



**5th Edition**

**April 2019**

# **Charter & Cyber Charter School Reform Report**

**Democratic House Education Committee**

**Representative James Roebuck**



**Updated Charter School Legislation and  
Academic Performance of Charter Schools**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**Education Committee**

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**Democratic Chairman**

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As Democratic Chairman of the House Education Committee, I am proud to present this 5<sup>th</sup> edition of our Charter School Reform Report. In this report, we will provide an update on charter school reform legislation and initiatives, as well as the academic performance of charter and cyber charter schools in Pennsylvania.

In the 5 editions of this report, we have analyzed and reported on the performance of charter and cyber charter schools based on academic performance measures. Although the measures have changed since 2010 from Average Yearly Progress to School Performance Profile scores, charter schools, particularly cyber charter schools, still perform academically worse than traditional schools. That is not to say that there are no charter schools that are high performing. This report continues to identify these high performing charter schools and the excellent education they provide to their students. Unfortunately, these charter schools are the exception not the rule.

Even worse, since the enactment of the Charter School Law in 1997, 43 charter and cyber charter schools have closed for both academic and financial reasons, including fraud and abuse. Given the \$1.1 billion cost of charter and cyber charter schools to school districts and taxpayers, it is imperative that the state be extra vigilant in requiring greater and more transparent financial accountability of charter schools.

Unfortunately, the state has never reviewed the work of charter schools to look at both its successes and failures. Therefore, I am introducing HR263 to require the State Board of Education to conduct a study on the best practices of high performing charter schools, and to investigate those practices by our worst charter schools and those that have closed in regard to their failing academic performance and/or financial irregularities. By learning from both the successes and failures of charter schools, we can improve learning for all our public school students and make needed reforms to the existing Charter School Law.

I hope you find this report informative and encourage your interest in improving the education of all our children.



James R Roebuck

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# Charter School FAQ

## What is a Charter School?

- Charter Schools were established by Act 22 of 1997 to offer alternatives in education of students using innovative strategies meant to improve student performance and save money
- Charter Schools are self-managed Public Schools that are created and controlled by parents, teachers, community leaders, and colleges or universities
- Charter Schools are approved and held accountable by School districts through a 3-5 year charter that can be renewed for up to 5 years
  - Charter Schools not approved by School Districts can seek approval from the State Charter School Appeals Board
- An existing public school can be converted into a charter school if 50% of the school staff and parents of its students agree to the conversion

## What is a Cyber Charter School?

- A Cyber Charter School, established by Act 88 of 2002, primarily delivers instruction to students over the internet which allows them to enroll students throughout the state.
- Cyber Charter Schools are approved and are to be held accountable by the State since the passage of Act 88 of 2002.
- Like Charter Schools, Cyber Charter Schools are approved through a 3-5 year charter that can be renewed for up to 5 years.
- A significant number of cyber school students were formerly home-schooled students.

## How many Charter and Cyber Charter Schools are there?

2017-2018	Charter Schools	Cyber Charter Schools	Regional Charter Schools	Totals
<b>Schools</b>	155	15	10	180
<b>Enrollment</b>	220,387	37,734	9,212	267,333
<b>Special Education Students</b>	18.6%	21.9%	17%	19%

## **What are some important features about Charter and Cyber Charter Schools?**

- Charter and Cyber Charter Schools are relieved of many State education mandates, except for those concerning nondiscrimination, health and safety and accountability.
  - Major mandate exemption is up to 25% of teachers do not have to be certified.
- Charter and Cyber Charter Schools are funded with State and Local Funds through a funding formula at 70-80% of a traditional public school funding.
- Like all public schools, Charter and Cyber Charter Schools are responsible for their students taking the PSSA's, and are held accountable under the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- There are no enrollment caps on Charter and Cyber Charter Schools

## **How are Charter and Cyber Charter Schools Funded?**

As public schools, charter and cyber charter schools are funded in the same way that district-run public schools are funded, namely through tax dollars. Charter and Cyber Charter Schools are not allowed to charge tuition.

- Currently, Charter School entities receive from the school district of residence for **non-special education students** the budgeted total expenditure per average daily membership of the prior school year, minus the budgeted expenditures of the district of residence for nonpublic school programs; adult education programs; community/junior college programs; student transportation services; for special education programs; facilities acquisition, construction and improvement services; and other financing uses, including debt service and fund transfers as provided in the Manual of Accounting and Related Financial Procedures for Pennsylvania School Systems established by the department.
- For **special education students**, the Charter School entities receives for each student enrolled the same funding as for each non-special education student plus an additional amount. This is determined by dividing the district of residence's total special education expenditure by the product of multiplying the combined percentage of the special education payment times the district of residence's total average daily membership for the prior school year.

## **When does a school district have to provide transportation to a charter school?**

The law requires school districts to provide transportation to resident students attending a charter school "on such dates and periods that the charter school is in regular session" if:

- The charter school is located within the district, or
- The charter school is located not more than ten miles by the nearest public highway beyond the district boundary, or
- The charter school is a regional charter school in which the district is participating.

**Who is responsible for the actions of a charter school and its employees, the charter school or the School District?**

As an independent, publicly funded school, each charter school has its own Board of Trustees. According to the Charter Law (Act 22 of 1997), the school is a non-profit, non-sectarian corporation and is “solely liable for any and all damages of any kind resulting from any legal challenges involving operation of a charter school.”

# Status of Charter School Reform

Over the past three legislative sessions there have been many attempts at Charter School Reforms with very little substantive legislation passed. **The legislative impasse has largely been over financial and governance issues concerning charters and cybers.**

- Charter School supporters want greater flexibility for the authorization, reauthorization and administration of charters and cybers.
- Charter School opponents are generally concerned about the financial drain of charters and cybers on public schools due to the faulty existing basic and special education funding formulas and the lack of financial accountability for charters and cybers.

## House Republican Legislation

Last session HB97 (Reese) served as the main comprehensive charter school reform legislation introduced by the House Republicans. HB97 passed the House in April 2017, but was not ultimately voted on in the Senate.

For the 2019-2020 Session, the House Republicans have not yet reintroduced HB97, but have instead introduced a four bill legislative package that includes parts of the charter school reforms included in HB97. The package includes the following legislation:

### ➤ **Charter School Reform – Ethics Requirements for Charter Trustees and Administrators (Reese)**

The legislation will improve several provisions of the Charter School Law related to making critical ethics, transparency, governance and auditing reforms, including:

- Requirements related to advertising;
- Imposing ethical obligations on charter school entities' board of trustees and administrators;
- Setting membership and quorum requirements for charter school entities' board of trustees;
- Requiring annual independent financial audits for charter school entities; and
- Setting limits on charter school entities' allowable unassigned fund balances.

