

Utah Charter Schools



Expanding Public Education

Utah State Charter School Board
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Report produced by the Utah State Charter School Board Staff
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FOREWORD

Charter schools were introduced to the state of Utah in 1999 and since inception, the goal has been to advance public education and have positive student outcomes. With strong support from our Governor, our legislators, and the State Board of Education, the number of charter schools in Utah has seen continued growth. In fact, we currently have 132 schools in operation statewide as of school year 2018.

The charter movement continues to emphasize quality, innovation, and choice. Charter schools provide diverse learning opportunities for students and generate new and exciting opportunities for educators. Utah charter schools continue to experiment with new models of instruction and accountability as they focus on learning outcomes and student academic growth.

As the largest authorizer in Utah, the State Charter School Board is working hard to enhance the charter school movement in Utah and is moving in some exciting directions. Our board and staff bring an unwavering dedication to student performance and an unyielding commitment to ethical and sound business practices. We stand by our values of integrity, autonomy, innovation, choice, accountability, excellence and collaboration. We are guided by our strategic plan, including our mission “to provide for positive student outcomes by authorizing, overseeing and elevating successful public charter schools through a rigorous approval process, effective oversight and meaningful collaboration.”

The State Charter School Board is committed to building and maintaining positive relationships with our schools through improved communication, functionality and transparency. We are also committed to holding schools accountable to high quality standards and to annually evaluate the performance of the schools we authorize. As was the focus 25 years ago when this movement first began, we seek autonomy in exchange for accountability. Please join us in our vision “to advance excellence in public education in Utah.”



Kristen Elinkowski

Utah State Charter School Board Chair

UTAH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD PROFILES



Kristin Elinkowski, Board Chair. Mrs. Elinkowski is the owner of an Internet/direct response marketing company. She formerly served as the president of the Board of Directors at North Davis Preparatory Academy. Mrs. Elinkowski previously worked as a congressional staff assistant to Congressman James V. Hansen, and as a campaign manager for several local campaigns. Mrs. Elinkowski has served as the vice chair on the Layton City Planning Commission, and has volunteered on several committees in her community. She also is an Honorary Commander at the 388th Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base. She is a graduate of Weber State University and the proud parent, along with her husband Ron, of three great kids.

DeLaina Tonks, Board Vice Chair. Mrs. Tonks is currently the director at Mountain Heights Academy, an online public charter school. She previously taught high school French and Spanish, and worked as an online instructional designer in Upper Arlington, Ohio. Mrs. Tonks is a 2014 “Best of State – Principal” winner and was also named as one of Utah Business’ “30 Women to Watch.” She serves as a member of the national Association of American Educators Foundation Board, Argosy University’s Educational Program Advisory Committee, President Holland’s Community Advisory Council at Utah Valley University, and has enjoyed previous service as the Draper Youth Council Chair, Legislative District 27 Chair, as a member of the Utah Immigration Commission, and the State Office of Education’s Digital Literacy Task Force. Mrs. Tonks holds a BA in French and Spanish teaching from Brigham Young University, an MA in Second Language Acquisition from The Ohio State University, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Instructional Psychology and Technology at Brigham Young University. She and her husband, Paul, live on top of a mountain with their four fabulous children, three cats, two bettas, and one turtle.



Dean Brockbank. Mr. Brockbank is legal counsel for the Greenfield Environmental Trust Group. He served on the Board of Trustees of the Legal Aid Society of Salt Lake for three years, and as Chairman of the School Community Council for Park Lane Elementary School for six years. Mr. Brockbank has served as a teacher-volunteer with Junior Achievement, as the executive sponsor for the United Way fundraiser campaign, and as a long-time volunteer for the Boy Scouts of America. He holds an accounting degree from Brigham Young University and a law degree from George Mason University. He speaks Spanish, French and Portuguese. He is married to Stephanie Brockbank, and they have five children. Governor Gary Herbert appointed Mr. Brockbank to the Utah State Charter School Board in 2010 and reappointed him in 2014.

Bruce Davis Ph.D. Dr. Davis serves as the Vice Provost and Dean of Continuing Education at Weber State University, where he teaches in the Goddard School of Business and Economics and the Dumke College of Health Professions. He has taught at Weber State for 33 years and serves on a number of other boards, including the boards of Intermountain McKay-Dee Hospital, the Davis Chamber of Commerce, Utah Certified Development Company, UTOPIA, and the NUAMES school board. He also serves on the Layton City Council. He and his wife Valerie are the parents of seven children and have 14 grandchildren.





Michelle Smith. Mrs. Smith is passionate about charter schools. She was a grassroots education activist who worked closely with members of the legislature authorizing the establishment of permanent charter schools. She also helped found the Utah Association of Public Charter Schools and helped pass legislation establishing the Utah State Charter School Board. She has been a primary founder of both Timpanogos Academy and Karl G. Maeser Preparatory Academy, and was a founder of Freedom Academy in Provo and Summit Academy in Draper. She has assisted the founders of many other Utah charter schools including Odyssey, Lincoln, Mountainville, and Noah Webster Academies. Mrs. Smith has been married to serial entrepreneur and former Utah State Charter School Board member Eric Smith for twenty-six years. She is the mother of seven children ages nine to twenty-three years old and the grandmother of a five month old. She enjoys international travel and speaks conversational Spanish and rudimentary French, Italian and Hebrew.

Cynthia Phillips. Mrs. Phillips is currently the Executive Director of the Weilenmann School of Discovery, a public charter school located in Park City, UT. She has been a teacher and administrator in secondary schools for the past 33 years, during which she has taught Latin, history, English language arts, and ancient Greek. She has never let her administrative assignments take her fully out of the classroom since teaching and students are her love and passion. Prior to her administrative and teaching positions at the Weilenmann School, Mrs. Phillips was an administrator and teacher at the Waterford School in Sandy, UT. She is currently a member of the Lone Peak Hospital Board in Draper, UT, a member of the Northeastern Utah Educational Services Board, and a member of the Utah Professional Practices Advisory Commission. Mrs. Phillips holds a BA in Latin from Brigham Young University, an MA in Classics from Tufts University, an MA in history from the University of Utah, and is currently a PhD candidate in Comparative Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of Utah. Mrs. Phillips and her husband, Greg, reside in Sandy, UT and Midway, UT. They have five children and eight grandchildren.



