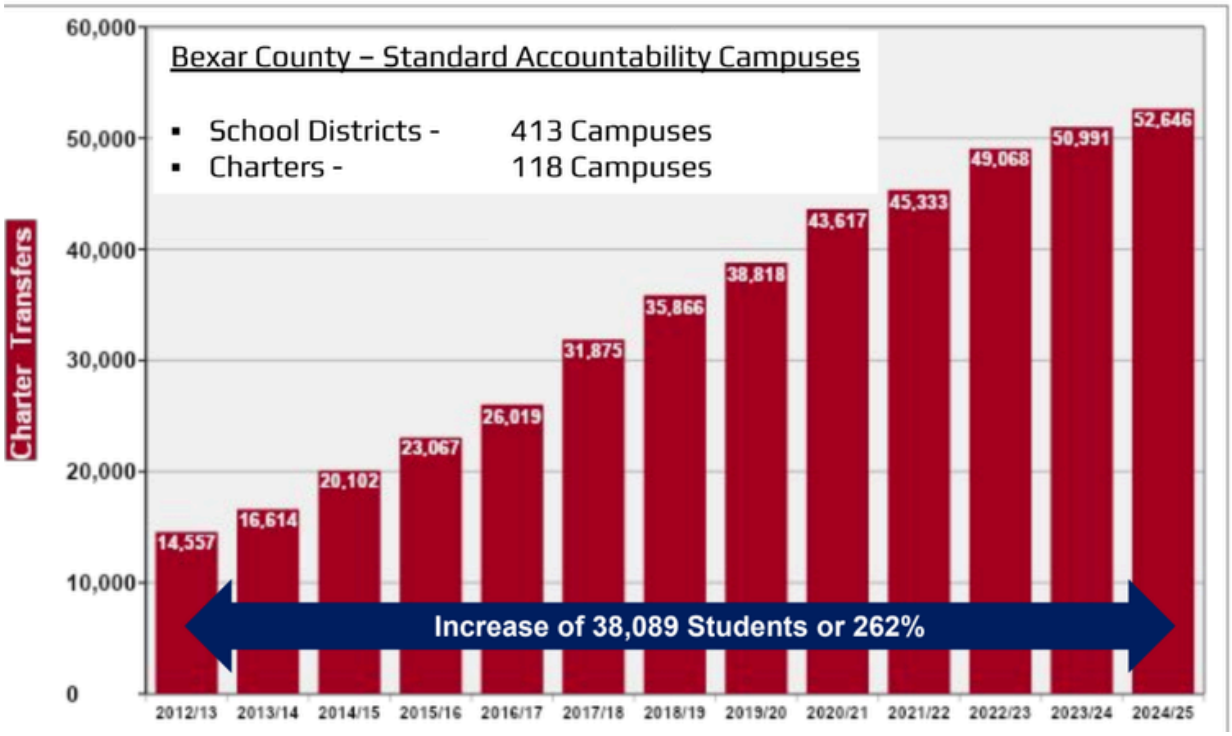
Charter Schools: Impact on San Antonio

San Antonio school districts lost an estimated $497,985,386 to charter schools in 2024-25.

In 2024-2025, Bexar County had 118 standard accountability charter school campuses that enrolled 52,646 students – an increase of 262% since 2012-2013. Almost every public school district in San Antonio has lost students to charter schools, **resulting in a countywide estimated revenue loss of $497,985,386 in the 2024-2025 school year alone**.

A public school district can't simply cut costs dollar-for-dollar to the loss in revenue when a student transfers to a charter school because of fixed costs such as insurance, maintenance, and transportation. Instead, public school districts must cut expenses – often non-mandated programs and services. As a result, unlimited charter school expansion results in lost opportunities for students who choose to attend their public school district.

Bexar County School Districts – 2024/25 Charter School Transfers



Source: Texas Education Agency – PEIMS Student Transfer Reports

Estimated Revenue Loss to Charter Transfers (School Year 2024-25): BEXAR COUNTY Public School Districts

Analysis prepared by Data for Public Education.