### ➤ **Charter School Reform – Application and Charter Process (Topper)**

This legislation will improve the chartering process through establishment of the following:

- A standard application form to be developed by PDE for statewide use;
- A charter amendment process;
- Improving the student enrollment process and record transfer process; and
- Allowing families with multiple children attending one cyber charter school to opt out of receiving multiple computers, printers and monitors.

➤ **Charter School Reform – Facilities Regulations (Dowling)**

The legislation affects facilities for charter schools, regional charter school, and cyber charter schools (“charter school entities”), it will improve several provisions of the Charter School Law related to facilities, including:

- Granting charter school entities a right of first refusal for the purchase or lease of unused school district buildings;
- Requiring school districts, intermediate units, member institutions of the State System of Higher Education and community colleges to make their facilities available to cyber charter school students for purposes of standardized testing, in accordance with the same policy that would apply to other organizations and community groups; and
- Requiring charter school entities to cover or remove religious objects and symbols if using a sectarian facility.

➤ **Charter School Reform – Dual Enrollment for Charter Schools (Marshall)**

Allows charter schools, regional charter schools, and cyber charter schools ("charter school entities") to offer dual enrollment programs to their students. A dual enrollment program allows current high school students to enroll in concurrent college classes through an institution of higher education. Current laws only allow traditional public schools to enter into concurrent enrollment agreements and offer such programs. The legislation would allow charter school entities to offer similar programs to the students they serve.

**House Democratic Charter Schools Legislation Package: Treating all Public Schools Equally**

In April 2017 House Democrats unveiled a package of eight charter school reform bills designed to treat all Pennsylvania public schools- both traditional and charter – and their students equally under law. With charter and cyber charter schools seen more as another school choice option rather than the original intent of the charter school law that they be innovative and serve as models for all public schools. It is important that charter and cyber charter schools be held to the same academic and financial accountability standards of traditional public schools.

For the 2019-2020 Session, the House Democrats have reintroduced the Treating All Schools Equally legislation. Rep. Roebuck has said, **“The core idea of our legislative package is this: Charter schools and traditional public schools should be treated equally under law. Both receive tax dollars, and both are already considered public schools under Pennsylvania law.”**

House Democratic Charter School Legislation		
Bill #	Description	Sponsor
HB1329	<b>Limitations on Certain Unreserved Fund</b> – Amend Section 688 of School Code. Sets limits on charter and cyber charter schools’ allowable unassigned fund balances the same as school districts, and provides for the refund of excess fund balances to tuition-paying school districts.	<b>Carroll</b>
HB1330	<b>Lease Payments</b> - Prohibits lease overpayments by prohibiting individuals related to the charter school or public school entity or educational management service provider of a charter school or public	<b>Roebuck</b>

	school entity from receiving any payments for approved reimbursable annual rental for leases of buildings or portions of buildings for charter school or public school use. Requires all lease agreements entered into by any public school entity to include a copy of the lease agreement.	
HB1331	<b><u>Special Education Payments to Charter Schools</u></b> Applies the same funding principles used in the special education formula for school districts to determine a school district's payment for a special education student enrolled in a charter school. These provisions include a gradual phase-in that has the effect of applying the new methodology for calculating special education funding to only newly enrolled special education students.	<b>Miller, D</b>
HB1332	<b><u>Contractors Transparency and Fees</u></b> - Provide adequate transparency and financial accountability for contractors, including for-profit management companies that provide management, educational or administrative services to school districts or charter school entities. Also requires these entities to publicly disclose the use of any monies received from a school district or charter school as well as subject those funds to audit by the state. Limits Charter School and School District Management Organizations Fees by limiting the amount of overhead that management organizations are permitted to charge to no more than 5% of the tuition charged per student enrolled.	<b>Longietti</b>
HB1333	<b><u>Teacher Evaluation System</u></b> - Requires charter school entities to be included in the current rating system used for all public school employees beginning in the 2017-2018 school year. This will ensure that Charter and Cyber Charter teachers, principals and certified support staff are evaluated under the same system of evaluation as other public schools.	<b>McCarter</b>
HB894	<b><u>Advertising</u></b> – Requires all public school advertising to state that the ads are paid with taxpayer money. Ads can't state that schools, programs, services or transportation are free.	<b>Schlossberg</b>
HB168	<b><u>School Building Closure</u></b> – Amend Section 780 & 1311 of School Code to include procedures when a public school building closes or is shut down by the authorizer.	<b>Donatucci</b>
HB1334	<b><u>Transfer of School Records</u></b> – Requires school districts and charter schools to share student records with each other in a timely fashion. Public and nonpublic schools must transfer student records within 10 days of receiving a request from a school entity, records include attendance records.	<b>Madden</b>

# **Rep. Roebuck Proposed Charter School Study: Review of 22 years of Successful and Failed Charter Schools**

**Many of the original sponsors of the Charter School law enacted in 1997 believe that the most important intent of the law is to “encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods” and to improve student learning that can be replicated by other public schools.**

Unfortunately, the charter school movement’s original intent of developing and promoting innovative public schools has been largely replaced and subsumed under the “school choice” movement. Where what matters more is that families have more education choices either public or private for their children at taxpayer’s expense with limited or no academic or fiscal accountability to taxpayers.