James Moss. Mr. Moss is an attorney specializing in employment law and business litigation with Payne & Fears LLP. He has been involved with the J. Reuben Clark Law Society as the Chair of the Service and Outreach Committee, and Chair of the Orange County Chapter. He has also served on the Community Council for Wasatch High School and on the Education Committee for the Utah Valley Chamber of Commerce, and has tutored English-language learners in elementary schools. He has received degrees in Political Science and Law from Brigham Young University, and an Ed.D. from the University of Southern California, where he focused on charter schools and labor law issues. Mr. Moss grew up in Orem, UT and now lives with his wife and five children in Midway, UT. He enjoys mountain biking, skiing and traveling with his family.

INTRODUCTION

Utah charter schools are continuing to increase their prominence in the state. With 135 charter schools and over 75,000 enrolled students, charter schools have shown consistent growth in enrollment from year to year and are representing a greater share of the Utah student population than ever before. Despite this growth, the demand for alternative and innovative educational opportunities outpaces the supply in many areas and thousands of students are wait-listed statewide every year.

The mission of charter schools is to provide additional educational options and quality outcomes for students and parents. Successful charter schools are more than a gathering of excellent teachers and effective curricula. These schools also have sound policy, strong governance, capable leadership, fiscal responsibility, and parent and community engagement. The vast majority of Utah public charter schools possess this level of quality. Some common trends seen among the most successful charter schools are strong professional development, teacher one-on-one time with students, effective use of data, smaller class sizes, and leveled learning.

This report takes a look at charter schools on the whole, identifying some of Utah charter schools' greatest successes, as well as areas for improvement in the coming year. While the majority of success metrics are relatively consistent with prior years, the strongest trend in Utah charter schools is a consistent growth in demographic diversity. As a result, this year's report includes an expanded look at the demographic make-up of the charter school student population. Demographic diversity provides an additional way to distinguish Utah charter schools on top of the variability and originality of the educational models.

The variety that Utah charter schools should not be overlooked. Some schools focus on serving educationally disadvantaged students, while others target advanced students and offer strong college preparatory curriculum. Schools also vary in their focus (e.g., arts, STEM, classical education) and in their educational programs. There are many charter schools with impressive achievements, as well as several charter schools continuing to innovate and improve. Those wishing to know more about individual charter schools are encouraged to access the Charter School Directory at <http://schools.utah.gov/charterschools/School-Directory.aspx> and the USOE Data Gateway at <http://schools.utah.gov/data/Data-Gateway.aspx>.

This report celebrates the accomplishments of all charter schools and their students, and shares information and performance data for charter schools regardless of authorizer.



State Charter School Board



Our Vision

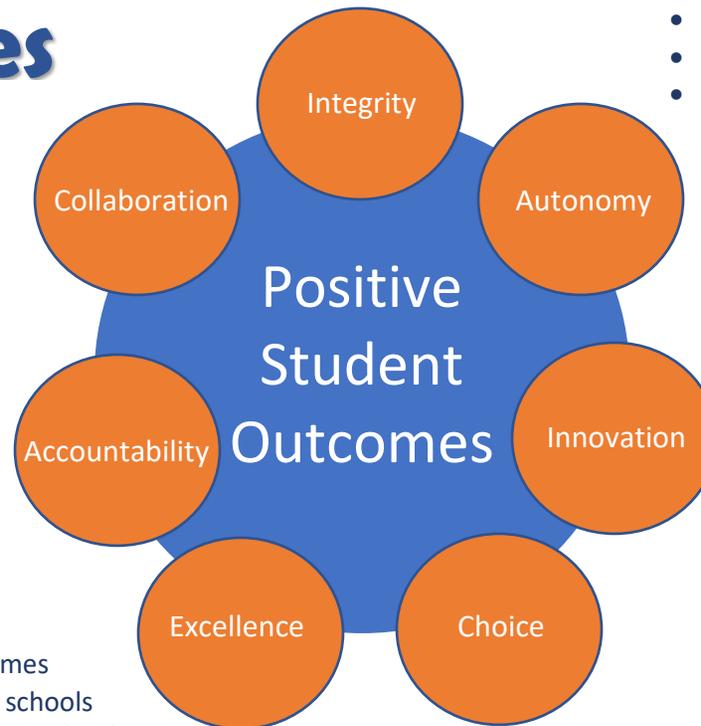
is to advance excellence in public education in Utah.

Our Mission

is to provide for positive student outcomes by authorizing, overseeing, and elevating successful public charter schools through a rigorous approval process, effective oversight, and meaningful collaboration.

Our Core Values

- Working together with the State Board of Education, the Legislature, local school boards, and other agencies
- Sharing ideas and building networks
- Ensuring high quality student outcomes and stewardship of public funding
- Taking on responsibility for the success of Utah charter schools
- Committing to high quality student outcomes
- Encouraging growth of successful charter schools and working to improve our low-performing schools



- Holding ourselves to high standards
- Acting with fairness and respect
- Communicating effectively and with transparency
- Supporting the mission of charter schools
- Encouraging innovative and diverse approaches to education
- Providing opportunity to develop unique educational experiences
- Fostering the development of vibrant, sustainable, and high-performing schools
- Valuing experimental approaches
- Sharing successful findings and initiatives
- Providing alternatives for parents and students
- Leveraging limited resources to provide the best possible education



Utah Charter Schools



Charter Schools by the numbers...

