
SCHOOL CHOICE

KEY ISSUES

While traditional public schools serve nearly 86 percent of North Carolina’s students, parents have other options available to them when deciding how to educate their children. This section covers basic information about public charter schools and magnet schools, as well as longstanding choice options outside the public school system: private schools and home schooling.

In 2014-15, there were 1,667,425 total K-12 students in North Carolina. Of these students, 97,259 were in private school¹ (6%), 68,770 were in public charter schools² (4%), and 67,804 were homeschooled³ (4%). Approximately 1,433,592 students were enrolled in traditional public schools (including magnet schools).⁴

INTRODUCTION TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are publicly funded but privately governed schools operating in 41 states, including North Carolina, as well as the District of Columbia. Charter schools are granted **autonomy** in exchange for **accountability**; that is, they are exempt from many state and local laws but must meet performance and operational standards in order to keep their doors open. Charter schools are nonsectarian and tuition-free.

A charter is essentially a contract to run a school, negotiated between a charter school operator (often a nonprofit organization) and a charter school “authorizer,” which is an entity vested by state law with the authority to grant charters and oversee chartered schools. Many states have multiple authorizers, often including local school districts, state education agencies, independent charter boards, and/or higher education institutions. North Carolina has a single charter authorizer: the State Board of Education.

The charter agreement describes how the school will be governed, what will be taught, how student achievement will be measured, and what students are expected to achieve. As long as the school meets the terms of its charter, it is free from many of the rules and regulations that apply to other public schools in areas such as staffing, scheduling, managing school finances, and setting curriculum. Despite these freedoms, charter schools are required to comply with health and safety regulations, anti-discrimination laws, and laws mandating a minimum number of school days. In addition, they are bound by open meetings laws, and state education authorities clarified in 2014 that, like other public schools, charter schools are required to disclose names, salaries, and positions of employees, though some charter schools and supporters dispute their reading of state law.⁵ Charter schools are required to administer and report results on state-mandated end-of-grade and end-of-course tests, and thus cover the same core subjects as traditional public schools. However, unlike traditional public schools, if a charter school fails to meet the terms of the charter agreement, the authorizer may revoke the charter and close the school.

¹ 2015 North Carolina Private School Statistics. Available at <https://ncdoa.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/documents/files/14-15CSStats.pdf>.

² NC DPI 2014-15 Average Daily Membership. Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/fbs/accounting/data/>.

³ 2015 North Carolina Home School Statistical Summary. Available at <http://ncdoa.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Documents/hhh240.pdf>.

⁴ NC DPI 2014-15 Average Daily Membership.

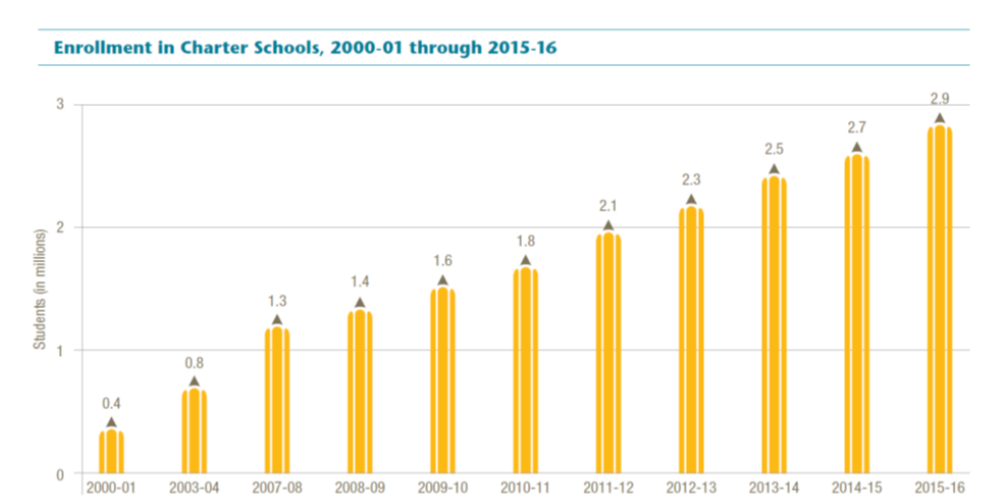
⁵ Charlotte Observer, “NC education officials: Charter schools must disclose salaries.” Available at <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/education/article9113006.html>.

CHARTER SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

Charter schools are growing across the country. The first charter school opened its doors in St. Paul, Minnesota, in September 1992. As of the 2015-16 school year, there are 6,824 charter schools across the country serving over 2.9 million students.⁶

<i>Charter Schools Opened and in Operation as of 2015-2016⁷</i>								
State	New Charters in 2015	Total Charter Schools	State	New Charters in 2015	Total Charter Schools	State	New Charters in 2015	Total Charter Schools
Alaska	1	28	Kansas	0	10	Ohio	8	373
Arizona	19	535	Louisiana	11	143	Oklahoma	7	35
Arkansas	10	50	Maine	1	7	Oregon	5	127
California	80	1,234	Maryland	4	50	Pennsylvania	4	175
Colorado	15	226	Massachusetts	2	81	Rhode Island	3	28
Connecticut	2	24	Michigan	7	300	South Carolina	3	68
Delaware	5	27	Minnesota	9	165	Tennessee	20	100
D.C.	4	115	Mississippi	2	2	Texas	53	723
Florida	38	656	Missouri	3	68	Utah	3	111
Georgia	11	115	Nevada	2	38	Virginia	2	9
Hawaii	1	34	New Hampshire	2	26	Wisconsin	13	244
Idaho	1	48	New Jersey	4	89	Wyoming	0	4
Illinois	3	145	New Mexico	3	99			
Indiana	15	91	New York	12	257	TOTAL	404	6,824
Iowa	0	3	North Carolina	15	161			

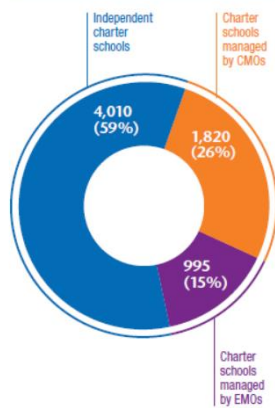
Nationally, charter school growth is increasing each year. During the 2015-16 school year, more than 400 new charter public schools opened, and an estimated 250,000 additional students attended charter schools in the 2015-16 school year compared with the previous year. This is an estimated 9 percent growth in charter school enrollment between fall 2014 and fall 2015.⁸



⁶ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Charter Schools, Students, and Management Organizations, 2015-16. Available at <http://www.publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/New-Closed-2016.pdf>.