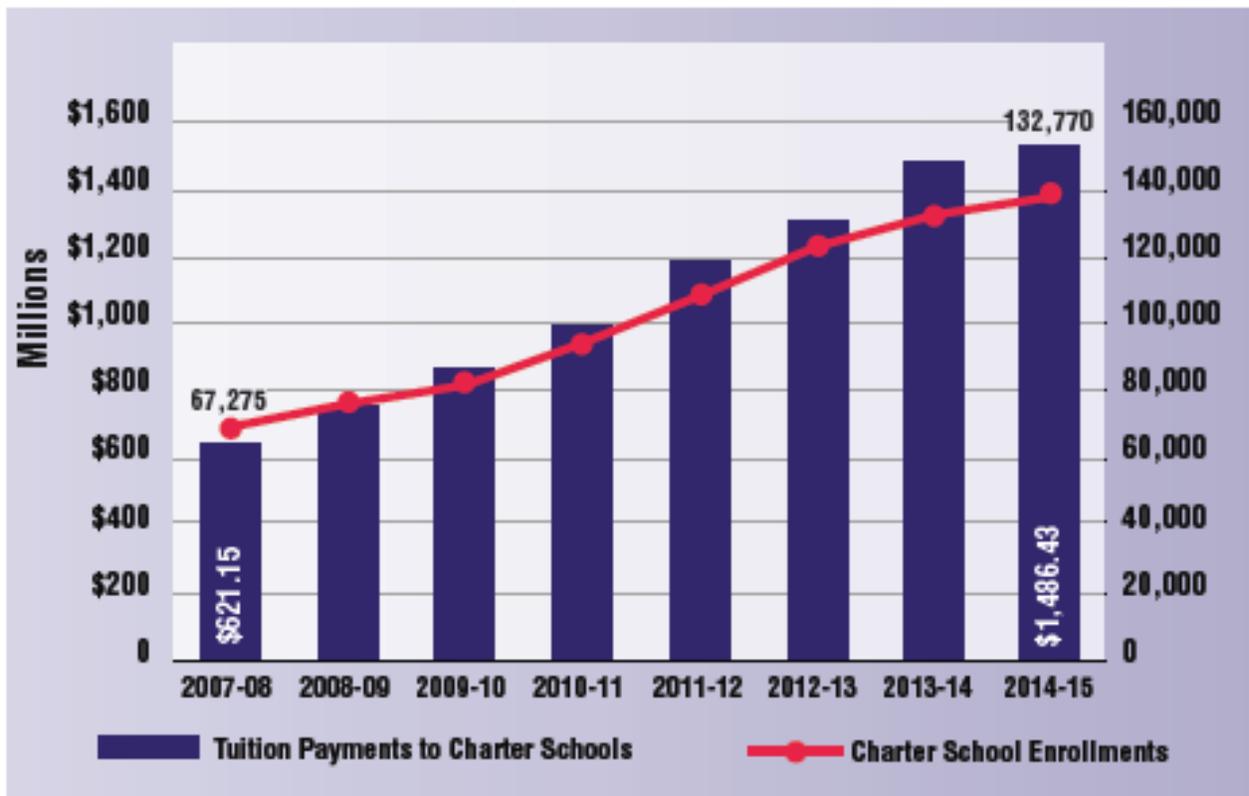
**Rep. Roebuck is introducing HR263 to require the State Board of Education to conduct a study on the best practices of high performing charter schools to meet the first three goals of the charter school law: (1) improve student learning; (2) increase learning opportunities for all pupils; (3) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods. In addition, the study would investigate those practices by our worst charter schools in regard to their failing academic performance and/or their fiscal irregularities. Only by learning from both the successes and failures of charter schools, can we improve the existing charter school law AND learn from our best charter schools about those different and innovative teaching methods. This can improve student learning and increase learning opportunities in all public schools for all our students.**

# Problems with Existing Funding of Charter and Cyber Charter Schools

## The Cost of Charter Schools to Public Schools: Basic Education

- In 2016-17 school districts paid over \$1.1 billion in basic education tuition payments to charter and cyber charters.
- In 2016-17 tuition payments to charter schools accounted for over 3.4 % of all statewide school district expenditures.

**Charter School Tuition Payments and Enrollments 2007-08 to 2014-15**



Since 2017-18 while charter school enrollment has increased by 97.4%, tuition payments from school districts to charter/cybers has increased by 139.3%.

**The existing Basic Education Funding Formula** for Charters and Cybers is based on the tuition of the school district where the students reside rather than the actual cost of instruction at the charters or cybers. The difference between the tuition amount sent to charters or cybers from school districts generally exceed the school cost of educating students in the charters and cybers.

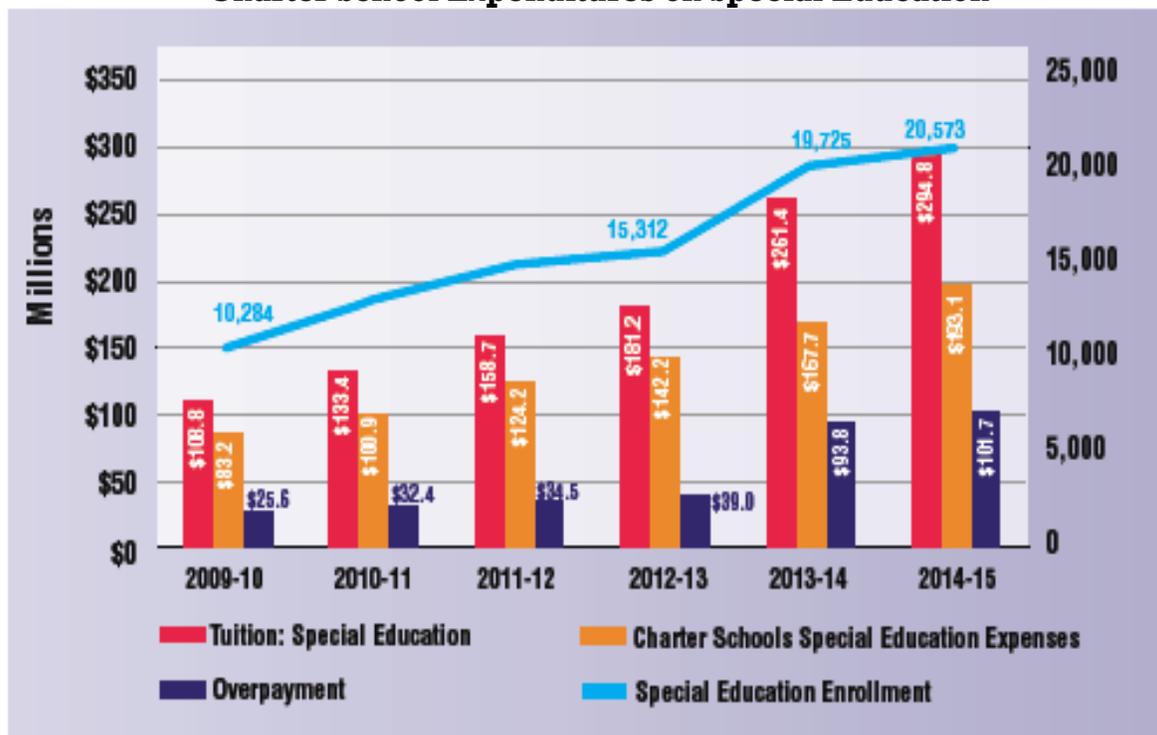
This is especially a problem with cyber charter schools who enroll students from several school districts each with their own different tuition rate. Cybers are making a profit off the difference between the cost of instruction and the generally higher tuition payments they receive from most school districts.

Past efforts to reduced basic education overpayments to cybers have failed to be enacted. These have ranged from Wolf Administration efforts in its first year’s budget proposal to set a \$5,950 rate for all cybers. This would have saved school districts \$162 million to the most recent effort in HB97 that would have saved school districts only \$27 million and only for two years.