No.	District Name	District Enrollment	Charter Transfers	Charter Transfers as % of District Enrollment	Est. Revenue Loss to Charter Transfers
1	Northside ISD (Bexar)	100,208	16,577	16.5%	$141,318,834
2	San Antonio ISD	44,047	9,701	22.0%	$97,383,942
3	North East ISD	56,420	8,314	14.7%	$72,118,162
4	Judson ISD	23,539	4,805	20.4%	$45,609,282
5	Edgewood ISD (Bexar)	7,849	2,766	35.2%	$26,669,364
6	Southwest ISD	14,833	2,287	15.4%	$22,673,259
7	East Central ISD	11,497	2,177	18.9%	$19,126,722
8	South San Antonio ISD	7,468	1,671	22.4%	$16,458,298
9	Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD	14,947	1,839	12.3%	$15,508,564
10	Harlandale ISD	11,546	1,514	13.1%	$14,880,593
11	Southside ISD	6,091	682	11.2%	$6,828,060
12	Alamo Heights ISD	4,749	147	3.1%	$1,249,118
13	Randolph Field ISD	1,427	88	6.2%	$757,155
14	Somerset ISD	4,259	51	1.2%	$534,161
15	Fort Sam Houston ISD	1,617	27	1.7%	$238,485
16	Lackland ISD	1,010	0	0.0%	$0
TOTAL		**362,085**	**54,453**	**15.0%**	**$497,985,386**

Texas Education Agency (TEA) data used in analysis:

1. 2024-25 TEA PEIMS Standard Reports, District Transfer Report:
   - https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/adhocrpt/Standard_Reports/Transfer_Reports/district_transfer_report.html
2. 2024-25 TEA PEIMS Standard Reports, Student Enrollment Reports:
   - https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/adhocrpt/adste.html
3. 2024-25 TEA School District State Aid Reports, Summary of Finances (Near Final – Run ID 45927):
   - Tier One regular program allotment and special allotments, selected items from Tier Two Detail and Other Program Detail Reports, and Refined Average Daily Attendance.
   - https://tealprod.tea.state.tx.us/Tea.FspReports.Web/

Note: The charter transfers count above is inherently conservative as it only includes student transfers from the district to charters where the count is unmasked. Student transfer counts are masked to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Masked numbers are typically small (<10 students) although larger numbers may be masked to prevent imputation of student personally identifiable information. Additionally, Boerne, Comal, and Medina Valley ISDs together have a total of 11 campuses located in Bexar County but they represent a small percentage of the total estimated revenue loss to charter transfers and are excluded from this table.

Charter Schools: Impact on San Antonio

The majority of high-rated charter schools in Bexar County serve a significantly lower percentage of economically disadvantaged, at-risk, and special education students.

Unlike public school districts that are required to accept and enroll all students, charter schools can exclude certain students and underserve others. It's important to consider student demographics because **student demographics can have implications on student performance, school ratings, and finance.**

Bexar County - Largest 2024/25 Charter Enrollment

Charter	Bexar County Enrollment	2025 Academic Rating	Economically Disadvantaged	At-Risk	Special Education
Royal Public Schools	429	F (56)	84.9%	65.2%	16.4%
The Gathering Place **closed 2025*	525	F (59)	61.4%	28.1%	29.9%
Essence Preparatory Charter **closing 2026*	337	F (59)	99.5%	23.0%	9.6%
George Gervin Academy	834	D (63)	100.0%	98.7%	9.2%
Compass Rose Academy	2,680	D (66)	73.1%	67.5%	15.2%
Legacy Traditional Schools - Texas	1,829	C (71)	51.8%	26.3%	9.0%
Lighthouse Public Schools	416	C (72)	88.7%	82.9%	19.5%
Southwest Preparatory School	529	C (77)	75.4%	85.9%	18.1%
Somerset Academies of Texas	2,534	C (79)	73.5%	57.6%	16.1%
Inspire Academies	602	B (80)	48.8%	26.8%	23.0%
KIPP Texas Public Schools	3,148	B (80)	90.2%	74.5%	10.8%
Jubilee Academies	2,508	B (81)	86.9%	67.1%	11.6%
Texas College Preparatory Academies	695	B (81)	37.3%	30.1%	10.8%
Great Hearts Texas	6,560	B (83)	25.4%	32.5%	12.3%
IDEA Public Schools	17,164	B (83)	82.9%	56.3%	11.2%
Harmony Public Schools - South Texas	1,686	B (87)	80.5%	65.4%	11.7%
School of Science & Technology	2,126	B (87)	56.7%	41.6%	12.8%
School of Science & Technology - Discovery	2,116	B (88)	64.4%	43.6%	14.8%
Eleanor Kolitz Hebrew Language Academy	446	A (91)	12.8%	23.7%	9.7%
BASIS Texas	3,520	A (93)	2.8%	27.8%	4.4%