⁷ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Charter Schools, Students, and Management Organizations, 2015-16.

⁸ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Charter Schools, Students, and Management Organizations, 2015-16.



Most charter schools are independent, “stand-alone” schools that operate at a single site. Others are part of networks run by management organizations, either nonprofit charter management organizations (CMOs) or for-profit education management organizations (EMOs).

Source: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Charter Schools, Students, and Management Organizations, 2015-16.

CHARTER SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA

On June 21, 1996, the North Carolina General Assembly passed House Bill 955, the “Charter Schools Act of 1996,” which established opportunities for charter schools to operate across the state. The purposes of charter schools articulated by the statute were to:

- Improve student learning;
- Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning opportunities for students who are identified as at risk of academic failure or academically gifted;
- Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;
- Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system; and,
- Hold the schools . . . accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results, and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems (G.S. 115C-238.29A).

In North Carolina any person, group of persons, or nonprofit corporation may seek to establish a charter school. The State Board of Education gives final approval on all successful applicants. The State Board may grant the initial charter for up to 10 years and may renew the charter upon the request of the chartering entity for subsequent periods of up to 10 years each. A charter school’s board of directors governs the school. The board is ultimately responsible for decision-making in all matters relating to the day-to-day operations of the school, including budgeting, hiring/firing, curriculum, instructional materials, operating procedures, transportation, insurance, and food services.

In 2015-16, North Carolina had 158 operating charter schools, including two virtual charter schools.⁹ North Carolina ranked 12th in the nation in 2015-16 for the number of charter schools in operation, up from 16th in the nation in 2012-13.¹⁰ The size of charter schools in the state ranged from 19 to 1,776 students in 2014-15¹¹. State law requires a minimum of 65 students unless the school obtains a waiver.

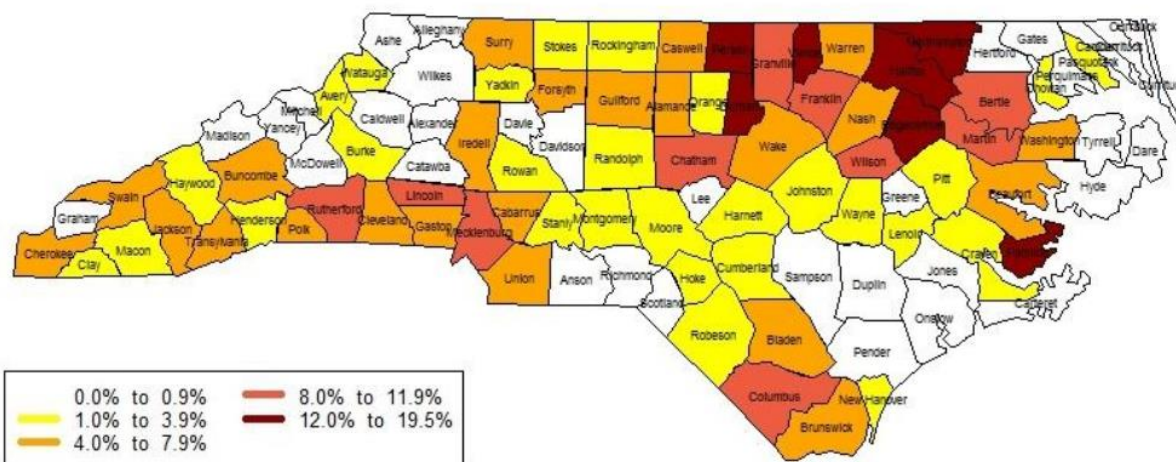
⁹ NC DPI Office of Charter Schools, Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/charterschools/schools/>.

¹⁰ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Charter Schools, Students, and Management Organizations, 2015-16.

¹¹ NC DPI 2014-15 Average Daily Membership.

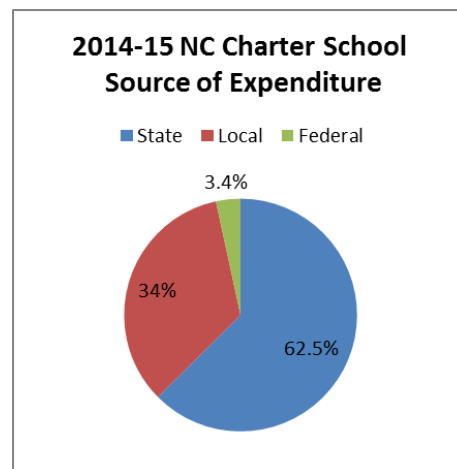
Fourteen new charter schools opened in North Carolina in 2015-16 and fifteen charter school applications were approved. Three charter schools closed. Since the cap was lifted in 2011, between 14 and 26 applications have been approved each year.¹²

**Percentage of Public School Students in Membership at Charter Schools
Month 1 2015-16**



Source: Percentage of Public School Students in Membership at Charter Schools. Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/csmembersmap.pdf>. Note: City LEAs are combined with the county LEAs. In most cases, the city percentage is similar to the county percentage, except for the following: Weldon City (17.1%) and Roanoke Rapids (5.5%) in Halifax County (22.7%); Elkin City (1.8%), and Mount Airy City (9.4%) in Surry County (4.7%); Chapel Hill (1.2%) in Orange County (6.4%); and Kannapolis City (2.3%) in Cabarrus (5.3%).