135 charter schools in the state of Utah

75,567 total students enrolled in charter schools

75 school visits made by the SCSB in 2017

91% of charter schools authorized by the SCSB

5 approved charters and expansions for 2018

319 participants in SCSB mentoring and training initiatives

6 charter schools are in the

Top 10

for mathematics growth or proficiency



WINTER SPORTS SCHOOL



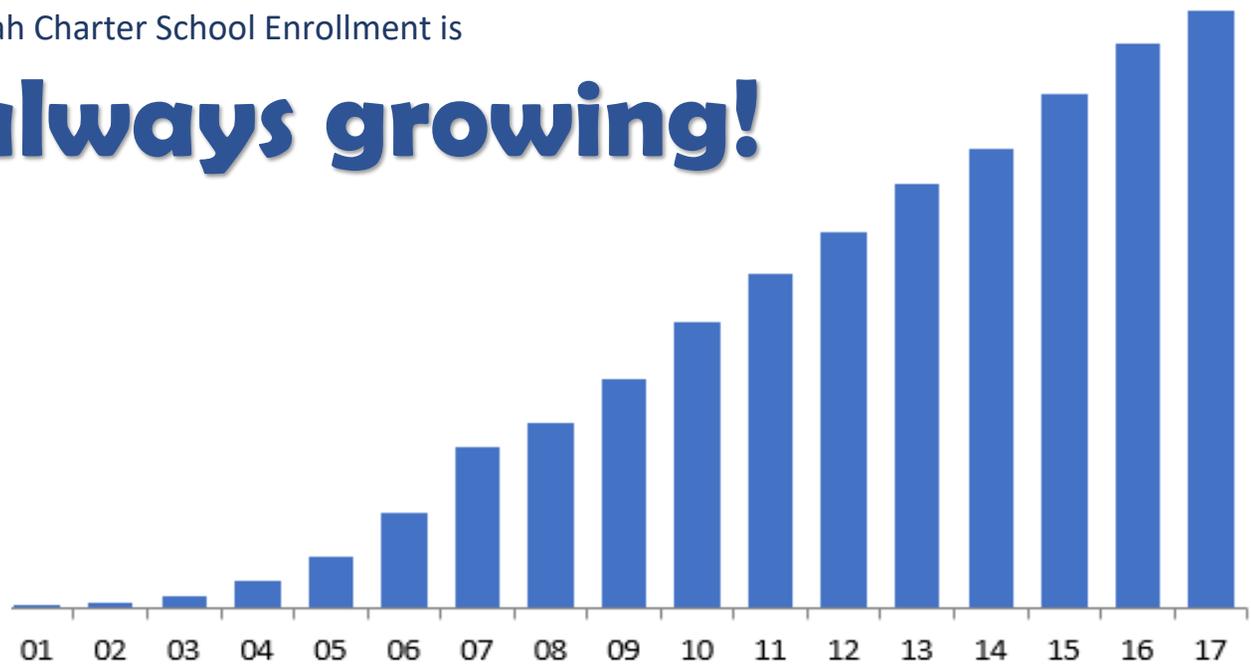
NORTHERN UTAH ACADEMY
for MATH, ENGINEERING & SCIENCE

Guardian Academy
Inspiring Tomorrow's Leaders



Utah Charter School Enrollment is

always growing!

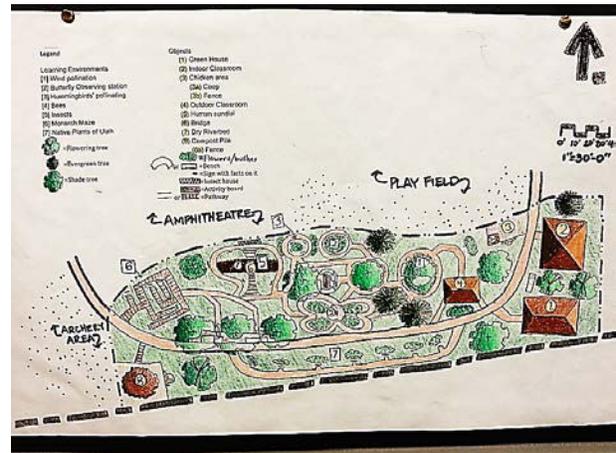


CHARTER SCHOOL INNOVATION

The charter school movement encourages the improvement of student outcomes through original and innovative methods. In an effort to discover new methods and tap into charter school creativity, the Utah State Charter School Board approved funding for the Innovative Student Improvement Program (ISIP) Grant that offers up to \$100,000 to schools attempting to enhance the mission of their current charter, or to implement innovative methods determined by the school.

To date, over \$417,000 has been awarded to Utah charter schools in 2017 to improve student outcomes using innovative methods. Listed below are some examples of charter schools using the grant to expand innovative educational opportunities in Utah.

PROMONTORY SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING



- Student-designed outdoor expeditionary learning space, including a pollination garden
- Ideas originated from students and put through revision process

AMERICAN PREPATORY ACADEMY – WVC CAMPUSES



- Suzuki Violin classes
- Starting in kindergarten and tracking student progress through the third grade
- ISIP grant funded the violins, material, and assessments for two years of the four-year program

ITINERIS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

- ISIP grant funded FutureINDesign (FIND), a STEAM career development program for marginalized young adults
- Attempt to narrow the digital literacy gap in Utah
- Creation of a pipeline of talent for the growing workforce



SALT LAKE ARTS ACADEMY



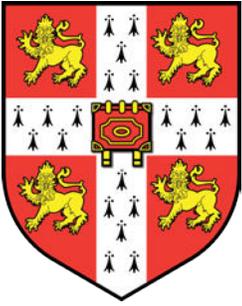
- Used funding to improve the common integrated arts space, allowing students to improvise collaborate, and workshop ideas
- Integrated technology into the arts by using iPads to record music, teach graphic design, and support the performing arts

NOAH WEBSTER ACADEMY

- Funded teams of 1st – 6th graders, which were given \$1000 each to purchase hands-on science materials for classrooms
- Also purchased Edivate Science visual materials
- Saw improved science growth rates following implementation



CITY ACADEMY



- Full implementation of Cambridge International Examinations
- Only public school in Utah that can identify as Cambridge School

ACADEMY FOR MATH, ENGINEERING & SCIENCE (AMES)



- Introduced Literacy Composition Foundations class
- Focused on improving low-performing 9th and 10th grade students
- Saw gains in both proficiency and growth for language arts

BEAR RIVER CHARTER SCHOOL



- Delivered arts-integrated and hands-on learning for Kindergarteners in the afternoon
- Supplemented the Direct Instruction approach in the mornings