## The Cost of Charter Schools to Public Schools: Special Education

In 2016-17 school districts paid over \$547.7 million in special education tuition payments to charter and cyber charters.

**School District Tuition Payments for Special Education and Charter School Expenditures on Special Education**



Charter/Cyber Charter Schools reported special education expenditures of only \$244 million but received \$547.7 million in special education funding. The \$303.7 difference indicates charter/cyber charters are receiving substantially more funding than is needed to educate special need children.

**The existing Special Education Funding Formula** significantly overfunds charters and cybers beyond the actual costs of special education services provided to students in charters and cybers.

When the General Assembly enacted the new Special Education Funding Formula for school districts, it was not applied to charters and cybers, even though the Special Education Funding Commission recommended it should apply to special education funding of charters and cybers. It is hoped that these overpayments will be addressed when the Special Education Funding Commission reconvenes this year to review the existing Special Education Funding formula.

# The Need for a Charter School Funding Commission

Legislation to establish a Charter School Funding Advisory Commission was introduced last session by Senator Browne and Senator Vulakovich. SB806 would have established a Charter School Funding Advisory Commission to review and make recommendations concerning charter and cyber charter school funding. The Charter School Advisory Commission would have operated in a similar manner to the Special Education and Basic Education Funding Commissions and the Public School Construction and Reconstruction (PLANCON) Advisory Committee. While no legislative action was taken on SB806 last session, Senator Browne is expected to introduce this legislation for the 2019-2020 session.

This new commission will consist of members of all four caucuses, including the majority and minority chairs of the Appropriations and Education Committees, two members appointed by the House and Senate Majority Leaders and one member appointed by the House and Senate Minority Leaders and the Secretary of Education.

The commission shall be charged with examining all current laws, regulations and executive policy statements which determine funding for charter and cyber charter schools in the Commonwealth.

The commission shall issue a report with its findings and recommendations, no later than eighteen months from the effective date of the legislation. **It is important to note that SB806 is restricted to focusing only on charter school funding issues and does not include other unrelated non-funding issues regarding charter school reform that past legislative efforts had tried to include. Adding these other non-funding issues to the work of a School Funding Commission in bills such as HB97 from last session has been a major obstacle in passing charter school reform legislation.**

Representative Boback has introduced HB1219 which would amend the Public School Code to authorize the formation of a legislative commission to review and make recommendations concerning funding related to charter schools, regional charter schools, and cyber charter schools.

Representative McCarter will also be introducing legislation to establish a Cyber Charter School Advisory Commission to review and make recommendations concerning cyber charter school funding. The Commission will be charged with examining all current laws, regulations, and executive policy statements which determine funding for cyber charter schools.

# Charter and Cyber Charter School Performance on School Performance Profile Scores

## School Performance Profile Score Averages

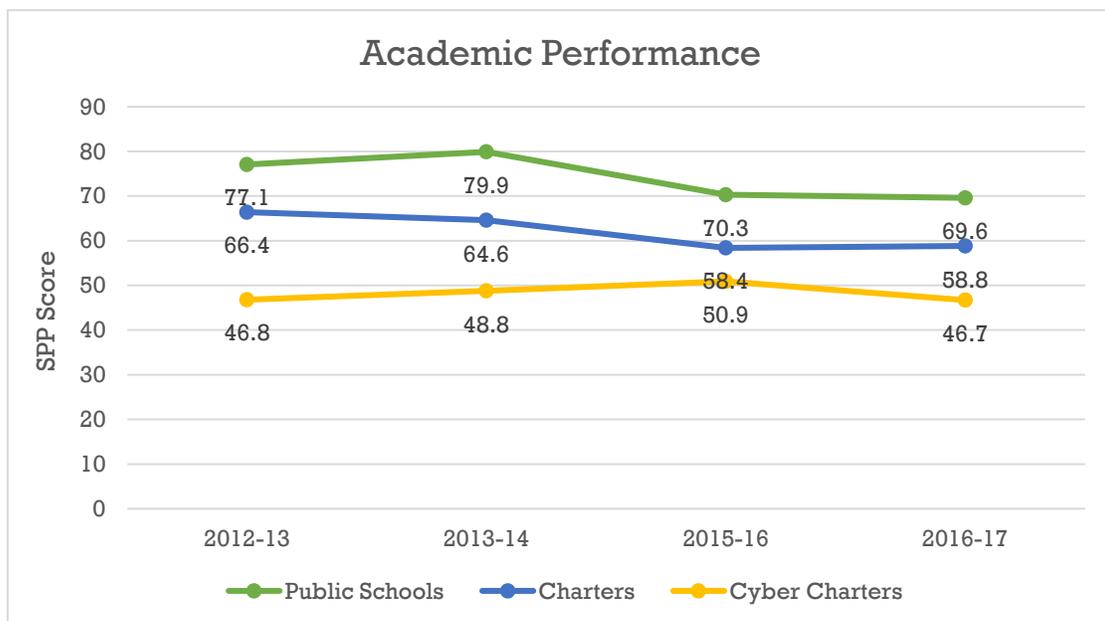
In terms of academic performance, in 2013 the state changed how it measured academic performance of schools from Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to a School Performance Score on the School Performance Profile (SPP). Since the 2012-13 school year, the PA Department of Education has issued School Performance Profiles (SPP) for every public school including charter and cyber charter schools that includes a summative School Performance Score between 0 and 100 similar to the scores a student would receive on their report card. PDE issued SPPs through the 2016-17 school year.

**Although the measures have changed since 2010 from AYP to SPP scores, charter schools, particularly cyber charter schools, still perform academically worse than other traditional public schools.**

This report's analysis on the academic performance of charter and cyber charter schools is based on School Performance Scores for four (2012-13, 2013-14, 2015-16, 2016-17) of the five years when PDE reported these scores for all public schools.

**For 2016-2017, the last year SPP reported scores, based on a score of 100, the average SPP score for traditional public schools was 69.6, for charter schools 58.8 and for cyber charter schools 46.7. None of the 14 cyber charter schools had SPP scores over 70, considering the minimum level of academic success, and 10 cyber schools had SPP scores below 50.**

**The following chart illustrates the difference between the academic performance between traditional public schools and charter and cyber charter schools has remains relatively constant between the 2012-2013 and 2016-2017 school years with traditional public school outperforming charter and cyber charter schools.**



It is important to note that there was a year long pause in 2014-15 in the calculation of scores for a majority of Pennsylvania schools, which was put in place to mitigate the unintended impacts of changes in student performance on the newly aligned and more rigorous PSSA. Due to the more rigorous PSSA, School Performance Scores for all public schools in 2015-16 and 2016-17, both traditional and charter schools on average declined from the first two years of reported SPP scores in the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years.