Charter Schools receive funding based on the average per pupil allocation in the local education agency (LEA) from which the student came.¹³ In 2015-16, charter schools received \$444,131,335 in state funds for 81,943 planned students.¹⁴ This breaks down to an average of \$5,420 per charter student from the state. State funds may be used for any purpose other than purchasing a building. Charter schools also receive LEA funding on a per pupil basis equal to LEA funds for program costs for all other public school students. Unlike traditional public schools in their districts, charter schools do not receive capital funds and must locate and lease or purchase facilities on their own. Some charter schools have located facilities in renovated storefronts, church facilities, mobile structures, or traditional school buildings throughout the state.



Source: NC DPI Highlights of the Budget 2016

¹² NC DPI Highlights of the Budget 2016. Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2016highlights.pdf>.
¹³ NC DPI Highlights of the Budget 2016.
¹⁴ NC DPI Highlights of the Budget 2016.

Charter schools do receive federal funding. As with traditional public schools, federal funding is targeted towards specific populations, including low income children and children with special needs.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH CAROLINA’S CHARTER SECTOR

SENATE BILL 8 (2011)

In July 2011, the North Carolina General Assembly passed Senate Bill 8 reforming the state’s charter school law. The Act redefined previous law by:

- 1) Removing the 100-school cap on charter schools statewide;
- 2) Allowing the State Board discretion in granting final approval of charter schools;
- 3) Raising the enrollment growth cap in charter schools to 20 percent of all students;
- 4) Permitting charter schools to charge fees charged by the local school administrative unit;
- 5) Strengthening the standards for retaining a charter; and
- 6) Requiring the State Board of Education to report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the act, including the creation, composition, and function of an advisory committee; charter school application process; a profile of applicants and the basis for acceptance or rejection; and resources required at the State level for implementation of the current charter school laws.

NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD (SENATE BILL 337)

In July 2013, the North Carolina General Assembly passed Senate Bill 337 reforming several components of charter school law. The main provision of the law repealed the Charter School Advisory Council and created the North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board, which will make recommendations to the State Board of Education on the adoption of rules related to charter schools. Members of the Advisory Board are appointed by the General Assembly, Governor, State Board of Education, and Lieutenant Governor. Under the law, charter schools can no longer choose to be accountable to their Local Board of Education instead of the State Board of Education. Information the State Board of Education receives from the Local Board of Education does not have to be considered in reviewing a charter application. The law also mandates that fifty percent of teachers must be licensed and all charter school teachers teaching a main subject (mathematics, science, social studies, language arts) must be college graduates.

NC CHARTER SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS (2016)

First Name	Last Name	City	Appointed By
Steven	Walker	Raleigh	Lt. Governor
Tammi	Sutton	Gaston	Governor
Hilda	Parlèr	Wake Forest	Governor
Joseph	Maimone	Mooresboro	Governor
Sherry	Reeves	Oriental	Senate
Phyllis	Gibbs	Greensboro	Senate
Alan	Hawkes	Greensboro	Senate
Alex	Quigley	Durham	House
Eric	Sanchez	Henderson	House
Tony	Helton	Forest City	House

CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND CHARTER REVISIONS (HOUSE BILL 250)

Several elements of charter school enrollment were addressed in this bill, passed in July 2013. The major provision of the law stated that “charter schools must attempt to reasonably reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the general local population or the special population served by the school.”

VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS

Section 8.35 of the Appropriations Act of 2014 authorized the creation of two pilot K-12 virtual charter schools. The length of the pilot was set for 4 years. The maximum enrollment in each pilot was capped at 1,500 students in the first year, rising to 2,592 in year four. North Carolina Virtual Academy, managed by K12, Inc., and North Carolina Connections Academy, affiliated with Connections Education, opened in Fall 2015.

Nationally, virtual schools operated by these same two companies have generated significant controversy. The Tennessee Virtual Academy, operated by K12, Inc., was ordered to close in April 2015 due to continual low performance, though a court order later permitted the school to remain open for at least one more year. A 2015 Stanford University study found that virtual charter school students lost an average of 72 days’ worth of learning in reading and a year’s worth of learning in math compared to their peers in traditional brick-and-mortar schools.¹⁵

CHARTER RENEWAL AND OTHER CHARTER LAW CHANGES (HOUSE BILL 334)

In 2015, House Bill 334 was passed, making it more difficult for authorizers to refuse to renew schools’ charters by making renewal the default, in contrast to the law it replaced, which required charter schools to earn renewal through solid academic performance. Other states that have gone down this path, including Ohio, Texas, and Utah, have suffered declines in charter school accountability and performance. The same bill shifted some control and oversight responsibilities for charter schools away from NC DPI.

CURRENT NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER SCHOOLS BY COUNTY

Charter Name	County	Year Open
North Carolina Connections Academy	N/A – Virtual	2015
North Carolina Virtual Academy	N/A – Virtual	2015
Clover Garden	Alamance	2001
River Mill Acad.	Alamance	1998
The Hawbridge School	Alamance	1998
Crossnore Academy	Avery	1999
Grandfather Academy	Avery	1997
Washington Montessori Public Charter School	Beaufort	2000
Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy	Bladen	2013
Charter Day School	Brunswick	2000
South Brunswick Charter School	Brunswick	2014
ArtSpace Charter School	Buncombe	2001
Evergreen Community Charter School	Buncombe	1999
Francine Delany New School for Children	Buncombe	1997
Invest Collegiate (Buncombe)	Buncombe	2014
The Franklin School of Innovation	Buncombe	2014

¹⁵ Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) (2015). *Online Charter School Study 2015*. Stanford, CA: Author.

