



WASHINGTON STATE
CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL REPORT | 2022

Dear Charter Community,

As we reflect on 2022, we are struck by the continued resilience and responsiveness of Washington's charter public schools amidst the ongoing challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism, and educational injustice. Charter public schools in Washington continue to attract significantly higher than average percentages of Global Majority (i.e. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) students and educators and students from low-income families, and they continue to deliver promising academic results.

However, even though charter public schools are serving disproportionately high percentages of marginalized students, the biggest challenge facing our sector is policy that perpetuates inequity: charter public school students receive up to 25 percent less in state education funding than peers attending traditional public schools. And even though communities across the state are voicing the need for free, public school options that prepare students to lead successful and fulfilling lives, the State Legislature has yet to re-open the authorizing window to allow for more time to open additional community-rooted charter public schools.

Our 2021-2024 strategic plan explicitly prioritizes our policy and advocacy strategy to address these challenges head on. In 2022, we secured one-time per pupil enrichment funding and made significant inroads to greater awareness and support for our issue – both within the Legislature and among diverse Washingtonians.

Our strategic plan also clearly defines high-quality schools as those that are academically, operationally, and financially strong, and as those that achieve those outcomes through student-centered, anti-racist, and community-rooted practices. All our member services are oriented toward helping schools be high-quality in these ways. As an organization, we are continuously improving our own structures and policies to be more equitable. The goal of advancing anti-racism serves as a foundation upon which all our other goals and work stems. The progress we made in 2022 reflects this intentional shift, and we are excited to share the progress made across our programs, communications, and advocacy efforts last year.

We are incredibly proud of the accomplishments of our educators and students, the WA Charters team, parents and community advocates, and the expanded impact of our innovative programs and committed partners. Notably, in July 2022, we adopted a new co-presidency leadership model, with three talented women at the helm: Rekha Bhatt, Co-President of Innovative Schools, Haid Bloxham, Co-President of Finance and Operations, and Natalie Hester, Co-President of External Affairs. Writing this less than a year later, we couldn't be more confident in the trajectory of the organization and its capability to achieve major wins and work toward our vision – an anti-racist, student-centered public education system accessible to all students.

Thank you for all that you do to support our work and charter public schools.

**Yours in the work,
WA Charters Board of Directors**



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2021-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

In February 2021, our Board adopted a bold new strategic plan for 2021-2024 with the input of more than 150 diverse community stakeholders. The plan identified four clear goals, including the foundational goal of advancing anti-racism that spans all areas of the organization's work.

There were three key themes in our stakeholder interviews that informed our anti-racist mission:

1. The 2020 national and local reckoning with racial injustice, spotlighting persistent systemic inequities.
2. The concerns related to diversity, equity, and inclusion within our sector, including the impact of school closures on Global Majority communities and tensions and challenges experienced by parents in some school communities.
3. The need to recruit more Global Majority leaders within the sector, especially as school leaders (most cited theme across all stakeholder groups).

Our new mission and vision speak to our way forward.

