

How do charter schools work in Nashville?

Charter schools are independently operated public schools managed by a board of directors and authorized by a local or state entity. In Tennessee, charter schools are not required to follow the policies and rules of local boards of education but are required to publicly report on student performance.

The nuts and bolts of charters in Tennessee



TN law allows charters to be approved for 10-year terms, at which point they can apply for renewal through their authorizer.

Nashville's charter landscape

Authorizers (the entity that approves the charter)



Origin and Responsibilities

Since 2002, when TN passed its first charter legislation, the MNPS School Board has been the primary authorizer of charter schools in the city.

Since 2011, the state-run Achievement School District (ASD) has had the authority to take over low-achieving schools and authorize new charters to lead a turnaround effort. If ASD schools improve, they are eligible to exit the ASD and roll under the Tennessee Charter School Commission portfolio.

The TN Public Charter School Commission authorizes charters on appeal and Achievement School District transfers. They have also assumed authorizing authority for former State Board of Education-approved schools.

of schools

26

1

5

Charters are more prevalent in East and South Nashville



4 new Nashville charters approved by the TN Charter Commission are set to be added in the coming years

28%
of the state's charter schools are in Nashville

17%

of MNPS students are in MNPS charter schools (~13,400) in the 22-23 school year

Since 2002, 6 MNPS charter schools have been closed for poor performance or under-enrollment and three charter schools have been consolidated into one.

Charter Operators in MNPS



KIPP, Lead, and Republic operate just under half of the district's charters

Student demographics in MNPS Schools

	MNPS Charters	MNPS Non-Charters		MNPS Charters	MNPS Non-Charters
Black	44%	38%	Economically disadvantaged	40%	37%
Hispanic	37%	31%	Students with disabilities	13%	14%
White	16%	26%	English language learners	27%	28%

Source: MNPS Open Data Portal

The history of charter school legislation in Tennessee

Tennessee's original charter law passes, allowing charters to enroll students who are zoned to an underperforming schools

Law lifts charter school cap and establishes open enrollment for all students in a district

Law clarifies multiple rules for charter operations, provides an authorizer's fee for districts, and establishes a facilities fund for charters

2002

2009

2011

2014

2017

2019

Law expands who is eligible to enroll in a charter school and caps the total number of charters at 90 statewide

Law gives State Board of Education (SBOE) authority to hear appeals and authorize charters denied by local school boards

Law creates TN Public Charter School Commission to hear appeals and authorize charters denied by local boards