The New Dimensions School	Burke	2001
A.C.E. Academy	Cabarrus	2014
Cabarrus Charter Academy	Cabarrus	2013
Carolina International School	Cabarrus	2004
Tiller School	Carteret	1998
Chatham Charter School	Chatham	1997
The Woods Charter School	Chatham	1998
Willow Oak Montessori	Chatham	2013
The Learning Center	Cherokee	1997
Pinnacle Classical Academy	Cleveland	2013
Columbus Charter School	Columbus	2007
Flemington Academy	Columbus	2013
Alpha Academy	Cumberland	2000
The Capital Enroce Academy	Cumberland	2014
Water's Edge Village School	Currituck	2012
Carter Community Charter School, Inc.	Durham	1998
Excelsior Classical Academy CFA	Durham	2015
Global Scholars Academy	Durham	2011
Healthy Start Academy	Durham	1997
The Institute of Development of Young Leaders	Durham	2013
Kestrel Heights School	Durham	1998
KIPP Durham College Preparatory	Durham	2015
Maureen Joy Charter School	Durham	1997
NC Virtual Academy	Durham	2015
North Carolina Connections Academy	Durham	2015
Reaching All Minds Academy	Durham	2014
Research Triangle Charter Academy	Durham	1999
Research Triangle High School	Durham	2012
The Central Park School for Children	Durham	2003
Voyager Academy	Durham	2007
North East Carolina Prep	Edgecombe	2012
Arts Based School	Forsyth	2002
Forsyth Academies	Forsyth	1999
Quality Education Academy	Forsyth	1997
The Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge	Forsyth	1997
The N.C. Leadership Academy	Forsyth	2013
Crosscreek Charter (formally A Child's Garden)	Franklin	2001
Youngsville Academy	Franklin	2015
Mountain Island Charter	Gaston	2010
Piedmont Community School	Gaston	2000
Falls Lake Academy	Granville	2013
Oxford Preparatory High School	Granville	2013
Cornerstone Charter Academy	Guilford	2012
Greensboro Academy	Guilford	1999
Guilford Preparatory Academy	Guilford	2001
Phoenix Academy Inc.	Guilford	2000
Summerfield Charter Academy	Guilford	2013
The Community Preparatory and Leadership Academy: A Challenge Foundation Academy	Guilford	2012
The College Preparatory and Leadership Academy of High Point	Guilford	2012
Triad Math and Science Academy	Guilford	2008
KIPP Halifax College Preparatory	Halifax	2014
Anderson Creek Club Charter School	Harnett	2014
Shing Rock Classical Academy: CFA	Haywood	2015
The Mountain Community School	Henderson	1999

American Renaissance School	Iredell	1999
Langtree Charter Academy	Iredell	2013
Pine Lake Preparatory	Iredell	2007
Success Institute	Iredell	2000
Summit Charter School	Jackson	1997
Neuse Charter School	Johnston	2007
The Children's Village Academy	Lenoir	1997
Lincoln Charter School	Lincoln	1998
Bear Grass Charter School	Martin	2012
Aristotle Preparatory: A Challenge Foundation Academy	Mecklenburg	2013
Bradford Preparatory School	Mecklenburg	2014
Charlotte Lab School	Mecklenburg	2015
Charlotte Learning Academy	Mecklenburg	2014
Charlotte Choice Charter	Mecklenburg	2013
Charlotte Secondary School	Mecklenburg	2007
Community School of Davidson	Mecklenburg	2004
Commonwealth High School	Mecklenburg	2014
Corvian Community School	Mecklenburg	2012
Crossroads Charter High	Mecklenburg	2001
Invest Collegiate Transform	Mecklenburg	2013
Kennedy School	Mecklenburg	1998
KIPP Charlotte	Mecklenburg	2007
Lake Norman Charter	Mecklenburg	1998
Metrolina Regional Scholars' Academy	Mecklenburg	2000
Pioneer Springs Community School	Mecklenburg	2014
Socrates Academy	Mecklenburg	2005
Sugar Creek Charter School	Mecklenburg	1999
The Community Charter School	Mecklenburg	1997
Thunderbird Preparatory School	Mecklenburg	2014
Stewart Creek High School	Mecklenburg	2015
Queen City STEM School	Mecklenburg	2015
Queen's Grant Community Schools	Mecklenburg	2002
United Community School	Mecklenburg	2014
VERITAS Community School: A Challenge Foundation Academy	Mecklenburg	2015
Sandhills Theatre Arts Renaissance School (STARS)	Moore	1999
The Academy of Moore County	Moore	1997
Rocky Mount Prep. School	Nash	1997
Douglass Academy	New Hanover	2013
Cape Fear Center for Inquiry	New Hanover	2000
Island Montessori	New Hanover	2013
Wilmington Preparatory Academy	New Hanover	2007
Gaston College Preparatory (GCP)	Northampton	2001
Z.E.C.A. School of Arts and Technology	Onslow	2013
Orange Charter School	Orange	1997
The Expedition School	Orange	2014
Arapahoe Charter School	Pamlico	1997
Northeast Academy of Aerospace & Advanced Technologies	Pasquotank	2015
Bethel Hill Charter School	Person	2000
Roxboro Community School	Person	2006
Winterville Charter Academy	Pitt	2015
Uwharrie Charter Academy	Randolph	2013
CIS Academy	Robeson	1997
Southeastern Academy	Robeson	2013
Bethany Community Middle School	Rockingham	2000