VISION

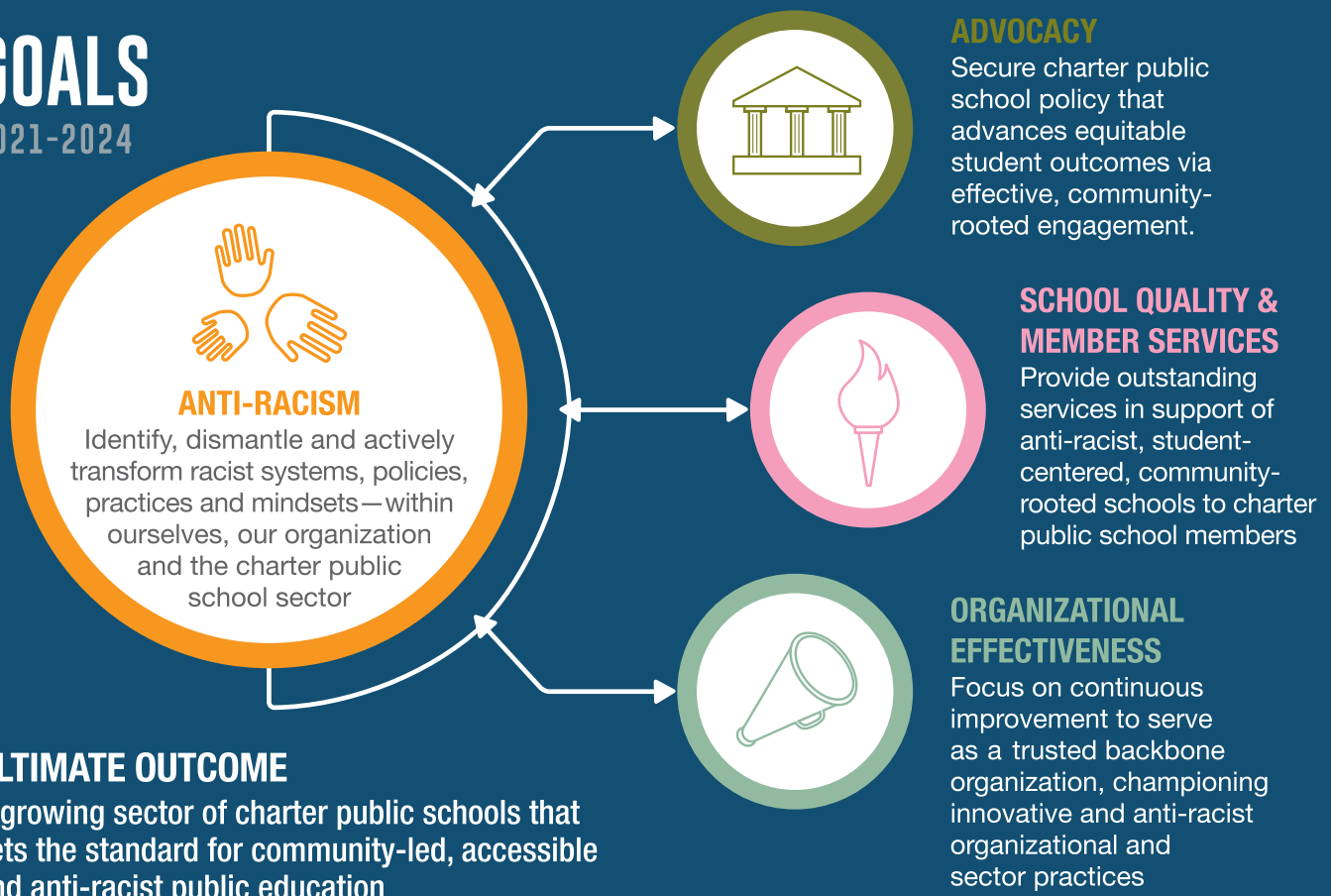
An anti-racist, student-centered public education system accessible to all students

MISSION

We advocate for and support a thriving, innovative charter public school sector that upholds quality via student-centered, community-rooted schools and aspires to disrupt a systemically racist and inequitable education system

GOALS

2021-2024



PROGRESS IN ACTION

No mission is achieved without action. We are pleased to report significant progress across each of WA Charters' major goals in 2022, reflecting action guided by our core values of anti-racism, collaborative partnership, cultural humility, and educational justice.

ADVOCACY

WA Charters continues to play the central role leading advocacy for the state's charter public school sector. In 2022, we secured one-time funding in a challenging political environment, made significant progress growing an engaged grassroots base, and built a diverse cross-section of voices among community-based organizations (CBOs), advocacy partners, and policymakers. We provided critical defense against potential legislation and legal action that would have hindered our sector's operations and growth. Our advocacy also included paid and earned media campaigns designed to increase accurate awareness, inoculate against misinformation, and drive a positive narrative about the benefits of and need for charter public schools.

SCHOOL QUALITY AND MEMBER SERVICES

One of the ways that we challenge the status quo is how we define school quality. While academic outcomes are an essential measure, we know they do not paint a full picture nor lead to transformational outcomes for students and communities alone. Therefore, our strategic plan defines high-quality schools as those that not only demonstrate strong student academic outcomes and operational and financial health but also affirm students' identities, are inclusive of all learners and use innovative methods to individualize learning and reflect the needs of communities as defined by the communities themselves. All WA Charters membership services and data collection efforts are designed to support schools to meet this quality definition.