Source: Texas Education Agency – PEIMS Student Transfer Reports, Accountability Reports, and Texas Performance Report

Disparities in student demographics are often much greater between charter school campuses and nearby public school district campuses. **Many district campuses serve two to six times the rate of special education students as charter school campuses of similar grade level just a few miles away.**

For example:

- BASIS San Antonio - Pri North Central serves just under 7% special education students. The closest North East ISD campus serving the same grade levels serves almost 17% special education students (Ridgeview Elementary).
- Great Hearts Western Hills serves 11.5% special education students. The closest Northside ISD campuses serving the same grade levels respectively serve 14.7%, 18.1%, and 22.1% special education students (Jay High, Jordan Middle, and Evers Elementary).

Charter schools across San Antonio routinely serve a lower percentage of special education students than the nearest district campuses

Charter Campus	Students in Special Education %	District Campus (ISD)	Students in Special Education %	Distance
Southwest Preparatory School - Northeast Elem Campus	11.8%	Woodridge Elementary School (Alamo Heights ISD)	18.6%	1.8 mi
Jubilee San Antonio	11.7%	Salado Elementary School (East Central ISD)	12.2%	1.1 mi
		Legacy Middle School (East Central ISD)	17.7%	1.5 mi
		Highlands High School (San Antonio ISD)	18.2%	3.4 mi
IDEA Monterrey Park Academy	7.1%	Gonzalez Elementary School (Edgewood ISD)	11.3%	1.6 mi
IDEA Monterrey Park College Preparatory	8.2%	Gus Garcia University School (Edgewood ISD)	18.5%	2.1 mi
		Memorial High School (Edgewood ISD)	12.6%	2.1 mi
IDEA South Flores Academy	8.7%	Bellaire Elementary School (Harlandale ISD)	15.9%	1.5 mi
IDEA South Flores College Preparatory	12.7%	Terrell Wells Middle School (Harlandale ISD)	19.5%	1.5 mi
		Harlandale High School (Harlandale ISD)	13.5%	1.7 mi

Charter Campus	Students in Special Education %	District Campus (ISD)	Students in Special Education %	Distance
Great Hearts Live Oak	15.8%	Rolling Meadows Elementary School (Judson ISD)	25.2%	2.5 mi
		Kitty Hawk Middle School (Judson ISD)	24.7%	3.8 mi
		Veterans Memorial High School (Judson ISD)	14.8%	4.3 mi
BASIS San Antonio - Pri North Central Campus	6.9%	Ridgeview Elementary School (North East ISD)	16.9%	1.9 mi
SST Alama	17.9%	El Dorado Elementary School (North East ISD)	23.7%	1.8 mi
		Wood Middle School (North East ISD)	27.0%	3.1 mi
BASIS San Antonio - Shavano Campus	2.3%	Rawlinson Middle School (Northside ISD)	13.4%	2.5 mi
		Clark High School (Northside ISD)	11.3%	1.2 mi
Great Hearts Western Hills	11.5%	Evers Elementary School (Northside ISD)	22.1%	1.7 mi
		Jordan Middle School (Northside ISD)	18.1%	1.7 mi
		Jay High School (Northside ISD)	14.7%	3.1 mi
Valor San Antonio *relocated in 2025 from 4300 Centerview Dr.*	10.8%	Beard Elementary School (Northside ISD)	15.7%	2.0 mi
		Garcia Middle School (Northside ISD)	15.3%	1.6 mi

Charter Campus	Students in Special Education %	District Campus (ISD)	Students in Special Education %	Distance
Compass Rose Legacy Elementary	19.4%	Schenck Elementary School (San Antonio ISD)	21.4%	1.8 mi
Compass Rose Legacy	19.2%	Mission Academy (San Antonio ISD)	20.6%	2.3 mi
Essence Preparatory Charter School *scheduled to close in 2026*	9.6%	Hirsch Elementary School (San Antonio ISD)	23.2%	2.2 mi
		Davis Middle School (San Antonio ISD)	16.6%	2.3 mi
Founders Classical Academy of Schertz	16.8%	Rose Garden Elementary School (Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD)	26.2%	1.9 mi
		Corbett Junior High School (Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD)	19.7%	2.0 mi
		Byron P. Steele II High School (Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD)	13.0%	6.6 mi
Greg A. Garcia Early College Intermediate - New Frontiers Public Schools Inc.	7.4%	Zamora Middle School (South San Antonio ISD)	21.5%	1.9 mi
IDEA Burke Academy	7.8%	Big Country Elementary School (Southwest ISD)	22.5%	1.2 mi