Lake Lure Classical Academy	Rutherford	2010
Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy	Rutherford	1999
Gray Stone Day School	Stanly	2002
Millennium Charter Academy	Surry	2000
Mountain Discovery Charter	Swain	2002
Brevard Academy: A challenge Foundation Academy	Transylvania	1998
Union Academy	Union	2000
Henderson Collegiate	Vance	2010
Vance Charter School	Vance	1999
Casa Esperanza Montessori	Wake	2003
Cardinal Charter	Wake	2014
East Wake Academy	Wake	1998
Endeavor Charter School	Wake	2008
Envision Science Academy	Wake	2014
The Exploris School	Wake	1997
Hope Charter Leadership Academy	Wake	2001
Longleaf School of the Arts	Wake	2013
Magellan Charter School	Wake	1997
PAVE Southeast Raleigh Charter School	Wake	2015
PreEminent Charter School	Wake	2000
Quest Academy	Wake	1999
Raleigh Charter High School	Wake	1999
Southern Wake Academy	Wake	2000
Sterling Montessori Academy	Wake	1997
The Franklin Academy	Wake	1998
Torchlight Academy	Wake	1999
Triangle Math and Science Academy	Wake	2012
Wake Forest Charter Academy	Wake	2014
Haliwa-Saponi Tribal	Warren	2000
Two Rivers Community School	Watauga	2005
Dillard Academy	Wayne	1998
Bridges Academy	Wilkes	1997
Sallie B. Howard School	Wilson	1997
Wilson Preparatory Academy	Wilson	2014

Source: NC DPI Office of Charter Schools Directory. Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/charterschools/schools/>.

2015-16 CHARTER ENROLLMENT BY COUNTY

LEA	2016 Charter membership	2016 LEA Allotted ADM for Traditional Public School	Charter Membership as % of LEA
Alamance-Burlington	1,241	22,724	5.2%
Alexander	9	5,175	0.2%
Alleghany	1	1,442	0.1%
Anson	13	3,526	0.3%
Ashe	16	3,151	0.5%
Asheboro City	173	4,775	3.5%
Asheville City	363	4,413	7.6%
Avery	46	2,114	2.1%
Beaufort	335	7,027	4.6%
Bertie	243	2,453	9.0%

Bladen	278	4,708	5.6%
Brunswick	1,002	12,659	7.3%
Buncombe	1,534	24,975	5.8%
Burke	257	12,620	2.0%
Cabarrus	1,743	31,249	5.3%
Caldwell	49	12,037	0.4%
Camden	1	1,900	0.1%
Carteret	217	8,495	2.5%
Caswell	195	2,751	6.6%
Catawba	169	16,714	1.0%
Chapel Hill-Carrboro	143	12,203	1.2%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	15,535	149,554	9.4%
Chatham	968	8,448	10.3%
Cherokee	175	3,290	5.1%
Chowan	28	2,207	1.3%
Clay	21	1,329	1.6%
Cleveland	908	15,148	5.7%
Clinton City	-	3,080	0.0%
Columbus	606	6,045	9.1%
Craven	179	14,325	1.2%
Cumberland	855	50,780	1.7%
Currituck	25	3,933	0.6%
Dare	9	4,992	0.2%
Davidson	156	19,680	0.8%
Davie	8	6,345	0.1%
Duplin	13	9,952	0.1%
Durham Public	5,947	34,168	14.8%
Edgecombe	951	5,865	14.0%
Elkin City	23	1,256	1.8%
Forsyth	2,716	54,471	4.7%
Franklin	915	8,668	9.5%
Gaston	1,849	31,442	5.6%
Gates	3	1,657	0.2%
Graham	4	1,190	0.3%
Granville	944	8,051	10.5%
Greene	8	3,245	0.2%
Guilford	5,307	71,917	6.9%
Halifax	879	2,989	22.7%
Harnett	324	20,725	1.5%
Haywood	254	7,376	3.3%
Henderson	437	13,787	3.1%
Hertford	14	3,008	0.5%
Hickory City	12	4,511	0.3%

Hoke	300	8,902	3.4%
Hyde	1	593	0.2%
Iredell	1,834	31,442	5.6%
Jackson	248	3,782	6.2%
Johnston	957	34,765	2.7%
Jones	4	1,144	0.3%
Kannapolis City	130	5,452	2.3%
Lee	19	10,153	0.2%
Lenoir	198	9,212	2.2%
Lexington City	4	3,047	0.1%
Lincoln	1,211	11,646	9.4%
Macon	48	4,442	1.1%
Madison	16	2,485	0.6%
Martin	396	3,372	10.5%
McDowell	30	6,347	0.5%
Mitchell	17	1,956	0.9%
Montgomery	120	4,103	2.8%
Moore	519	13,056	3.8%
Mooresville City	361	6,065	5.6%
Mt. Airy City	170	1,641	9.4%
Nash	938	15,868	5.6%
New Hanover	888	26,241	3.3%
Newton City	7	3,230	0.2%
Northampton	481	1,992	19.5%
Onslow	193	26,038	0.7%
Orange	518	7,526	6.4%
Pamlico	252	1,272	16.5%
Pasquotank	78	5,813	1.3%
Pender	21	8,978	0.2%
Perquimans	16	1,749	0.9%
Person	1,104	4,628	19.3%
Pitt	799	24,104	3.2%
Polk	120	2,286	5.0%
Randolph	565	17,924	3.1%
Richmond	17	7,548	0.2%
Roanoke Rapids City	172	2,951	5.5%
Robeson	349	23,465	1.5%
Rockingham	396	13,006	3.0%
Rowan	206	19,944	1.0%
Rutherford	1,064	8,387	11.3%
Sampson	4	8,685	0.0%
Scotland	15	5,997	0.2%
Stanly-Albemarle	240	8,670	2.7%

Stokes	116	6,440	1.8%
Surry	404	8,283	4.7%
Swain	97	2,083	4.4%
Thomasville City	22	2,404	0.9%
Transylvania	287	3,561	7.5%
Tyrrell	7	593	1.2%
Union	2,021	41,924	4.6%
Vance	1,124	6,480	14.8%
Wake	9,577	158,049	5.7%
Warren	162	2,342	6.5%
Washington	92	1,647	5.3%
Watauga	158	4,330	3.5%
Wayne	519	18,982	2.7%
Weldon City	195	945	17.1%
Whiteville City	245	2,241	9.9%
Wilkes	70	9,896	0.7%
Wilson	1,283	12,375	9.4%
Yadkin	63	5,430	1.1%
Yancey	6	2,238	0.3%
2016 State Total	79,575	1,459,852	5.2%

Source: NC DPI Charter School Membership By Region 2015-16.

Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/csmembersregion15-16.pdf>.

INTRODUCTION TO MAGNET SCHOOLS

In contrast to charter schools, magnet schools are considered part of the traditional public school system, operating under the same local administration and local school board. The unique feature of magnet schools is that they have a focused theme and a curriculum aligned to that theme. Some of these themes include STEM, fine and performing arts, Montessori, and international studies. Students are still taught the complete range of subjects required by the state's curriculum, but teaching is tailored to the magnet school's theme.

Magnet schools first came into being in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a tool to further academic desegregation in large urban school districts. Magnets were intended to attract students from across different school zones. To accomplish this, magnet schools had to do two things. First, they had to open their enrollment to students outside their traditional school zones. Second, they had to provide an environment or experience that would attract students and families from other school zones. By encouraging enrollment rather than forcing enrollment, the hope was that families would voluntarily desegregate their children.¹⁶

The number of magnet schools has increased rapidly since federal court rulings accepted magnet programs as a method of desegregation in the mid-1970s. Between 1982 and 1991, the number of individual schools offering magnet programs nearly doubled and the number of students enrolling in these programs almost tripled. By the 1991-92 school year, more than 1.2 million students were enrolled in magnet schools in 230 school districts. In the 1999-2000 school year, 1,372 magnet schools operated in 17 of the 33 states that reported such information to the federal government. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

¹⁶ Public School Review, What is a Magnet School? Available at <http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/2>.

reports that as of 2011, 2,722 magnet schools were in operation in the United States. The states with the most magnet schools are Michigan (464), Florida (414), California (282) and Texas (219).¹⁷

Students do not attend magnet schools based on the location of their home and zoned school boundaries as they do for traditional public schools. Interested students instead have to apply and are selected based on a lottery (within the school district) or prioritized criteria. Prioritized criteria often include an expressed interest in the theme of the magnet school or indicators of potential. Approximately one-third of magnet schools use academic performance as a selection criterion.¹⁸

Magnet schools tend to be mainly an urban phenomenon. According to U.S. Department of Education, more than half of large urban school districts have magnet school programs as compared to only 10% of suburban districts. Magnet schools exist at the elementary school, middle school, and high school levels.

Magnet schools often have a much more racially diverse student body than other schools in their districts because the students do not come solely from specific neighborhoods or geographic zones; however, students of low socioeconomic status tend to be underrepresented in magnet schools. Students who attend magnet schools are also more likely to live in two-parent households and to have parents who graduated from college than students who attend traditionally zoned public schools.¹⁹

Local districts finance magnet schools the same way they finance other public schools. However, magnet schools do have access to additional federal funds through the Magnet Schools Assistance program. The Magnet Schools Assistance program provides grants to eligible local educational agencies to establish and operate magnet schools that are operated under a court-ordered or federally approved voluntary desegregation plan. In FY 2015, the U.S. Department of Education earmarked over \$91 million in grant funding through this program to magnet schools throughout the country.²⁰

MAGNET SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA

There are 107 magnet schools in North Carolina serving 73,713 students.²¹ The majority of these magnet schools are located in Wake and Mecklenburg counties, with 47 and 26 magnet schools respectively. In North Carolina, 70 percent of the students who attend magnet schools are minorities compared to the state average of 48 percent.²²

The application process and criteria for magnet school admission varies by LEA. For example, in Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools, students who meet minimum entrance requirements for a school are selected through a lottery. In comparison, Wake County uses prioritized criteria to select students who meet the minimum entrance requirements.²³

¹⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. Available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_108.asp.

¹⁸ Public School Review, What is a Magnet School?

¹⁹ Public School Review, What is a Magnet School?

²⁰ U.S. Department of Education, Magnet School Assistance Program.

Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/magnet/index.html>.

²¹ Public School Review, North Carolina Magnet Public Schools.

Available at http://www.publicschoolreview.com/state_magnets/stateid/NC.

²² Public School Review, North Carolina Magnet Public Schools.

²³ Wake County Magnet School Application Process. Available at <http://www.wcpss.net/Page/189>.

INTRODUCTION TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS

In contrast to charter and magnet schools, private schools are largely unaccountable to government institutions and are traditionally privately funded. Funding for private schools comes from a variety of sources including tuition, private grants, and fundraising from parents or private organizations. Students typically have to apply to be admitted to a private school. Private schools do not have to meet state-approved academic standards, make budgets public, adhere to open meetings and records laws, or publicly report student achievement. Private schools, however, must comply with health and safety regulations, anti-discrimination laws and laws stating the minimum number of school days.²⁴

In the United States, a wide variety of schools are termed “private schools,” including boarding schools and religiously-affiliated schools. According to the Private School Universe Survey, in the 2011-12 school year there were 30,861 private elementary and secondary schools in the United States serving 4,494,845 students, representing 10 percent of all students. Sixty-eight percent of private schools were religiously-affiliated, with the majority identified as Catholic, followed by Conservative Christian, Jewish, Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopal, Seventh-day Adventist, and Calvinist. In the 2011-12 school year, the racial makeup of private school students was 71 percent white, 10 percent Hispanic or Latino, 9 percent black or African-American, and 5 percent Asian. The majority of private schools operate in cities or suburban areas. Private schools in the United States have an average student to teacher ratio of 11:1.²⁵

For the 2011-2012 school year, private school full tuition averages were \$7,770 for elementary schools, \$13,030 for secondary schools, and \$13,640 for combined schools.²⁶

PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA

In 2014-15, North Carolina private schools served 97,259 students at 720 schools.²⁷ Over 70 percent of these students attended religious schools. Private schools in NC are 50% male and 50% female. Racial data for private schools is not available from the NC Department of Administration’s Division of Non-Public Education.