Another way that we increase school quality and member services is through identifying, supporting, and empowering Global Majority leaders from different geographic regions to enter and thrive in our sector. In 2022, individuals and teams participating in our online course for prospective charter public school founders represented diverse communities across Western, Central, and Eastern Washington. The Transformative Leader Fellowship brought in 12 new rising leaders, two-thirds of whom identified as members of the Global Majority.



Co-Presidents: Natalie Hester, Haid Bloxham, and Rekha Bhatt

Looking ahead, we continue to prioritize services and programming that support member schools to deliver strong academic, operational, and financial outcomes by upholding anti-racist, student-centered, and community – rooted practices.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

We believe that nimbleness to adapt and evolve are the cornerstones of being an effective charter public school support and advocacy organization. We approach every step of the organization's evolution with a focus on quality, people, and sustainability to ensure the smooth transitions and operations necessary to making progress across each of our goals.

In 2022, we successfully transitioned the True Measure Collaborative (TMC) to a program administered by WA Charters to support the TMC in its transition to an independent 501(c)3 in 2023. In 2022, WA Charters diversified the types of funding supporting our sector by cultivating new, mission-aligned partners, providing technical assistance for schools' fundraising, and advocating successfully for more public resources.

In July 2022, WA Charters adopted a new, collaborative leadership model with three co-presidents: Rekha Bhatt, Co-President of Innovative Schools; Haid Bloxham, Co-President of Finance and Operations, and Natalie Hester, Co-President of External Affairs. This new model provides our organization and sector with strategic, community-rooted leadership equipped to lead WA Charters and the sector into its next phase of growth.

A DIVERSE AND EQUITY-FOCUSED SECTOR

Together with our growing sector of charter public schools, families, and communities, WA Charters is working to create a more equitable public education system. We believe that regardless of the type of public school that a family chooses, their child deserves equitable resources. We also believe that our system should be responsive to demand for additional, high-quality, student-centered, free, public options, and that our law should allow for establishment of new charter public school options.

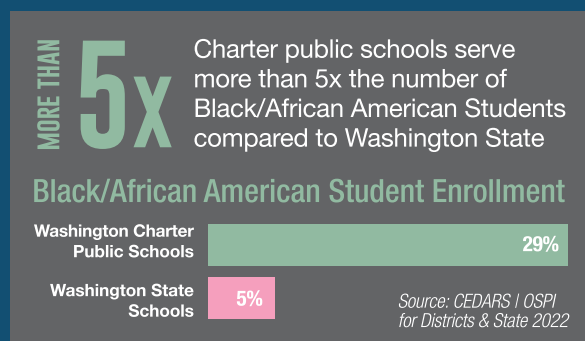
Charter public schools and these priorities are, at

their heart, an equity issue. A recent enrollment study showed that during COVID, while district enrollment declined in 2020, charter public school enrollment in Washington increased 35 percent, and a whopping 50 percent for English language learners. Today, we continue to serve disproportionately high percentages of systemically underserved students – because families recognize that they can rely on charter public schools to help their students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally in an identity-affirming school culture with a diverse teaching staff that reflects the students in their classrooms.

Ensuring Student-Centered, Anti-Racist, Community-Rooted Public School Options for Washington Students

Washington's charter public schools are free, open to all, overseen by public agencies and are an important part of our public school system. Charter public schools provide families with access to high-quality public school options, respecting that **one size doesn't fit**

all when it comes to student learning. Designed to expand opportunities for systemically underserved students, the charter public school law empowers schools designed to disrupt cycles of poverty and injustice and that focus on serving low-income families and Global Majority students.