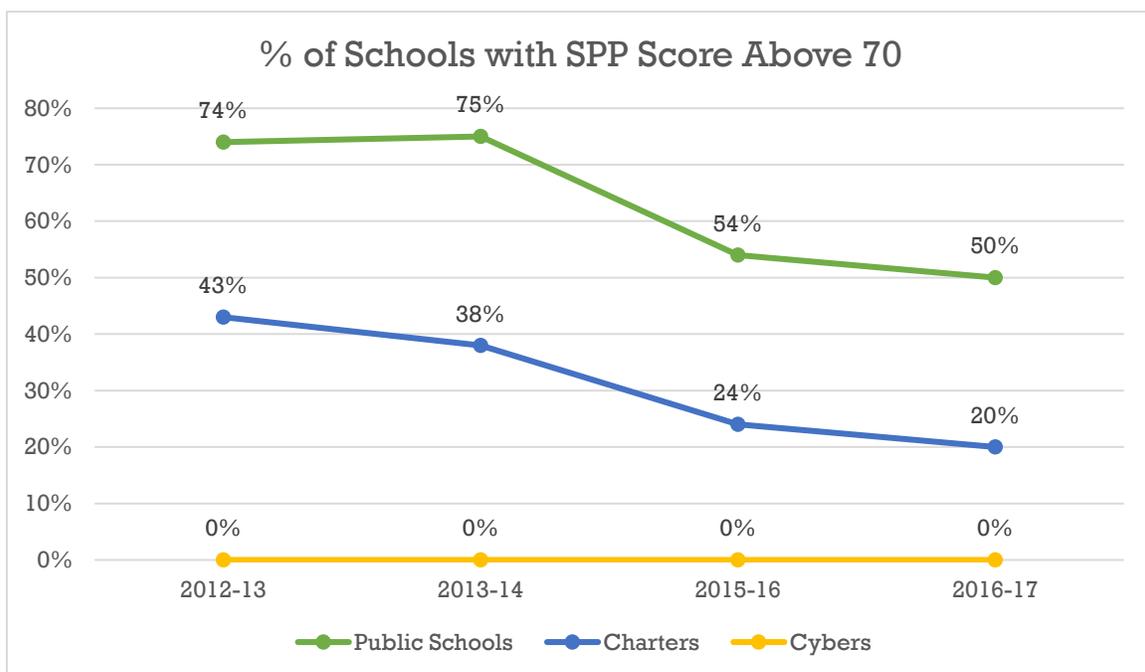
**School Performance Profile Score by Achievement Levels**

**Traditional public schools also outperform charter and cyber charter schools in terms of the percentage of their schools that are achieving academic success. For the 2016-17 school year, 51% of traditional public schools had SPP scores at or above 70 while only 20% of brick-and-mortar charter schools had SPP scores at or above 70 and no cyber charter schools had SPP scores above 70.**

**Percentage of 2016-17 School Entity SPP Scores by Achievement Level**

<i>SPP Scores</i>	<b>Public School</b>	<b>Charter School</b>	<b>Cyber Charter School</b>
<i>90-100</i>	5%	2%	0%
<i>80-89.9</i>	16%	4%	0%
<i>70-79.9</i>	30%	14%	0%
<i>60-69.9</i>	28%	25%	7%
<i>Below 60</i>	21%	55%	93%

The following chart illustrates that the difference in terms of the percentage of their schools that are achieving academic success between traditional public school and brick-and-mortar charter schools has held relatively constant between the 2012-2013 and 2016-2017 school years while no cyber charter school has achieved an SPP score above 70 during the entire five year period.



## **Performance of Charter Schools Based on How Long They Have Existed**

As was documented in last year's charter school report, overall, the performance of just brick-and-mortar charter schools do not significantly improve the longer that a charter school has been open. Fifty-six percent (56%) of brick-and-mortar charter schools have now been open for ten years or more. Unfortunately, for 2015-2016, of these 84 charter schools a significant majority, 55 of the brick-and-mortar charter schools (65%) opened 10 years or more have SPP scores below 70. This is better than those charter schools opened within the last 5 years where 94% (33 of 35 brick and mortar charter schools) have SPP scores below 70. Overall, these results are not encouraging.

For cyber charter schools, no cyber school, no matter how long they have been open, has an SPP score above 70.

Additionally, as of 2015-2016, there are 41 brick-and-mortar charter schools and 9 cyber charter schools that have been open more than 10 years that have SPP scores under 60. The continued underperformance of these charter and cyber charter schools raise concerns about renewing so many charter schools with poor performance over so many years.

## **Impact of Student Poverty on Performance of Charter Schools**

As is the case with traditional public schools, the performance of brick-and-mortar charter schools are affected by the level of student enrolled in a charter school who are economically disadvantaged. The following table compares the performance of brick-and-mortar charter schools by the percentage of their enrollment that is economically disadvantaged.

**2016-2017 Number of Charter Schools by SPP Scores and Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students Enrolled**

SPP Scores	% Economically Disadvantaged				Totals
	75-100%	50-74%	26-49%	0-25%	
90-100	0	1	0	2	3
80-89	1	2	1	3	7
70-79	5	4	6	6	21
60-69	18	9	9	3	39
Below 60	61	19	7	0	87
Totals	85	35	23	14	157

Fifty-four percent of brick-and-mortar charter schools have enrollments of economically disadvantaged students that are 75% or more. Of these 85 charters, 79 (92%) have SPP scores below 70. Of the 120 charters with more than 50% economically disadvantaged students, 108 (89%) have SPP scores below 70. In contrast, of the 37 charter schools with less than 50% economically disadvantaged students, 19 (51%) have SPP scores above 70.