In 2015-16, the average NC private school tuition rates were estimated at \$7,925 for elementary schools and \$9,065 for high schools.²⁸

Enrollment and Number of Private Schools in North Carolina in 2014-15					
County	Enrollment	Number	County	Enrollment	Number
Alamance	1,384	8	Jones	0	0
Alexander	79	1	Lee	656	4
Alleghany	60	1	Lenoir	1,030	3
Anson	0	1	Lincoln	50	2
Ashe	0	0	Macon	67	2
Avery	63	2	Madison	33	2
Beaufort	338	3	Martin	0	0

²⁴ Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, School Choice FAQs. Available at

<http://www.edchoice.org/school-choice-faqs/are-participating-private-schools-held-accountable/>.

²⁵ National Center for Education Statistics, Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results From the 2011-12 Private School Universe Survey. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013316.pdf>.

²⁶ US Department of Education, Statistics About Nonpublic Education in the United States. Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/nonpublic/statistics.html>.

²⁷ NC Department of Administration, 2015 North Carolina Private Schools Statistics. Available at <https://ncdoa.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/documents/files/14-15CSStats.pdf>.

²⁸ Private School Review, North Carolina Private Schools. Available at <http://www.privateschoolreview.com/north-carolina>.

Bertie	363	3	McDowell	174	2
Bladen	157	2	Mecklenburg	19,205	88
Brunswick	381	9	Mitchell	63	3
Buncombe	3,312	29	Montgomery	103	2
Burke	116	3	Moore	1,091	11
Cabarrus	1,915	9	Nash	1,149	7
Caldwell	146	2	New Hanover	3,016	25
Camden	0	0	Northampton	155	2
Carteret	370	6	Onslow	884	14
Caswell	0	0	Orange	1,174	8
Catawba	1,440	12	Pamlico	92	2
Chatham	136	3	Pasquotank	368	8
Cherokee	18	1	Pender	0	1
Chowan	0	1	Perquimans	0	0
Clay	43	1	Person	83	1
Cleveland	136	2	Pitt	2,055	16
Columbus	160	4	Polk	15	1
Craven	1,009	7	Randolph	774	9
Cumberland	4,152	27	Richmond	231	5
Currituck	15	1	Robeson	335	8
Dare	75	3	Rockingham	305	7
Davidson	1,151	8	Rowan	904	10
Davie	63	1	Rutherford	279	8
Duplin	116	5	Sampson	569	4
Durham	4,486	30	Scotland	276	3
Edgecombe	0	0	Stanly	471	5
Forsyth	4,494	24	Stokes	159	2
Franklin	26	2	Surry	77	2
Gaston	2,129	11	Swain	76	2
Gates	0	0	Transylvania	76	3
Graham	12	1	Tyrrell	0	0
Granville	20	1	Union	2,173	12
Greene	73	1	Vance	626	6
Guilford	6,383	36	Wake	16,932	78
Halifax	471	4	Warren	22	1
Harnett	386	8	Washington	0	0
Haywood	144	4	Watauga	84	2
Henderson	865	15	Wayne	1,225	10
Hertford	396	5	Wilkes	250	3
Hoke	82	4	Wilson	974	6
Hyde	38	1	Yadkin	47	2
Iredell	1,052	14	Yancey	73	3
Jackson	156	3			
Johnston	425	6	TOTAL	97,259	720

Source: NC Department of Administration, 2015 North Carolina Private Schools Statistics.

RECENT LEGISLATION AFFECTING PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA

VOUCHERS “OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS” (SENATE BILL 402)

Section 8.29 of Senate Bill 402 created a voucher program for students who met certain criteria and income thresholds to attend private schools beginning in the 2014-15 school year. In 2015, following a legal challenge, the NC Supreme Court ruled that the program was constitutional, setting the stage for expansion of the program in 2015-16 and likely continued growth in the years ahead.²⁹

The voucher program is overseen by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA), whose primary mission is to oversee financial aid programs for postsecondary education. Under the legislation, for a child to be eligible, he or she must be a resident of North Carolina, have not graduated from high school, be at least five years old on or before August 31, have a household income that does not exceed 133% of the amount required to receive free or reduced lunch, and meet one of the following criteria:

- was a full-time student attending a North Carolina public school the previous semester;
- received a scholarship grant in the previous year;
- is entering kindergarten or first grade;
- is in foster care; or,
- adoption was finalized in the past year.

Nonpublic schools that accept students receiving scholarships must be regionally or nationally accredited and must agree to meet certain requirements. These requirements include providing tuition information to SEAA, conducting a criminal background check on the highest-ranking staff person, providing information to the scholarship recipient's parents on their progress, administering national grade level tests for third grade and above, disclosing test results and graduation rates for scholarship recipients, and conducting a financial review if grants received exceed \$300,000.

In the wake of the 2015 NC Supreme Court ruling, the 2015 state budget added \$6.8 million for vouchers in 2015-16 and \$14 million in 2016-17. In 2016-17, total support for the state's voucher program will reach \$24.8 million. This will fund approximately 6,000 vouchers at the maximum grant of \$4,200 per year.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS (HOUSE BILL 269)

Repealing the tax credit for children with disabilities and related fund for Special Education and Related Services, House Bill 269 creates a program called Special Education Scholarship Grants for Children with Disabilities that provides up to \$3,000 per semester for eligible students to use for reimbursement of tuition and services. To receive a grant, a child with a disability must be under the age of 22, require an individualized education plan, and receive special education services on a daily basis. Eligibility is reviewed every three years by local educational agencies.

²⁹ News & Observer, NC Supreme Court upholds school voucher program. Available at <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article28437271.html>. NC Supreme Court. Available at <https://appellate.nccourts.org/opinions/?c=1&pdf=33175>.

HOME SCHOOLING IN NORTH CAROLINA

In the school year 2014-15, there were 67,804 home schools operating in North Carolina serving an estimated 106,853 students.³⁰ Of these schools, over 61 percent identify as religious schools and 39 percent identify as independent schools.