HAWTHORN ACADEMY



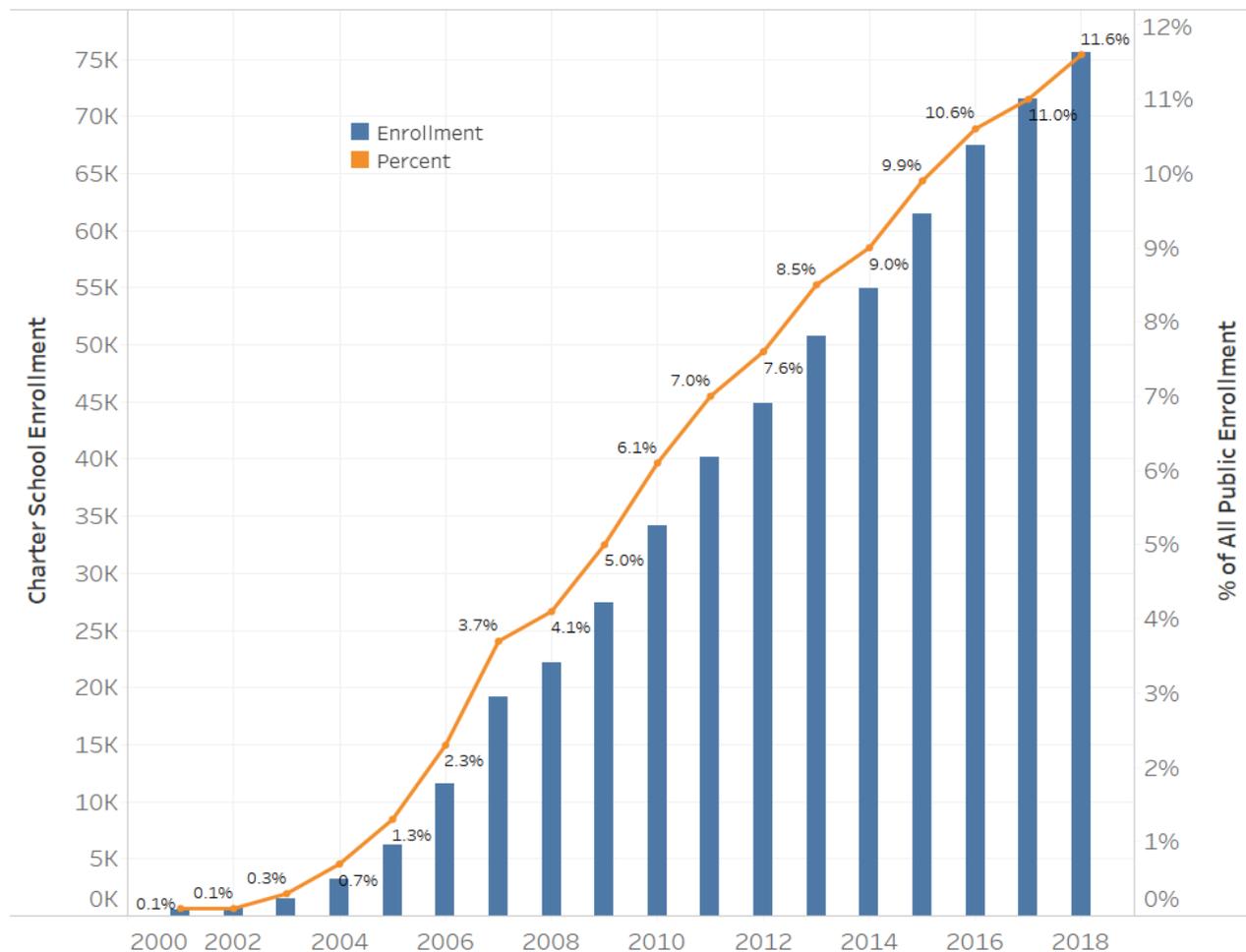
- Purchased software that allows math and science teachers at both Hawthorn Academy campuses (South Jordan & West Jordan) to conduct cross-curriculum simulations

ENROLLMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

Utah charter schools offer expanded educational opportunities for families. An increase in charter school enrollment indicates that more parents and students are taking advantage of the choices available to them. Charter schools can provide alternatives in curricular focus, geographic location, school size, safety, and school culture.

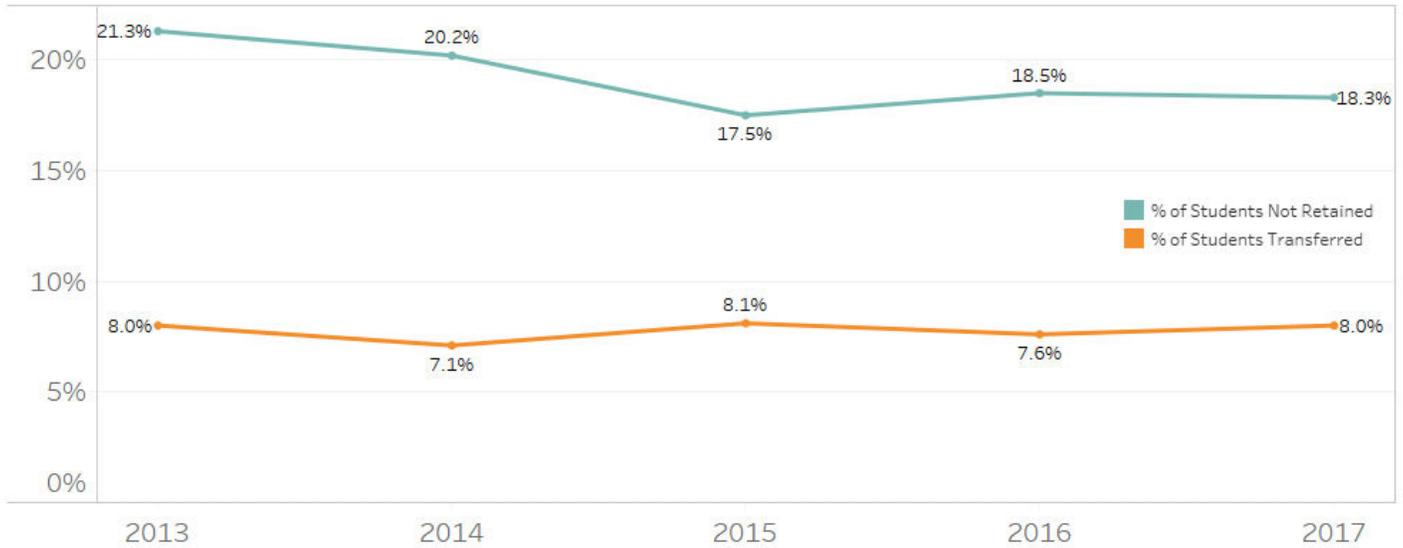
ENROLLMENT LONGITUDINALLY

Utah charter schools have always served a variety of students across the state, beginning with the first cohort of charter schools that opened in fall 1999 and continuing with the most recent cohort of charter schools that opened for the 2017-18 school year. While all public school student enrollments have been increasing, charter school enrollments have been increasing at a faster pace than district school enrollments. As can be seen, charter schools' percentage share of the whole Utah public school population has been steadily increasing, reaching 75,567 students and 11.6% of all enrollments in SY 2017-18. Just three years ago, in SY 2014-15, charter school enrollment was 9.9% of all enrollments.



TRANSFER AND RETENTION

While the overall enrollment of a charter school is important, the Utah State Charter School Board also recognizes the importance of student transfer rates (the percentage of students leaving the charter school during a school year) and student retention rates (the percentage of students reenrolling at the same charter school from one year to the next).