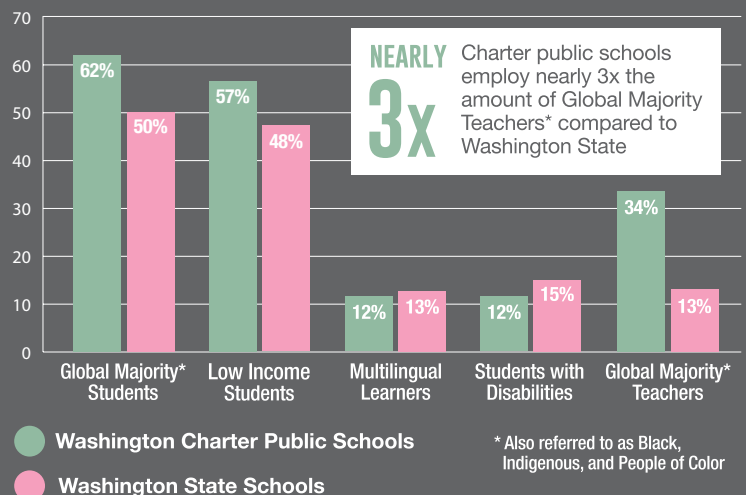
4,800 Number of students currently attending charter public schools in Washington

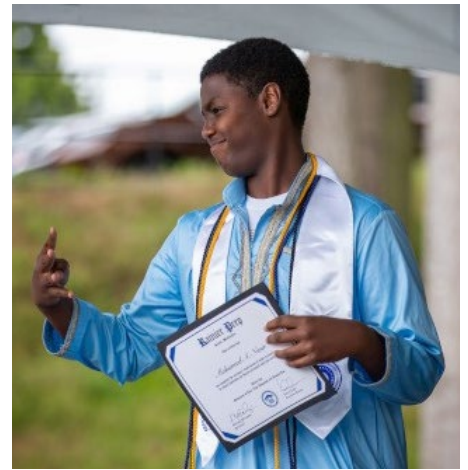
Source: SY 22-23 October CEDARS Report

16 Number of operating charter public schools in Washington

Student and Teacher Demographics

Source: SY 21-22 OSPI Report Card





RAINIER PREP

Choice, Challenge, and a Pathway to a College

Rainier Prep, one of the state's first charter public schools, opened its doors to students for the very first time in August 2015. Rainier Prep's model was informed by their local community, who demanded an additional college-prep public middle school option in their neighborhood with the flexibility to innovate and meet the specific needs of their students. Rainier Prep is closing systemic opportunity gaps, offering a pathway to college graduation and career success for historically under-represented students of color, immigrant students, and limited-income families. Now in its eighth year of operation, Rainier Prep is transforming the outcomes of its students and delivering on its promise of strong academics in an identity-affirming, community-rooted learning environment.

SCHOOL PROFILE

Location

Highline, South King County

Grades Served

5-8

Mission

To prepare all students to excel at four-year colleges and to become leaders in their communities.

Vision

Empowering lifelong learners, changemakers, advocates, and leaders

G•U•I•D•E•S Values

Grit • Urgency • Integrity • Discovery
Excellence • Society

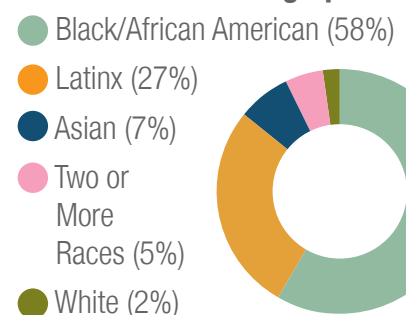
Student Population

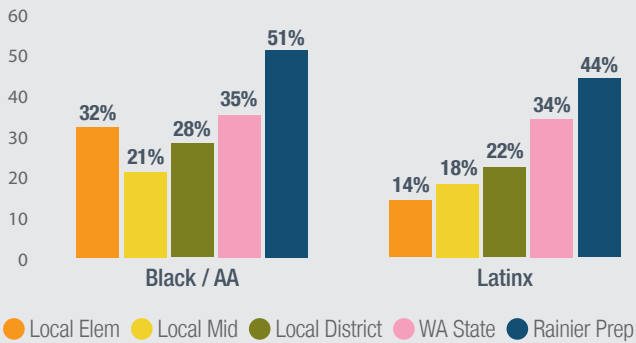
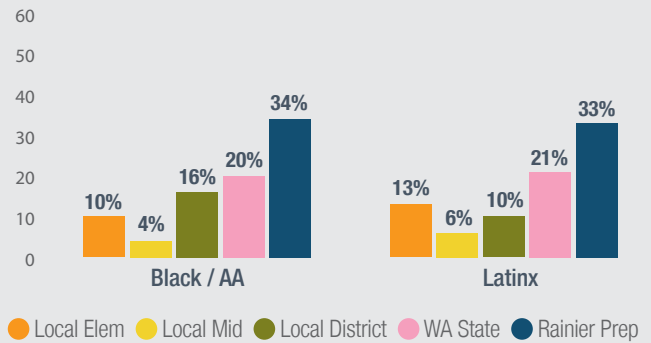
338