As is the case in traditional public schools, as the percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolled in a charter school goes down the academic performance of the charter school improves. **Unfortunately, poverty remains the number one predictor of academic performance regardless of the type of public school - traditional, charter or cyber charter. Those public schools that address poverty and the risk factors associated with poverty will be the most successful in raising academic achievement.**

### **Charter School Closures**

*In looking at the performance of charter and cyber charter schools it is also important to document the number of charter and cyber charter schools that have closed. **Since enactment of charter school legislation in 1997, a total of 43 charter and cyber charter schools have closed, including 37 brick-and-mortar charter schools and 6 cyber charter schools. This means that 19% of charter and cyber charter schools opened since 1997 have closed.** There are variety of reasons for the closure of these charter schools including academic, financial and operational reasons that either led to the revocation of the charter by a school district, or in the case of cyber charter schools by the state, or by the charter school voluntarily closing.*

Advocates for charter schools point to these closures as evidence that the Charter School Law is ensuring that charter schools are being held accountable and charter schools failing to fulfill their charter's mission are closed. However, as noted in a recent report Better Isn't Good Enough: The Path to Improving Philadelphia's Charter School Sector by Philadelphia School Advocacy Partners and Philadelphia Charters for Excellence, the process for closing a failing charter school in Philadelphia can drag on for years while students attending these low-performing schools continue to receive a substandard education. As noted in the previous section, evidence of this problem statewide, is that at least 41 failing charter and 9 cyber charter schools that have been in existence more than 10 years with SPP scores below 60 are still open. The report calls on the State Legislature to streamline the process of closing charter schools that are underperforming.

*Appendix A provides a list of Charter and Cyber Charter Schools that have closed*

# Highlighting High Performing Charter Schools

## What makes them work and what makes them different?

While overall academic performance of charter schools and particularly cyber charter schools is disappointing and trails the academic performance of traditional public schools, there are examples of charter schools that are successful in terms of academic performance and innovative approach to educating students. By looking at those charter schools, we can identify what characteristics make them work, as well as the student population factors that impact their academic performance.

### What are the High Performing Charter Schools?

For purposes of this analysis, a high performing charter school is one that had School Performance Profile (SPP) scores of 80 or above. **For 2016-2017, there were only 10 high performing charter schools.** This list does not include any cyber charter schools, as none of the 14 cyber charter schools have SPP scores even above 70 let alone 80.

What is most startling about the 2016-2017 SPP results for charter schools is the significant drop in the number of high performing charter schools compared to 2012-13 and 2013-2014. As noted earlier in the report, due to a more rigorous PSSA, School Performance Scores for all public schools, both traditional and charter and cyber charter schools on average declined from the first two years of reported SPP scores in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school year.

**Still, the number of high performing charter schools decreased by more than 50% from 28 in 2012-2013 to only 10 in 2016-2017. Of the 38 charter schools that had SPP scores over 80 in either 2012-2013 or 2013-2014, only 8 had SPP scores over 80 in 2016-2017.**

Overall, in the five years of this study from 2012-2017, there were 40 charter schools that had an 80 or above SPP score in one or more of the four school years 2012-13, 2013-14, 2015-16, and 2016-17. Only 5 of these 40 charter schools had an 80 or above SPP score in all four years:

- School Lane CS (K-8 Bucks County)
- Renaissance Academy (K-12, Chester County)
- Infinity CS (K-8, Dauphin County)
- Souderton CS Collaborative (K-12, Northampton County)
- Bucks County Montessori CS (9-12, Bucks County)

### Characteristics of High Performing Charter Schools

The characteristics of the significantly lower number of 10 high performing charter schools than in past years make them even more like specialty or magnet versions of traditional charter schools.

As is noted in the table on the next page, most of these high performing charter schools enroll fewer than 50% of their students who are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, of the 5 charter schools cited earlier that had an 80 or above SPP score in all four years of this study, none of them had an economically disadvantaged student enrollment above 50%. This is noted not to disparage the great work of these high performing charter schools, but to point out how

difficult it is for schools serving high poverty student populations to be high performing schools. Student poverty remains the number one predictor of the academic performance of a school.

The tables below provide data on high performing charter schools for the 2012-13, 2013-14, 2015-16 and 2016-17 school year:

<b>Charter School Characteristics</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2016-2017</b>
TOTAL	28	24	11	10
SPP score of 90 to 100	3	4	3	3
SPP Score of 80.0 to 89.9	25	20	8	7
50% or More Economically Disadvantaged Students	12	9	2	4
Less than 50% Economically Disadvantaged Students	16	15	9	6
15% or More Special Education Students	2	4	1	1
Less than 15% Special Education Students	26	20	10	9
Less than 10% Special Education Students	10	11	5	2
Established Pre-2005	22	16	9	7
Established 2005-2009	5	6	1	2
Established 2010-2014	1	2	1	1

These charter schools also serve significantly fewer **special education students** than traditional public schools. **In fact, for 2016-2017 only one of the 10 high performing charter schools had a special education student population greater than the 15% average of traditional public schools.** Finally, as noted in the 2013 Special Education Funding Commission report, charter schools enroll significantly less special education students with severe disabilities than traditional public schools. The academic performance of special education students is significantly lower than non-special education students.

For 2016-2017, in terms of **how long a high performing charter school has been in existence**, 9 of the 10 charter schools were established more than 10 years ago. This is a higher percentage than in 2012-2013 or 2013-2014, where with 22 of the 28 high performing charters in 2012-13 and 16 of the 24 high performing charters were established more than 10 years ago.

Based on the characteristics of the 10 high performing charter schools in 2016-2017, the picture of a typical high performing charter school is one that:

- was established more than 10 years ago;
- with less than 50% of their student enrollment being economically disadvantaged; and
- with 15 % or less of their student enrollment being special education students.

- are more like magnet type specialty school as evidenced by 2 of the high performing schools which are Performing Arts Charter Schools.

What is most common is that these high performing charter schools offer innovative education programs with most of them focused on a specific approach to education instruction or a specific academic area of instructional focus. They offer different approaches to instruction. Many offer longer school days, more days of schools, and more individualized education programs. All public schools, whether they are traditional public schools or charter schools would benefit from the innovative education programs offered by these high performing charter schools.

*Appendix B lists all the high performing charter schools and their characteristics for the 2012-13, 2013-14, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 school year.*