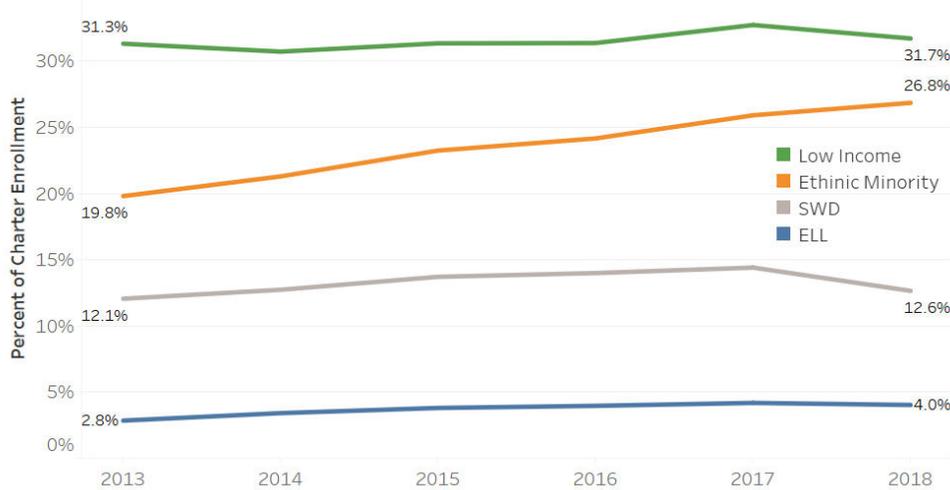


As a whole, charter schools had a transfer rate of 8.0% during SY 2016-17. This was an increase from 7.6% during SY 2015-16. There is substantial variability in transfer rates across charter schools, ranging from 1.3% to 47.8%. The majority of charter schools also retained most of their students from the end of SY 2016-17 to October 1, 2017. Overall, charter schools retained 81.7% of their students during that time period.

DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHICS LONGITUDINALLY

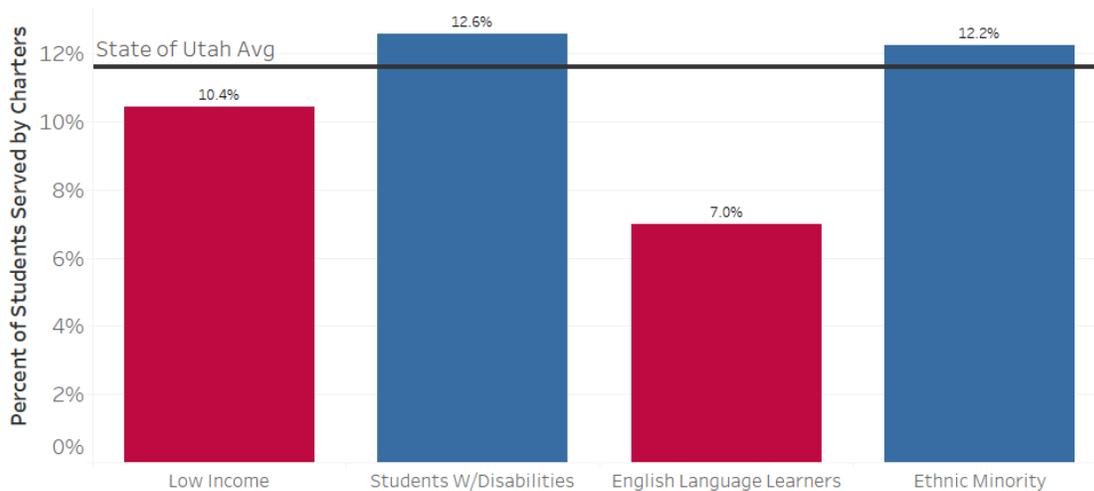
Utah charter schools have seen increases in some demographic subgroups. In particular, the percentage of ethnic minorities has shown a steady increase over time, from 19.8% in 2013 to 26.9% in October 2017 (SY 2017-18). Hispanics are the biggest ethnic minority group attending our charter schools,



currently at 17.5%, followed by those identified as multiple race 3.2% and Asians 2.6%.

DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

The following analysis identifies subpopulations within Utah that are over- and under-served by charter schools compared to statewide averages, indicating unique challenges or areas of growth for charters. For example, students with disabilities and ethnic minorities have greater representation in charter schools than in district schools. However, English language learners are underrepresented in charter schools, with only 7% of the subpopulation being served by charters.