Sources: Texas Education Agency TXschools.gov Student Information 2024-2025; Texas Education Agency Charter Locator Map; Google Maps

Charter Schools: Key Issues in Texas

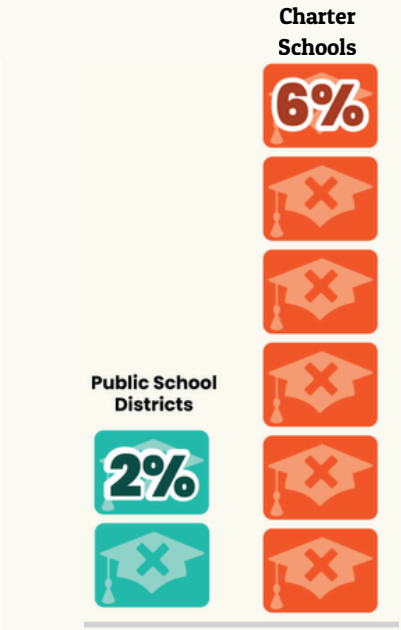
Thirty years ago, Texas charter schools started as an experiment. In 1995, the Texas Legislature authorized up to 20 "open-enrollment charter schools" and gave the elected State Board of Education the power to approve charter school applications.[1] Thirty years later, we have the data to assess the outcome of this experiment:

- Public school districts consistently outperform charter schools statewide.
- Charter schools leave too many students behind and limit their educational opportunities.
- Parents and the public have little say in charter school expansion or spending.
- Charter schools in Texas are private nonprofit organizations that receive public funds without sufficient public accountability.

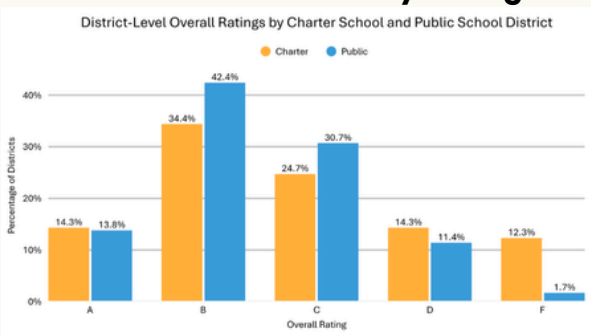
Public school districts consistently outperform charter schools statewide

Charter schools promise higher student performance in return for receiving exemptions from certain state laws that apply to public school districts. However, Texas charter schools lag behind public school districts in statewide high school graduation rates and other statewide performance measures.

High School Dropout Rates[2]



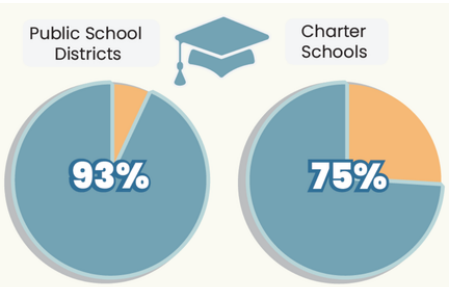
2025 State Accountability Ratings[3]



Charter schools have about 7 times the percentage of F-rated districts as public school districts.

Four-Year Graduation Rates[4]

Graduation rate for public school districts is 18 points higher than charter schools.

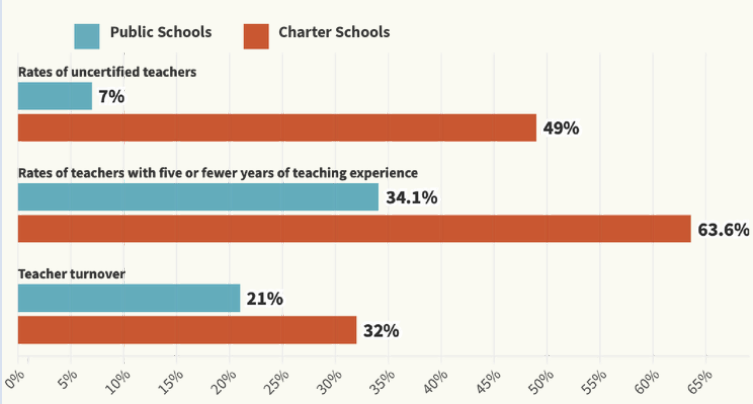


Newly approved charter schools in particular often report subpar student performance and low enrollment that can contribute to campus closure or even revocation of a charter by the state.