## APPENDIX A

### Charter School Closures

Institution Name	City	School District	Closed Date	Reason for Closing
Advanced Charter Enterprise School	Mercer		10/26/2014	Temporary closing – ACES suspending operations 10/26/14 for the remainder of the school year.
ARISE Academy Charter High School	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2015	academic, financial, and management problems since opening
Beaver Area Academic CS	Beaver		9/30/2015	No reason in EdNA
Career Connections Charter Middle School	Allegheny		9/26/2006	No reason in EdNA
Career Connections CHS	Allegheny	Pittsburgh SD	6/30/2014	Didn't meet all the conditions of its charter, didn't meet requirements for student performance, and didn't provide expanded choices or serve as a model.
Center for Economic & Law CHS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2003	Close Date 6/30/03 – Charter revoked
Chester CS	Delaware	Chester-Upland SD	6/30/2014	No reason in EdNA
Creative Educ Concepts CS	Delaware	Chester-Upland SD	8/31/1999	Charter revoked
Delaware Valley CHS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	06/30/2017	Fiscal problems and poor academic performance
Education Plus Academy Cyber CS	Chester		12/30/2015	financial issues stemming from the state budget freeze of 2015
Einstein Academy CS	Bucks	Morrisville Borough SD	6/30/2003	Charter revoked
Erin Dudley Forbes CS	Chester	Oxford Area SD	6/30/2010	Closed
Frontier Virtual Charter High School	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	7/1/2012	Financial mismanagement, student truancy, poor academic performance
Germantown Settlement CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2009	No reason in EdNA
Graystone Academy CS	Chester	Coatesville Area SD	6/30/2013	No reason in EdNA
Helen Thackston Charter School	York	York City SD	07/01/2018	Financial mismanagement, not completing required financial audits, and declining academic performance
Hope CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2013	Closed 6/30/13 charter revoked by School District – academic, financial and operational
Imani Education Circle CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2016	Poor academic performance and financial mismanagement
Medical Academy CS	Lehigh		6/30/2016	Poor academic performance and financial mismanagement

Midwestern Regional Virtual CS	Mercer		6/30/2016	No reason in EdNA
New Hope Academy CS	York	York City SD	6/30/2014	failure to meet state academic performance requirements
New Media Technology CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2016	Poor academic performance and financial mismanagement. Failure to provide students with the rich technology outlined in its application
Northeast CS	Lackawanna		8/7/2003	No reason in EdNA
Northwest PA Collegiate Academy CS	Erie	Erie City SD	6/30/2005	Closed
PA Learners Online Regional Cyber CS	Allegheny	Steel Valley SD	6/30/2013	Closed June 2013 organizational/operational reasons
Pennsylvania Global Academy CS	Erie	Millcreek Township SD	8/9/2005	Closed – PA global reclosed with date of 8/17/05. It had been reopened on 9/21/05 to allow child accounting to process a final social security reimbursement.
Pocono Mountain Charter School	Monroe	Pocono Mountain SD	6/30/2014	Closed June 23, 2014
Pocono School of Excellence CS	Monroe	Pocono Mountain SD	6/30/2004	No reason in EdNA
Renaissance Academy Pittsburgh Alt of Hope CS	Allegheny	Pittsburgh SD	6/30/2007	No reason in EdNA
Renaissance CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2009	No reason in EdNA
Roberto Clemente Elementary Charter School	Lehigh	Allentown City SD	07/03/2017	Financial mismanagement, conflict of interests, and low academic performances
Ronald H Brown CS	Dauphin	Harrisburg City SD	6/30/2006	No reason in EdNA
Sankofa Academy CS	Chester	West Chester SD	6/30/2014	Closed June 2014 academic, financial and operational
Solomon Charter School, Inc.	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	10/30/2013	Closed October 2013 charter voluntarily surrendered charter due to organizational/operational reasons
Thurgood Marshall Acad. CS	Allegheny	Wilkesburg City SD	11/15/2002	failure to provide the promised curriculum, to use the number of certified teachers required by law, to meet the requirements for student performance and to follow acceptable financial standards
Truebright Science Academy CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2019	failure to make adequate yearly process (AYP) in every year during the Charter School's current charter term, failure to provide adequate academic supports and program implementation for English Language Learners and for students with special needs, and having fewer than 75 percent of professional staff certified.

Village CS of Chester-Upland	Delaware	Chester-Upland SD	6/30/2008	Charter and district merged the school into the district program
Vitalistic Therapeutic CS of the Lehigh Valley	Lehigh	Bethlehem Area SD	1/30/2013	Closed January 2013 charter revoked by School District
Wakisha CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	12/23/2014	Closed December 19, 2014 financial and Operational
Walter D Palmer Leadership Learning Partners CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	1/30/2015	Closed December 31, 2014, financial and operational; SRC revocation of Charter on January 15, 2015.
Wonderland CS	Centre	State College SD	08/01/2018	Fiscal problems and poor academic performance
World Communications CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2017	Academic, management and financial problems with low and declining academic performance
Young Scholars Kenderton CS	Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	6/30/2016	Partnership school that reverted back to SRC control. Scholar Academies charter operator left Kenderton due to the high cost of operating the school's large special education population.

## APPENDIX B

### 2012-2013 High Performing Charter Schools **GREATER THAN 50%** Economically Disadvantaged Students

County	School Name	Grade Range	Total Enrollment	% Econ. Disadv. Students	% of Spec. Needs Students	Year Est.	SPP Score
Allegheny	Propel CS-Montour	K-8	416	71	16	2007	80.4
Allegheny	City CHS	HS 9-12	622	66	12	2002	81.2
Philadelphia	Franklin Towne Charter Elementary School	K-8	902	55	11	2000	81.8
Allegheny	Propel CS-McKeesport	K-8	394	87	12	2004	82.8
Allegheny	Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh CS	K-5	214	86	7	1999	85.5
Philadelphia	Ad Prima CS	K-8	407	66	4	2004	86
Philadelphia	Christopher Columbus CS	K-8	779	66	12	1999	86
Philadelphia	Folk Arts-Cultureal Treasures CS	K-8	477	85	13	2005	88
Philadelphia	Young Scholars CS	MS 6-8	250	83	12	1999	88.6
Philadelphia	Franklin Towne CHS	HS 9-12	1,013	51	11	2000	89.1
Erie	Montessori Regional CS	K-6	337	52	8	2004	89.8
Philadelphia	New Foundations CS	K-10	1,067	62	9	2000	83.5

### 2012-2013 High Performing Charter Schools **LESS THAN 50%** Economically Disadvantaged Students

County	School Name	Grade Range	Total Enrollment	% Econ. Disadv. Students	% of Spec. Needs Students	Year Est.	SPP Score
Luzerne	Bear Creek Community CS	K-8	421	36	14	2004	80.0
Philadelphia	Philadelphia Academy CS	K-12	1,182	31	21	1999	80.4
Bucks	School Lane CS	K-8	642	38	9	1998	82.3
Centre	Young Scholars of Central PA CS	K-8	246	14	10	2005	82.3
Monroe	Evergreen Community CS	HS 6-12	94	0	5	2006	82.3
Philadelphia	Philadelphia Performing Arts CS	K-8	1,060	44	10	2000	83.9
Allegheny	Environmental Charter School at Frick PA	K-8	525	30	10	2008	85.0
Montgomery	Souderton CS Collaborative	K-12	1,083	11	7	2002	85.0
Chester	Collegium CS	K-12	2,043	25	12	1999	86.2
Chester	Renaissance Academy CS	K-12	975	20	8	1999	87.9
Beaver	Baden Academy CS	K-5	210	25	9	2012	89.1
Philadelphia	Green Woods CS	K-8	413	16	11	2002	89.5
Dauphin	Infinity CS	K-8	121	12	4	2003	89.9
Philadelphia	MAST Community Charter School	K-12	1,306	37	13	1999	90.0
Northampton	Lehigh Valley Academy Regional CS	K-8	197	7	11	2000	93.2
Bucks	Bucks County Montessori CS	K-6	199	0	10	2000	94.2