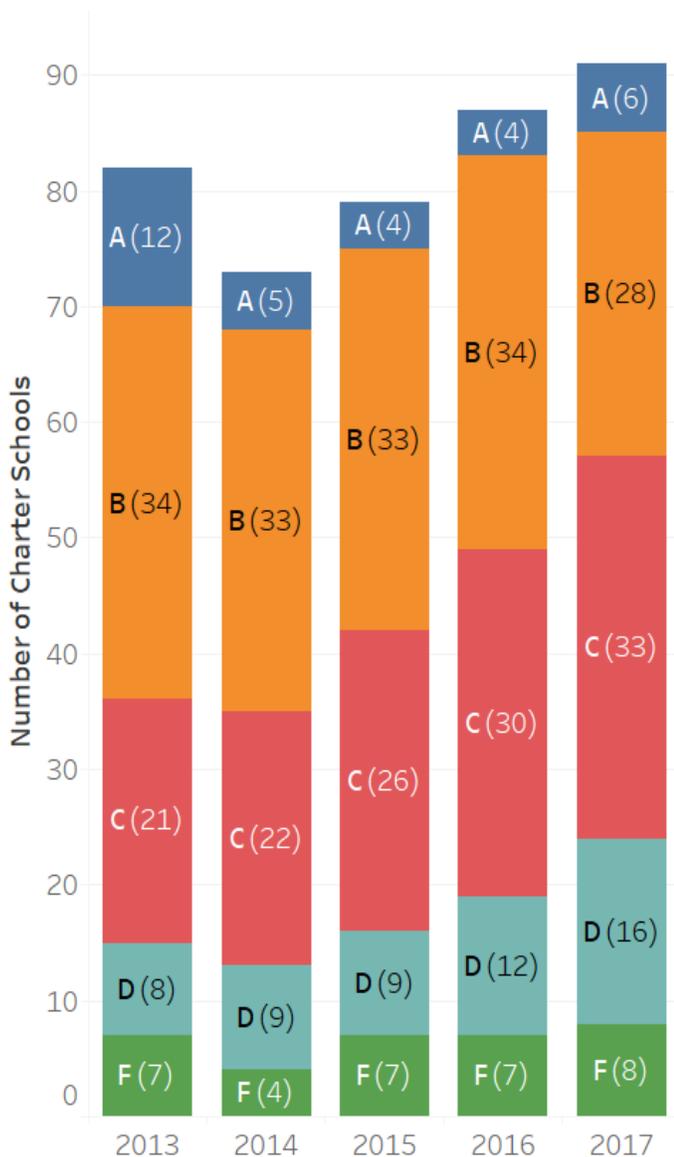


ACADEMICS

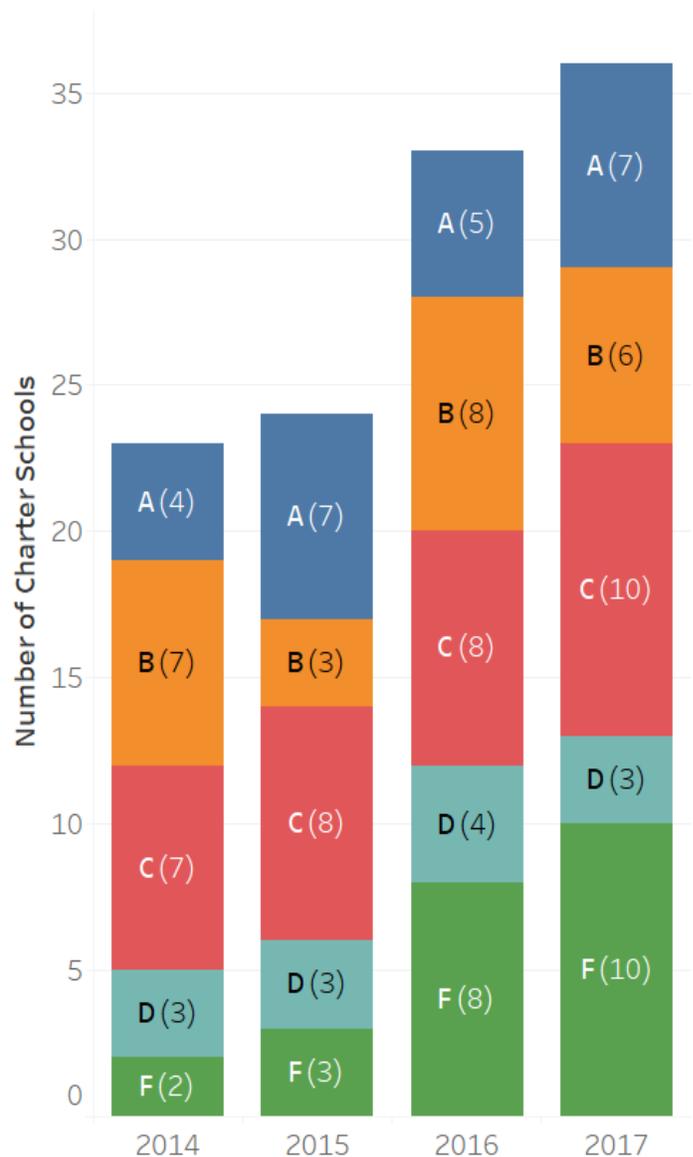
GRADING CHARTER SCHOOLS

Schools received a grade for the first time for the 2012-13 school year. Grades are assigned based on points awarded for the percentage of students reaching proficiency in language arts, mathematics, and science; the percentage of students reaching sufficient growth in those same subjects; ACT scores (for high schools only); and the percentage of students graduating within four years (for high schools only).