- More than half of the charter schools approved from 2013 to 2023 were D- or F-rated in 2025.[5]
- 96% of charter schools approved in Texas since 2017 (that are open and have data available) have not met the enrollment projections in their original charter applications.[6]
- Five of these newer charter schools closed just in 2025,[7] including two charter school closures in Bexar County (The Gathering Place[8] and Bexar County Academy[9]), leading to disruption and instability for hundreds of Texas students and families.

Charter schools leave too many students behind and limit their educational opportunities

Through budget and policy decisions, many charter schools fail to provide key programs, services, and experienced teachers that contribute to student success and ensure equal opportunities for all students. This is the case even though additional state funding is often available for these programs and services.



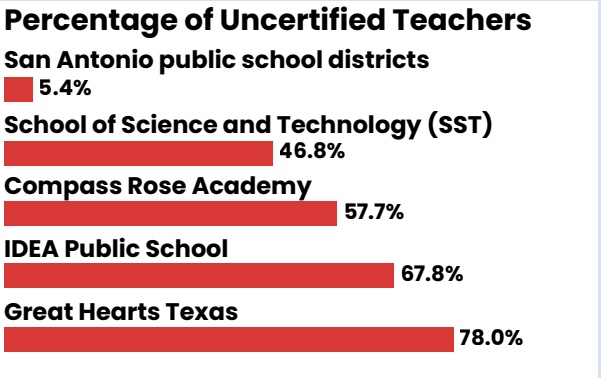
High Rates of Uncertified Teachers

Charter schools lag behind public school districts in the percentage of certified teachers in the classroom. That's because Texas law does not require certified teachers at charter schools,[10] except for special education and bilingual teachers. Research shows that having a certified teacher in the classroom positively influences student performance.[11]

SAN ANTONIO CASE STUDY: Charter schools have higher rates of uncertified teachers

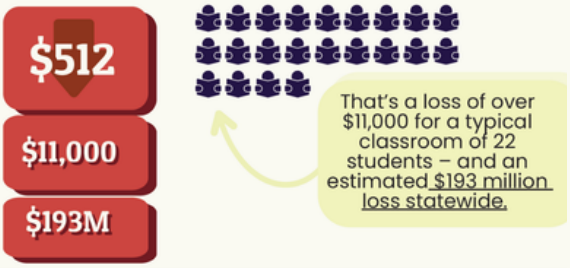
Public school districts: Just over 5% of teachers were uncertified in San Antonio public school districts in 2024-2025.[12]

Charter schools: Many charter school operators in San Antonio have much higher rates of uncertified teachers.[13]



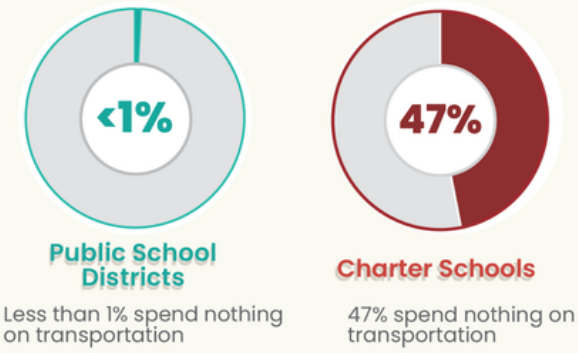
Less Spending on Instruction

Charter schools spend an average of $512 less per student on instruction than public schools.[14]



Lack of Transportation

Nearly half of charter schools spend nothing on transportation for students.[17] When charter schools force parents to provide their own transportation, they limit access for families who do not have a reliable vehicle and the flexibility to drop-off and pick-up students daily.