Because the Division of Non-Public Education does not record the number of students enrolled at each home school, the total home school enrollment is estimated by the number of home schools and the average number of children per household rate of 1.6. As seen in the table to the right, North Carolina home school students are spread over all ages.

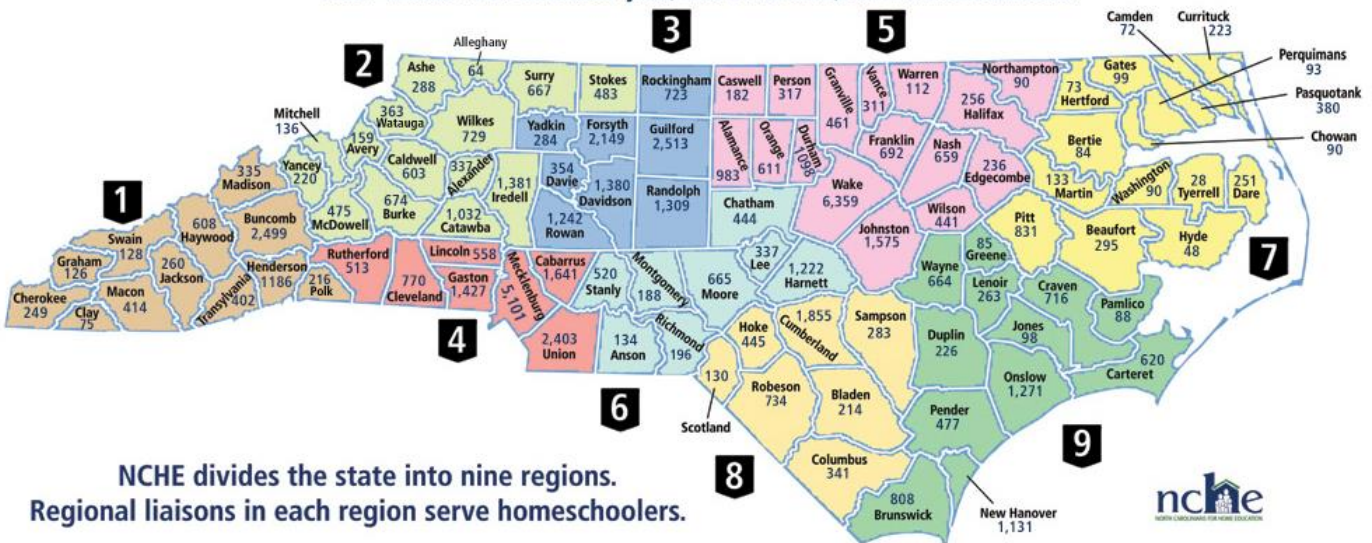
Parents or guardians residing in North Carolina with at least a high school diploma are permitted to home school their children if they submit a Notice of Intent to the North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education and agree to minimum requirements, including maintaining immunization records, administering a nationally standardized test each year that includes the subject areas of spelling, reading, English grammar, and mathematics, and operate "on a regular schedule, excluding reasonable holidays and vacations, during at least nine calendar months of the year." Home schools in North Carolina are required to elect to operate as either non-religious or religious schools under Part 1 or 2 of Article 39 in the NC General Statutes.

Age	2014-15 Estimated NC Home School Enrollment
6	7,863
7	10,164
8	8,884
9	9,156
10	9,183
11	9,596
12	9,595
13	9,686
14	8,919
15	9,180
16	7,949
17	6,878
Total	106,853

Source: 2015 NC Home School Statistical Summary

Number of Homeschools in North Carolina by County

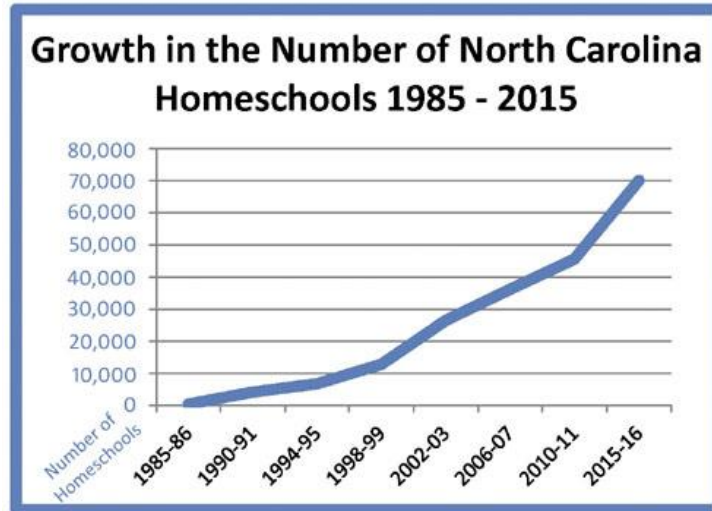
After the 2014-2015 school year, there were 67,804 NC homeschools.



Source: North Carolinians for Home Educations, Statistics. Available at <http://www.nche.com/stats>.

³⁰ NC Department of Administration, 2015 North Carolina Home School Statistical Summary. Available at <http://ncdoa.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Documents/hhh240.pdf>.

Home schools have grown dramatically over the last 20 years. January 1988, there were an estimated 1046 homeschools in North Carolina. Since then, the number of homeschools in North Carolina has grown at an annual growth rate of more than 16%. In August 2015, North Carolinians for Home Education estimated there were more than 70,000 home schools in North Carolina.³¹



Source: North Carolinians for Home Educations, Statistics.

RECENT LEGISLATION REGARDING HOME SCHOOLS

The NC General Assembly passed legislation in 2013 amending the definition of home school. SB 189 amended the definition to allow parents, legal guardians, or members of the household to determine the scope and sequence of academic instruction, provide academic instruction, and determine additional sources of academic instruction for the children in the home school.

³¹ North Carolinians for Home Educations, Statistics.