Charter Elementary School Grades



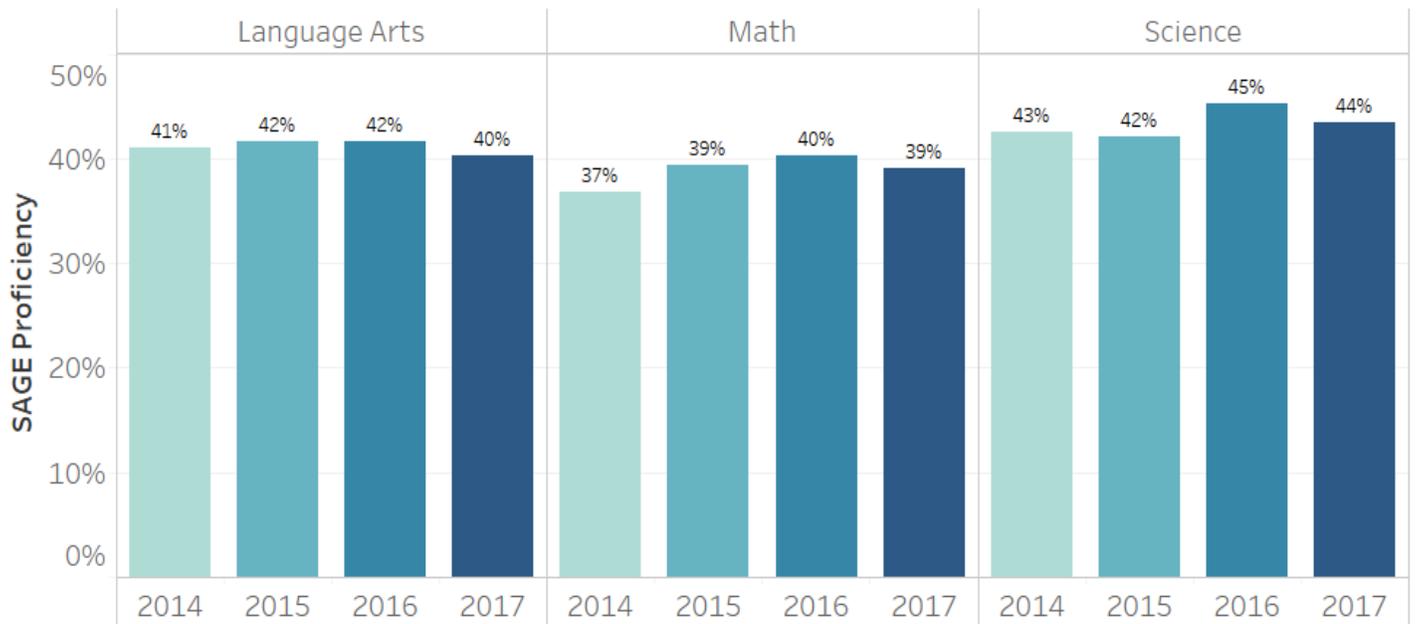
Charter High School Grades



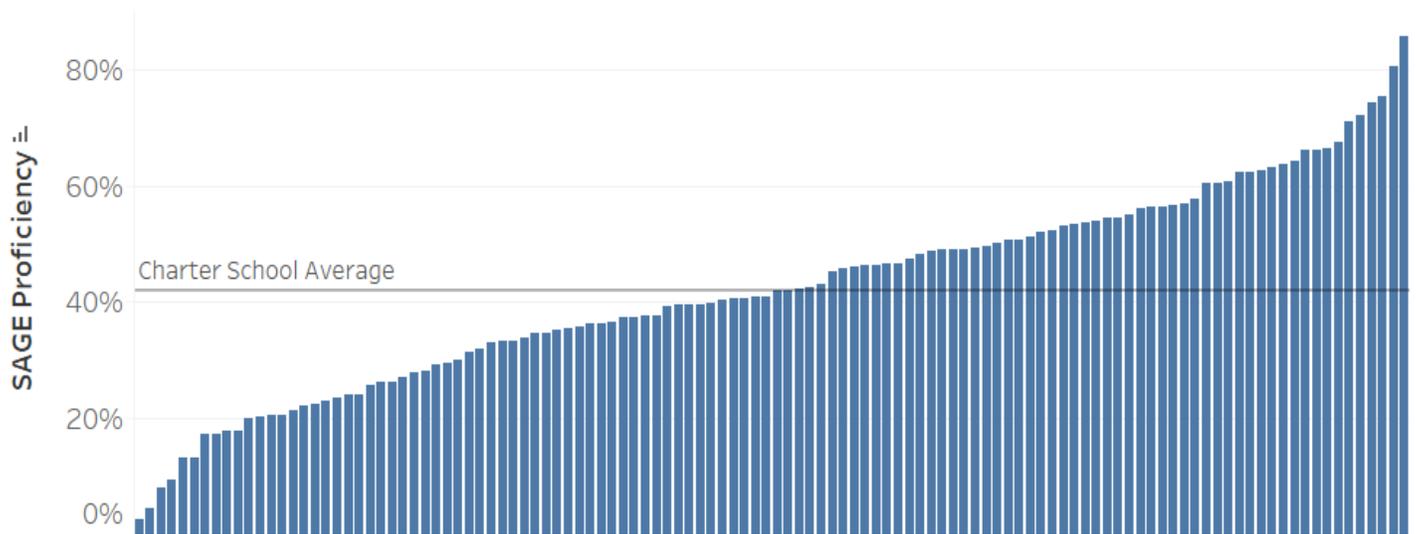
SAGE PROFICIENCY AND GROWTH

Student proficiency and growth levels on the standardized SAGE assessments are two key components that determine the school grade for all schools in the state. Proficiency levels reflect the extent to which students have met particular testing criteria for being proficient at a given subject area. Student growth levels reflect the average level of improvement made from one year to the next. While proficiency and growth levels are very different indicators of student success, achieving success in both areas is a priority for all charter schools in Utah.

Charter school 2017 SAGE proficiency rates show a slight decrease in all three-subject areas when comparing the rates to those in the prior year. However, since the implementation of SAGE testing, charter schools have seen an overall upward trend with peak proficiency rates in 2016. In addition, there is wide variability in proficiency across schools, with a number of charter schools among the most proficient in the state of Utah.



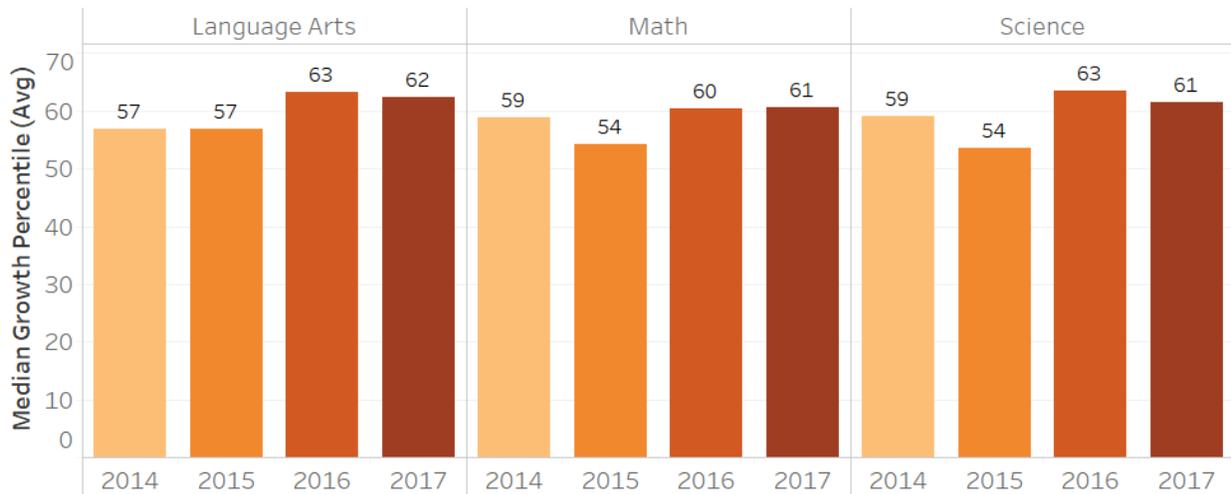
Charter Variability in Proficiency



SAGE GROWTH RATES

Charter schools also demonstrated small declines in average growth levels in SY 2017. Unlike the relatively consistent trend found with proficiency rates, growth rates for charter schools have increased substantially since SY 2015.

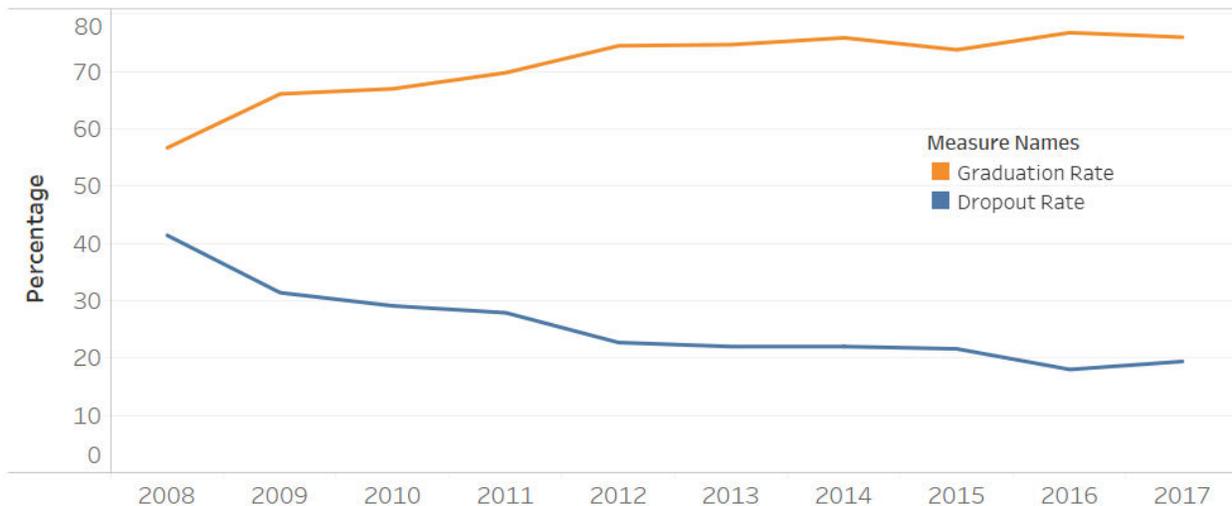
SAGE Growth



GRADUATION RATES

Using the federal definition of a four-year cohort graduation rate, the graduation rate for charter high school students has been historically lower than that for district high school students, but has been increasingly more rapidly, just about cutting the gap between the two types of schools in half over the last eight years (from 12.3 percentage points in 2008 to 6.6 in 2016). Despite this, charter schools saw a slight drop in graduation rate (a decrease of 0.8%) and a slight increase in dropout rate (an increase of 1.4%) in the prior school year. As with other data presented in this report, some charter schools have very high graduation rates. For the 2017 cohort, of charters with at least ten cohort members, sixteen schools have a graduation rate of 90% or higher.