Discretionary Expulsion

Charter schools can create a student code of conduct that includes undefined behavior expectations that allow students to be expelled for actions that are open to discretionary interpretation.[15] Based on data received from TEA, 84% of charter school expulsions in 2023-24 were for discretionary reasons, not for offenses requiring mandatory expulsion.[16]

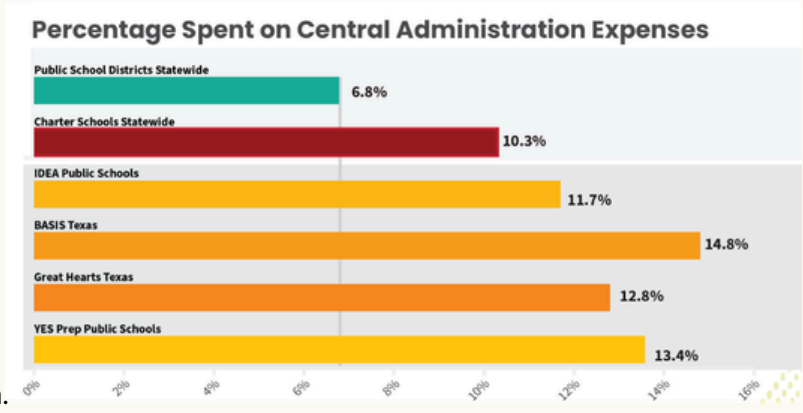
SAN ANTONIO CASE STUDY: Some charter schools spend nothing on transportation

Some of the charter school operators with the largest enrollment in San Antonio spend NOTHING on transportation for students:[18]

- BASIS Texas
- Eleanor Kolitz Hebrew Language Academy
- Great Hearts Texas
- Inspire Academies
- School of Science and Technology - Discovery

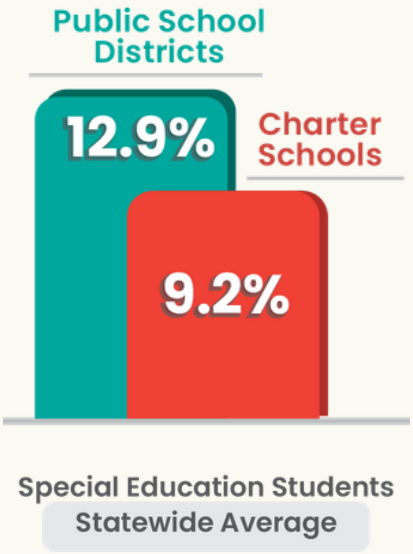
Higher Spending on Central Administration

Charter schools spend an average of $437 more per student for central administration expenses compared to public school districts.[19] Money spent on central administration could be used to expand student support or invest in instruction.

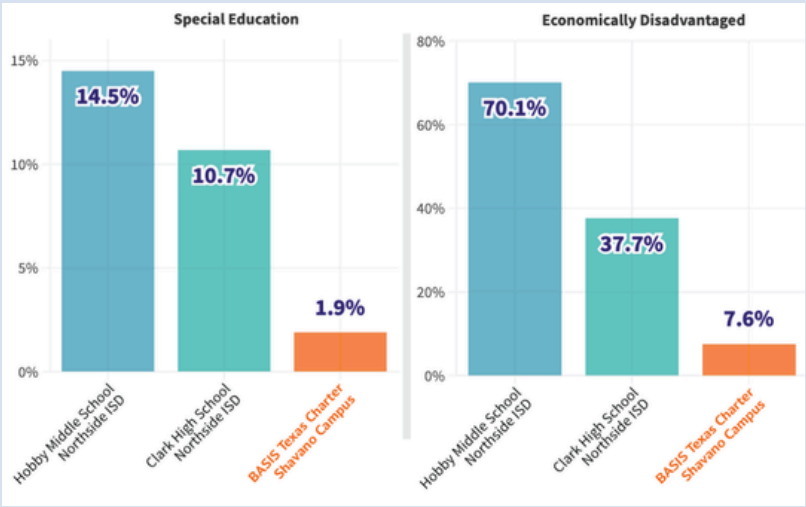


Lower Percentage of Special Education Students

Charter schools have historically underserved special education students statewide compared to public school districts.



