic increased (from 20 to 29 percent), as did the percentage who were Asian/Pacific Islander (from 3 to 4 percent). In contrast, the percentage of charter school students who were White decreased from 42 to 35 percent. The percentages who were Black and American Indian/Alaska Native decreased as well (from 34 to 28 percent and from 2 to 1 percent, respectively). Data were collected for charter school students of Two or more races beginning in 2009–10. Students of Two or more races accounted for 3 percent of the charter school population in 2012–13.

In school year 2012–13, the percentage of students attending high-poverty schools—schools in which more than 75 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) under the National School Lunch Program—was higher for charter school students (36 percent) than for traditional public school students (23 percent). In the same year, 20 percent of charter school students and 21 percent of traditional public school students attended low-poverty schools, in which 25 percent or less of students qualify for FRPL.

Endnotes:

¹ Berman, P., Ericson, J., Kamprath, N., Nelson, B., Perry, R., Silverman, D., and Solomon, D. (2000). *The State of Charter Schools 2000*. National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

² Adelman, N., Anderson, L., Cotton, L., Donnelly, M., Finnigan, K., and Price, T. (2004). *Evaluation of the Public*

Charter Schools Program: Final Report. U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary. Washington, DC: Policy and Program Studies Service.

³ The Center for Education Reform. (2014). Choice and Charter Schools: Charter School Law. Retrieved January 5, 2015, from www.edreform.com/issues/choice-charter-schools/laws-legislation.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, tables 216.20, 216.30, and 216.90; *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 216.90

Related indicators: Characteristics of Traditional Public and Public Charter Schools (indicator 16)

Glossary: Charter school, Combined school, Elementary school, Free or reduced-price lunch, National School Lunch Program, Secondary school, Student membership, Traditional public school