



RHODE
ISLAND

Annual Update: Charter Schools

Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

November 18, 2025

What are charters schools?

- Charter schools are public schools as defined by Rhode Island General Laws § 16-77-2.1. This includes district charter schools, independent charter schools, and mayoral academies.
- Additionally, “All students and prospective students of a charter school shall be deemed to be **public school students**, having all the same rights under federal and Rhode Island law as students and prospective students at a non-chartered public school.” § 16-77-3.1(b)
- No charter schools in Rhode Island can be managed or operated by a for-profit entity. § 16-77-3.1(d)
- Council approval is required for the “establishment or continuation” of charter schools. § 16-77-5.1(b)
- Intended to be vanguards, laboratories, and an expression of the on-going and vital state interest in the improvement of education. § 16-77-3.1(b)



Charter School Funding and Facilities

- Funding Formula: “money follows the student” as determined by state statute. § 16-7.2-5
- Federal funds go directly to the charter school districts as determined by the United States Department of Education.
- Local per pupil payment rates are reduced by:
 - Either 7% or the difference in defined expenditures between traditional LEAs and Charter LEAs (whichever is greater).
 - Either 14% or the difference in the defined expenditures between traditional LEAs and Mayoral Academy Charter LEAs (whichever is greater).
- Charters must lease or purchase their facilities.
- Charters are only eligible for up to 30% housing aid reimbursement for projects approved with the SBA. § 16-77.1-5



Charter School Admissions

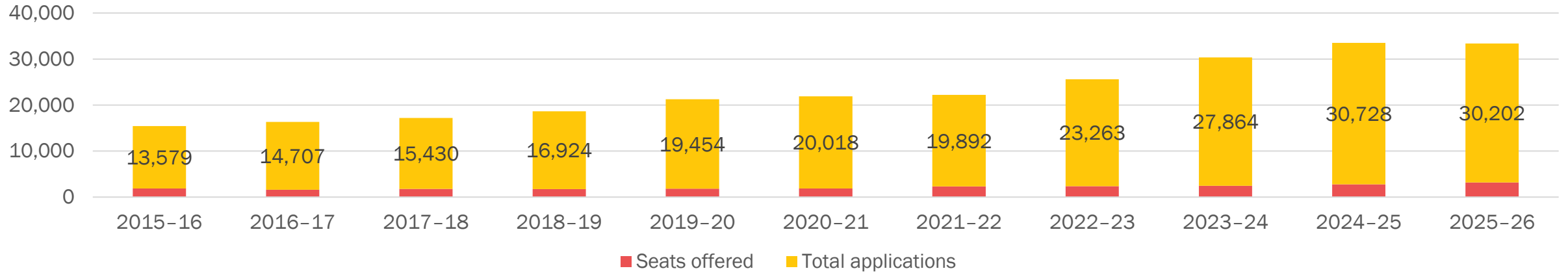
Charters are required to hold blind lotteries to determine seats offered and maintain a waitlist.

- Lottery Weights and Preferences:
 - Schools can prioritize siblings, children of staff, and children of founders.
 - May have weights or defined percentages by enrolling district.
- RIDE Oversight:
 - EnrollRI student application system:
 - **100% of charters are participating in EnrollRI to support student enrollment.**
 - RIDE directly monitors and collects data on charter school lotteries.



Parent Demand for Charter Schools Continues to Increase

Charter School Lottery Summary 2025–26



| Year | Seats offered | Total applications | Applications per available seat |
|---------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 1,222 | 12,005 | 9.8 |
| 2015-16 | 1,871 | 13,579 | 7.3 |
| 2016-17 | 1,609 | 14,707 | 9.1 |
| 2017-18 | 1,770 | 15,430 | 8.7 |
| 2018-19 | 1,711 | 16,924 | 9.9 |
| 2019-20 | 1,823 | 19,454 | 10.7 |
| 2020-21 | 1,889 | 20,018 | 10.6 |
| 2021-22 | 2,304 | 19,892 | 8.6 |
| 2022-23 | 2,353 | 23,263 | 9.9 |
| 2023-24 | 2,475 | 27,864 | 10.3 |
| 2024-25 | 2,765 | 30,728 | 11.1 |
| 2025-26 | 3,170 | 30,202 | 9.5 |

Charter Demand by Community

78% of charter school applicants come from Rhode Island's Urban Core.

| City | Unique Applicants | Total Applications | Average Applications per Unique Applicant | % of Unique Applicants by City |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Providence | 4,262 | 19,121 | 4.5 | 45% |
| Pawtucket | 1,646 | 4,246 | 2.6 | 18% |
| Woonsocket | 865 | 1,326 | 1.5 | 9% |
| Central Falls | 582 | 1,445 | 2.5 | 6% |
| Cranston | 409 | 954 | 2.3 | 4% |
| Warwick | 187 | 419 | 2.2 | 2% |
| North Providence | 150 | 479 | 3.2 | 2% |
| Cumberland | 124 | 191 | 1.5 | 1% |
| West Warwick | 100 | 210 | 2.1 | 1% |
| All Cities | 9,372 | 30,202 | 3.2 | - |



In Rhode Island's urban core districts, 55% of open enrollment middle schools are in a one-star school.