SAN ANTONIO CASE STUDY: BASIS Texas underserves special education and economically disadvantaged students



- BASIS Texas touts its A-rated Shavano High School in San Antonio. Yet Shavano does not enroll students representative of the area where it is located.
- The BASIS Texas Shavano campus serves far fewer special education and economically disadvantaged students than nearby district campuses located less than two miles away.
- Shavano has graduated ZERO special education students over the last five years, and only 28 economically disadvantaged students.[20]

Charter Schools by the Numbers School Year 2024-2025[21]

436,031 Students enrolled

$4.66 billion State funds to charter schools

188 Charter operators

959 Charter campuses

Parents and the public have little say in charter school expansion or spending

While state law limits the number of charter operators to 305,[22] there is no limit on the number of new charter campuses/sites that existing charter schools can open through a charter expansion amendment and no limit on charter school student enrollment. As a result, the cost of charter schools to the state—and to taxpayers—will continue to escalate as more and more new charter campuses are approved every year, often without evidence of actual need for a new charter campus, or assurance of quality.

The Commissioner has approved over 1100 new charter campuses/sites through charter amendments for existing charter operators through 2024.[23]

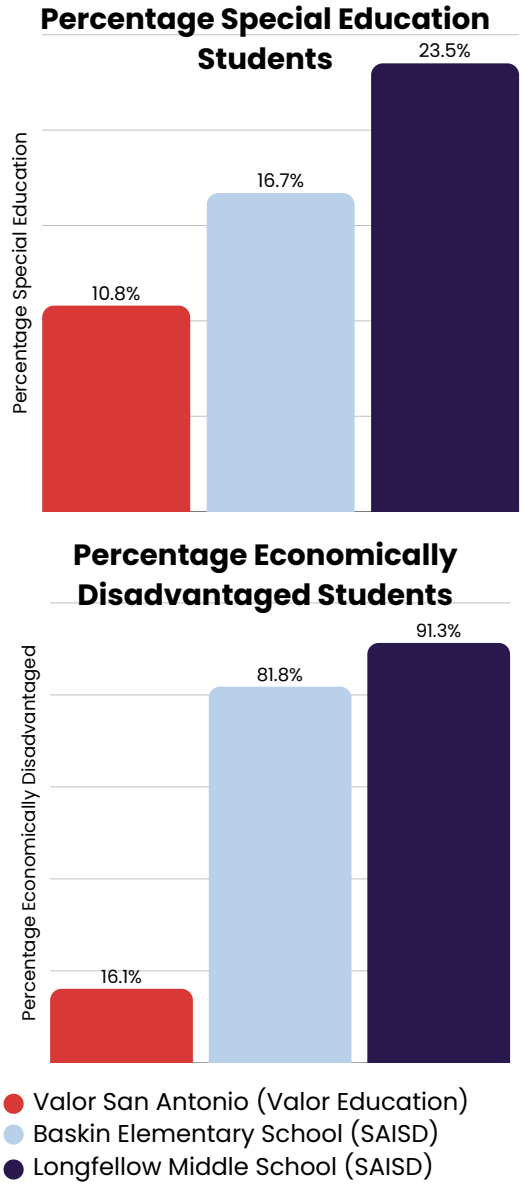
SAN ANTONIO CASE STUDY: Valor Education allowed to expand despite failure to live up to its commitments

Valor Education was initially approved in 2017 to open in Travis County. In its application, Valor committed to serve a similar demographic profile as the school districts where it would locate.[24] Once open, Valor failed to meet several of these promises, including serving less than half of its commitment to economically disadvantaged students.[25]

Despite this failure, the Texas Commissioner of Education approved a new Valor San Antonio campus that opened in 2023.[26] Valor San Antonio similarly failed to meet several of Valor Education's initial demographic projections and served a significantly different student body than San Antonio ISD public schools located less than two miles away.[27]

In June 2025, Valor announced that the San Antonio campus would relocate to a property that had previously served as a religious private school.[28]

Valor submitted expansion amendments for the initial San Antonio campus and for the relocation two years later. The Commissioner of Education approved both amendments with no public hearing for the affected communities.



Charter schools in Texas are private nonprofit organizations that receive public funds without sufficient public accountability

Unlike public school districts, charter schools lack direct public accountability for the most critical decisions they make that affect millions of Texas children in public school districts and thousands of students in charter schools and cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

Unelected charter school boards

Charter school board members are self-selected and cannot be voted out of office by the public. Charter board members are not required to live in the community where the charter campus is located, and some members may even live out-of-state.

No public vote on bond debt

Unlike public school districts that require voters to approve bond debt for new facilities, charter board members incur billions in bond debt for new facilities with no voter approval, even though the debt will be largely repaid by Texas taxpayers from state funds that charter schools receive.[29] Most of those charter school bonds are guaranteed by the Texas Permanent School Fund Bond Guarantee Program (PSF) and may be repaid with public funds if charter schools default.