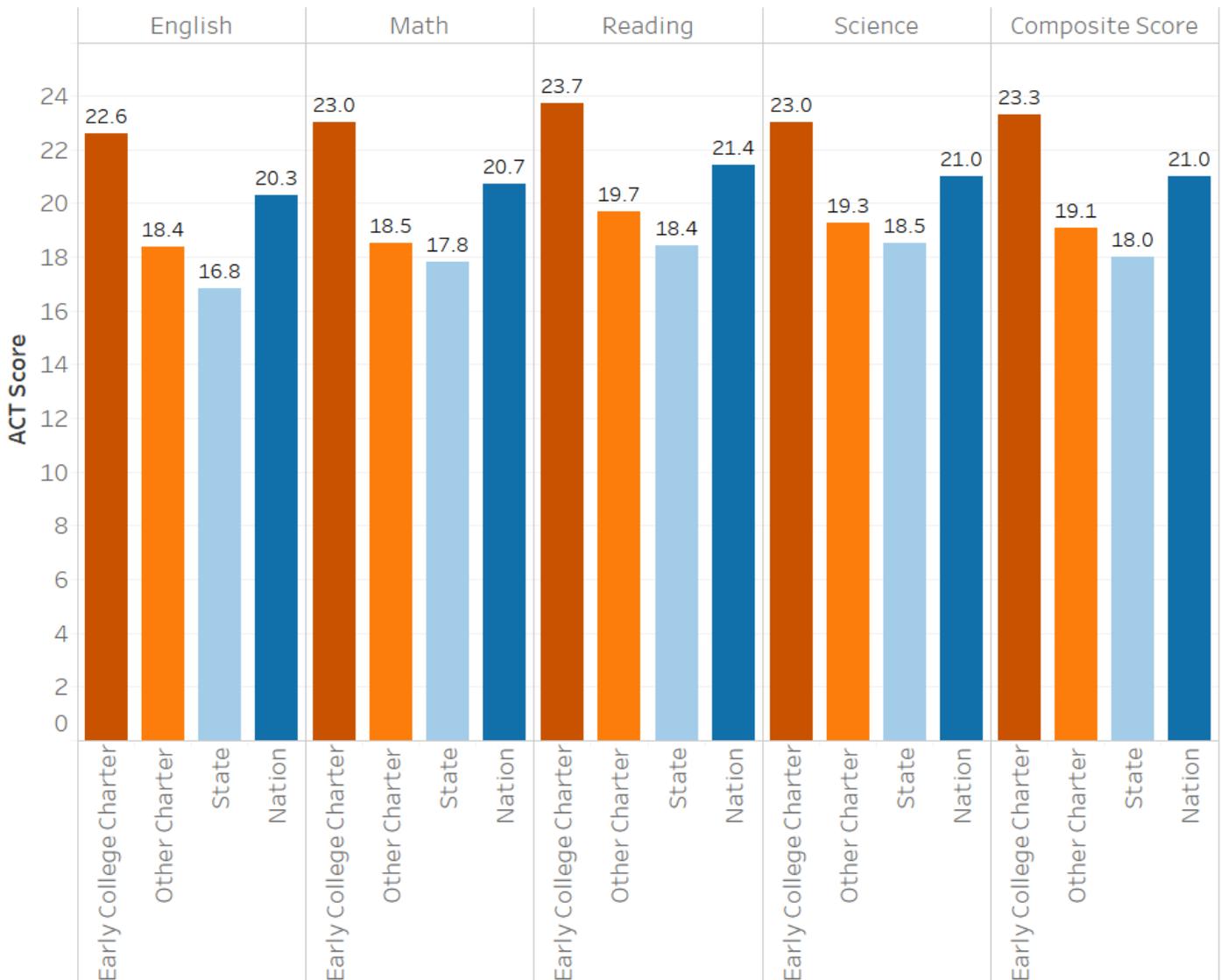
Charter School Graduation and Dropout Rates



COLLEGE READINESS (ACT)

Beginning with SY 2013-14, the ACT was given to all eleventh grade students in a Utah public school. Our 2017 data suggests that charter school students are producing consistent ACT scores over the past three years. However, the average charter school student is not meeting the College Readiness Benchmarks established by ACT for Math (22), Reading (22), and Science (23).

These benchmarks are indicators of being more likely than not of earning a B or higher in a corresponding college course. Despite this, charter schools continue to outperform the statewide ACT average, and the average nationwide ACT score also does not meet benchmarks for Math, Reading, or Science. Additionally, Utah early college charter schools perform well above nationwide average and have met all ACT benchmarks.



CONCLUSION

The story for Utah charter schools in 2017 is one of positive growth in several important areas. There are more charter schools than ever before in state history, as well as more variety in educational choice for families in Utah. The percentage of total students in the state currently enrolled in charter schools is higher than it has ever been, and that number is expected to continue to rise in the coming years. Additionally, the demographic diversity in charter schools is continuing to grow, with more ethnic minority students and English language learners opting for a charter school education.

On average, charter schools in Utah showed small declines in performance criteria, such as proficiency levels, growth levels, and graduation rates. While we strongly intend to improve the average success rates of charter schools in the state, we also recognize that looking at charter school data in aggregation provides a limited perspective of charter school capability. Charter schools have a much wider variability in performance than other public schools, and that is to be expected – a focus on innovation and choice comes with unique challenges for each charter school, and particularly for young schools that are continuing to adjust and build positive reputations in their communities. Overall, the charter school movement in Utah has produced several of the best performing schools in the state – a true testament to innovation in education.

Charter school success equates to success in innovation, originality, and choice. At the Utah State Charter School Board, we are proud to support creative and alternative approaches to education and will continue to support high quality, innovative initiatives to make the education experience better for Utah students.

“Innovation is the ability to see change as an opportunity – not a threat.”

Steve Jobs