In Rhode Island's urban core districts, 88% of open enrollment high school seats are in a one-star school.



48% of seats in Rhode Island's charter school seats are schools receiving three or more stars.

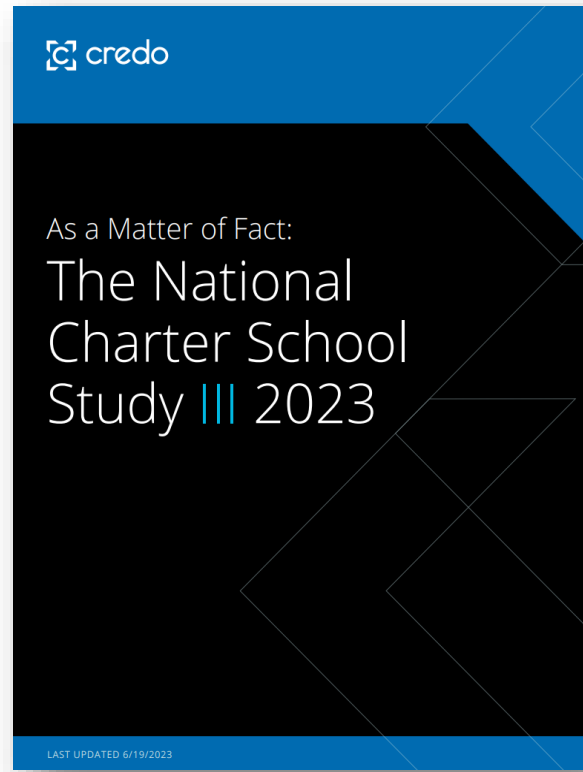


5.7% of seats in Rhode Island's charter school seats are in a one-star school.



The National Charter School Study III 2023

In June 2023, Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes released the National Charter School Study III. This study examines the academic progress of students enrolled in charter schools compared with the progress of students enrolled in traditional public schools.



National Charter School Study conducted by CREDO at Stanford University in 2023 indicates that charter students in Rhode Island outperformed their peers in traditional public schools, achieving an additional **half year of learning each year in reading and math.**



The National Charter School Study: The Results

Compared to other states, Rhode Island students receive 90 additional days of instruction in ELA and 88 additional days in Math.

| State | Days of Learning Equivalence in Reading | Days of Learning Equivalence in Math |
|-------|---|--------------------------------------|
| AR | 3 | -1 |
| AZ | 20 | 1 |
| CA | 11 | 4 |
| CO | 15 | 13 |
| DC | 5 | 32 |
| FL | 8 | -1 |
| ID | 17 | 8 |
| IL | 40 | 48 |
| IN | 3 | -27 |
| LA | 3 | 6 |
| MA | 41 | 41 |
| MD | 37 | 37 |
| MI | 36 | 24 |
| MN | 21 | 8 |
| MO | 39 | 56 |

| State | Days of Learning Equivalence in Reading | Days of Learning Equivalence in Math |
|-----------|---|--------------------------------------|
| NC | 13 | -17 |
| NJ | 33 | 32 |
| NM | 11 | 7 |
| NV | 8 | 3 |
| NY | 75 | 73 |
| OH | -4 | -38 |
| OR | -18 | -32 |
| PA | -1 | -21 |
| RI | 90 | 88 |
| SC | -8 | -47 |
| TN | 34 | 39 |
| TX | 24 | -5 |
| UT | -2 | -14 |
| WA | 26 | 39 |
| WI | 15 | 16 |





The Impact of Rhode Island's Charter School Performance
Review System on the Education Landscape
Policy Review

[CREDO Policy Review, October 2025](#)

- Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University highlights how the 2017 overhaul of the charter accountability framework led to increased efficacy in evaluating charter schools.
 - Led to Rhode Island being ranked 1st nationally in CREDO's 2023 National Charter School study
- "Part of our success ... is that you had to jump through lots more hoops than in other states where they were letting charters just open ..."
(School Leader)



RIDE's approach to charter school authorization is working.