No vote by an elected body on expansion

The approval of new charter campuses/sites through an amendment is made solely by the unelected Texas Commissioner of Education, with no public hearing or vote by an elected body. While the elected State Board of Education has authority to veto new charter school applications, it has no authority over the approval of charter school expansion amendments.[30]

Endnotes

1. Charter schools were authorized in Senate Bill 1, 74th Regular Legislative Session as part of a comprehensive rewrite of education laws.
2. TEA 2023 Snapshot. Link. https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/snapshot/snapshot_srch.html.
3. TEA State Accountability Ratings (2025; most recent state ratings). Link. https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/2025-accountability-rating-system.
Note: Data exclude Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) districts and campuses because they use a different accountability standard.
4. TEA 2023 Snapshot. Link. https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/snapshot/snapshot_srch.html.
5. Testimony from Our Schools Our Democracy to State Board of Education (September 9, 2025). Link to handout presented to State Board. https://osod.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Charters-Approved-by-TEA-SBOE-2013-2023.pdf.
6. Testimony from Our Schools Our Democracy to State Board of Education (September 9, 2025). Link to handout presented to State Board. https://osod.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Chart-FINAL-Enrollment-Updated-2025-Projected-vs-Actual-New-Charters-2017-2025_9.5.20252-002.pdf.
7. Ibid.
8. Andrea K. Moreno (February 14, 2025). The Gathering Place Charter School to close after 2024-2025 school year. KSAT. Link. https://www.ksat.com/news/local/2025/02/14/the-gathering-place-charter-school-to-close-after-2024-25-school-year/.
9. Melissa Manno (August 6, 2025). San Antonio charter school announces closure just days before new school year. San Antonio Express News. Link. https://www.expressnews.com/news/education/article/s-a-charter-announces-closure-days-new-school-20805628.php.
10. TEC 12.103(b) and 12.111(a)(9). Link. https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.12.htm#12.103, https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.12.htm#12.111.
11. J. Jacob Kirksey (2024). Amid Rising Number of Uncertified Teachers, Previous Classroom Experience Proves Vital in Texas (Policy Briefing). Texas Tech University. Link. https://ttu-ir.tdl.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e7e19f87-e065-4dc7-8210-153b989a5266/content.
12. TEA Uncertified Teacher Counts and Rates in Texas School Systems, 2024-2025. Link. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Ftea.texas.gov%2Freports-and-data%2Feducator-data%2Funcertified-teachers-district-dataset-2024-2025.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.
13. Ibid.
14. TEA Snapshot 2023. Link. https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/snapshot/snapshot_srch.html.
15. TEC 12.131. Link https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.12.htm#12.131.
16. TEA data on expulsions received via request from legislative office to TEA (November 2024 – January 2025). Data received on JJAEP, DAEP, and non-educational setting expulsion.
17. TEA PEIMS FSP 2023-2024. Link. https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/school.finance/forecasting/financial_reports/2324_FinActRep.html.
18. Ibid.
19. TEA Snapshot 2023. Link. https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/snapshot/snapshot_srch.html.
20. TEA TAPR 2023-24. Link. https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2024/index.html.
21. Commissioner's comments to the State Board of Education (June 25, 2025).
22. TEC 12.101(b-2). Link. https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.12.htm#12.101.
23. List of final charter school expansion amendments by year provided by TEA in response to public information requests.
24. Valor Public Schools application submitted to TEA in 2017. Link. http://castro.tea.state.tx.us/charter_apps/content/downloads/Applications/227829.pdf.
25. TEA TAPR 2023-24. Link. https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2024/index.html.
26. Valor Education press release (August 10, 2023). https://www.valoreducation.org/press-releases/valor-san-antonio-opens-august-16.
27. TEA TAPR 2023-24. Link. https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2024/index.html.
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30. TEC 7.102(c). Link https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.7.htm#7.102; TEC 12.101(b0). Link. https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.12.htm#12.101.

About Our Schools Our Democracy

Our Schools Our Democracy (OSOD) is a Texas-based nonpartisan and independent 501c3 nonprofit organization established to protect the fundamental rights of all Texans to a free, public education through research, education, outreach, and advocacy.

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