## 2013-2014 High Performing Charter Schools GREATER THAN 50% Economically Disadvantaged Students

County	School Name	Grade Range	Total Enrollment	% Econ. Disadv. Students	% of Spec. Needs Students	Year Est.	SPP Score
Philadelphia	Mastery CS-Thomas Campus	K-12	1123	71	14	2006	81.5
Allegheny	Propel CS-Northside	K-5	295	84	15	2011	81.8
Philadelphia	Planet Abacus CS	K-8	492	55	4	2007	81.8
Allegheny	*Propel CS-McKeesport	K-8	397	83	11	2004	83.8
Philadelphia	Laboratory CS	K-8	497	55	3	1998	83.9
Philadelphia	*Franklin Towne CHS	HS 9-12	1190	56	9	2000	86.1
Philadelphia	*Christopher Columbus CS	K-8	794	65	11	1999	87.7
Philadelphia	*Folks Arts-Cultureal Treasures CS	K-8	481	84	13	2005	88.4
Philadelphia	*Young Scholars CS	MS 6-8	251	81	12	1999	89.2

\*Charter Schools was also a Performing Charter School in 2012-2013

## 2013-2014 High Performing Charter Schools LESS THAN 50% Economically Disadvantaged Students

County	School Name	Grade Range	Total Enrollment	% Econ. Disadv. Students	% of Spec. Needs Students	Year Est.	SPP Score
Beaver	Lincoln Park Performing Arts CS	HS 7-12	656	28	7	2005	81.1
Centre	*Young Scholars of Central PA CS	K-8	271	28	9	2005	82.6
Northampton	*Lehigh Valley Academy Regional CS	K-12	134	33	8	2002	82.8
Bucks	*School Lane CS	K-8	822	41	8	1998	83.3
Philadelphia	*Green Woods CS	K-8	466	17	9	2002	83.8
Monroe	*Evergreen community CS	MS 6-12	95	0	0	2006	84.3
Lackawanna	Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence CS	K-8	189	13	0	2012	85.7
Philadelphia	*MAST Community Charter School	K-12	1322	37	13	1999	86.6
Centre	Centre Learning Community CS	MS 5-8	102	24	27	1998	87.3
Luzerne	*Bear Creek Community CS	K-8	437	41	15	2004	87.4
Northampton	Lehigh Valley Charter School for Arts	HS 9-12	472	25	10	1999	88.0
Montgomery	*Souderton CS Collaborative	K-8	204	5	12	2000	92.0
Chester	*Renaissance Academy CS	K-12	999	20	15	1999	92.5
Bucks	*Bucks County Montessori CS	K-6	200	0	10	2000	94.4
Dauphin	*Infinity CS	K-8	124	10	0	2003	96.7

\*Charter Schools was also a Performing Charter School in 2012-2013

**2015-2016 High Performing Charter Schools GREATER THAN 50% Economically Disadvantaged Students**

<b>County</b>	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Grade Range</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>%Econ. Disadv. Students</b>	<b>% of Spec. Needs Students</b>	<b>Year Est.</b>	<b>SPP Score</b>
<b>Allegheny</b>	City CHS	9-12	617	68	14	2002	89.8
<b>Philadelphia</b>	Franklin Towne CHS	9-12	1197	67	12	2000	94.9

**2015-2016 High Performing Charter Schools LESS THAN 50% Economically Disadvantaged Students**

<b>County</b>	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Grade Range</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>%Econ. Disadv. Students</b>	<b>% of Spec. Needs Students</b>	<b>Year Est.</b>	<b>SPP Score</b>
<b>Dauphin</b>	Infinity CS	K-8	151	7	6	2003	80.8
<b>Beaver</b>	Lincoln Park Performing Arts CS	7-12	706	27	7	2005	81.7
<b>Chester</b>	Renaissance Academy CS	K-12	1060	20	15	2000	82.8
<b>Bucks</b>	School Lane CS	K-11	1089	46	11	1998	83.7
<b>Northampton</b>	Lehigh Valley Charter HS for the Arts	9-12	553	21	6	1999	84.8
<b>Allegheny</b>	MAST Community Charter School	K-12	1313	40	14	1998	86.2
<b>Dauphin</b>	Capital Area School for the Arts CS	9-12	187	17	7	2013	86.7
<b>Bucks</b>	Bucks County Montessori CS	K-6	194	0	8	2000	91.1
<b>Montgomery</b>	Souderton CS Collaborative	K-8	222	5	10	2000	92.9

**2016-2017 High Performing Charter Schools GREATER THAN 50%  
Economically Disadvantaged Students**

<b>County</b>	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Grade Range</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>%Econ. Disadv. Students</b>	<b>% of Spec. Needs Students</b>	<b>Year Est.</b>	<b>SPP Score</b>
<b>Philadelphia</b>	Franklin Towne Charter Elementary School	K-8	936	56	12	2009	80.5
<b>Lackawanna</b>	Fell CS	K-9	155	68	10	2002	81.8
<b>Allegheny</b>	City CHS	9-12	573	66	17	2002	84.0
<b>Philadelphia</b>	Franklin Towne CHS	9-12	1162	66	14	2000	96.8

**2016-2017 High Performing Charter Schools LESS THAN 50%  
Economically Disadvantaged Students**

<b>County</b>	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Grade Range</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>% Econ. Disadv. Students</b>	<b>% of Spec. Needs Students</b>	<b>Year Est.</b>	<b>SPP Score</b>
<b>Centre</b>	Young Scholars of Central PA CS	K-8	389	26	14	2005	80.7
<b>Montgomery</b>	Souderton CS Collaborative	K-8	231	9	12	2000	83.7
<b>Philadelphia</b>	Green Woods CS	K-8	695	12	6	2002	84.1
<b>Northampton</b>	Lehigh Valley Charter HS for the Arts	9-12	627	34	8	1999	89.2
<b>Dauphin</b>	Capital Area School for the Arts CS	9-12	199	15	10	2013	90.3
<b>Bucks</b>	Bucks County Montessori CS	K-6	195	0	11	2000	90.8