Eligibility for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch

70%

Student Racial Demographics



ELA: Percentage of Students Meeting Standard on the Smarter Balanced Assessment**MATH: Percentage of Students Meeting Standard on the Smarter Balanced Assessment**

ACADEMIC RESULTS

While most students enter Rainier Prep below grade level in Reading and Math, a majority of Rainier Prep students graduate reading well above grade level and prepared for high school algebra. Rainier Prep students attain very high levels of academic proficiency and year-to-year growth, and they do so with significantly less state funding. Rainier Prep alumni perpetuate and promote these outcomes in their high schools of choice, the majority of which are district public schools.

WHY OUR LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES MATTER

Rainier Prep's results speak for themselves, and point to the need for additional, high-quality, student-centered, community-rooted charter public schools. Until and unless the window for new charter public school authorization reopens, communities without charter public schools cannot create this type of opportunity for local students and families. And while Rainier Prep is achieving outstanding results with significantly less funding than traditional schools, it is limited in its offerings and impact due to inequitable funding.

The video below provides a "day in the life" glimpse into the experience of one Rainier Prep student. It includes perspectives of teachers and leaders about how funding equity is critical for Rainier Prep and other charter public

schools and what will be possible when equitable funding for all charter public schools in our state is a reality.

VIDEO SPOTLIGHT: RAINIER PREP, HIGHLINE



Q&A with Karen Lobos, Executive Director, Rainier Prep



How did Rainier Prep come to exist? Why Highline, why a 5-8 middle school, and why college prep?



Our founding school leaders, who held strong connections to south King County, could have opted to open either an elementary school or

a high school. However, the community demand was for a college-prep middle school option, and Rainier Prep's founders were listening.

We approach this work with humility. To increase the web of support for our students and families, we are

Continued on page 8



Q&A with Karen Lobos, Executive Director, Rainier Prep

Continued from page 7

intentional about working with community partners who were here long before Rainier Prep and we believe community-wide collaboration is a factor in student achievement.

According to the RoadMap Project, 81 percent of students in South King County say they want to earn a college degree. Despite these aspirations, only 30 percent of these students earn a college degree by their mid-twenties. The sobering reality is that our students face systemic inequities that negatively impact their access to college and post-secondary programs.

As a daughter of Mexican immigrants, I understand this challenge first-hand. For my family, some of these challenges were language barriers, housing security, job security that translated to financial challenges, and computer/technology challenges for my parents. Thankfully, my family partnered with the Rainier Scholars program to ensure I could get the best education possible—an education that prepared me to be in a position of leadership today in the community that raised me. Many of my middle school peers, who were also students of color in limited-income families, didn't have a Rainier Scholars or

another support system to help them navigate our public education system, and so our paths have diverged.

I don't recall having a Latine teacher until high school when I took an advanced Spanish class. One of the many reasons I choose to work at Rainier Prep is to create the representation for our students that I wish I had as a younger student. Even today, as Global Majority students make up about 55 percent of our PK-12 student population nationally, and more than half statewide, our education leaders and superintendents are still overwhelmingly white and male. Our understanding of the many structural educational challenges informs Rainier Prep's mission to prepare all students to excel at four-year colleges and to become leaders in their communities. Our vision lifelong learners, changemakers, advocates who view themselves as assets to their community.



What makes Rainier Prep a truly student-centered and anti-racist public school?



Here at Rainier Prep, our academic program is very rigorous because we believe that our scholars are capable of excellence. One of the most important ways we support our students is through our 12-to-15-student advisory group model. Advisories meet daily and offer a space for students to do identity work, plan for high school, and engage in

social emotional learning (SEL).

We also have honed a College Success Program over the years. This program builds on Rainier Prep's rigorous academic preparation with authentic experiences that prepare students with the skills and knowledge to navigate and access college and career opportunities.

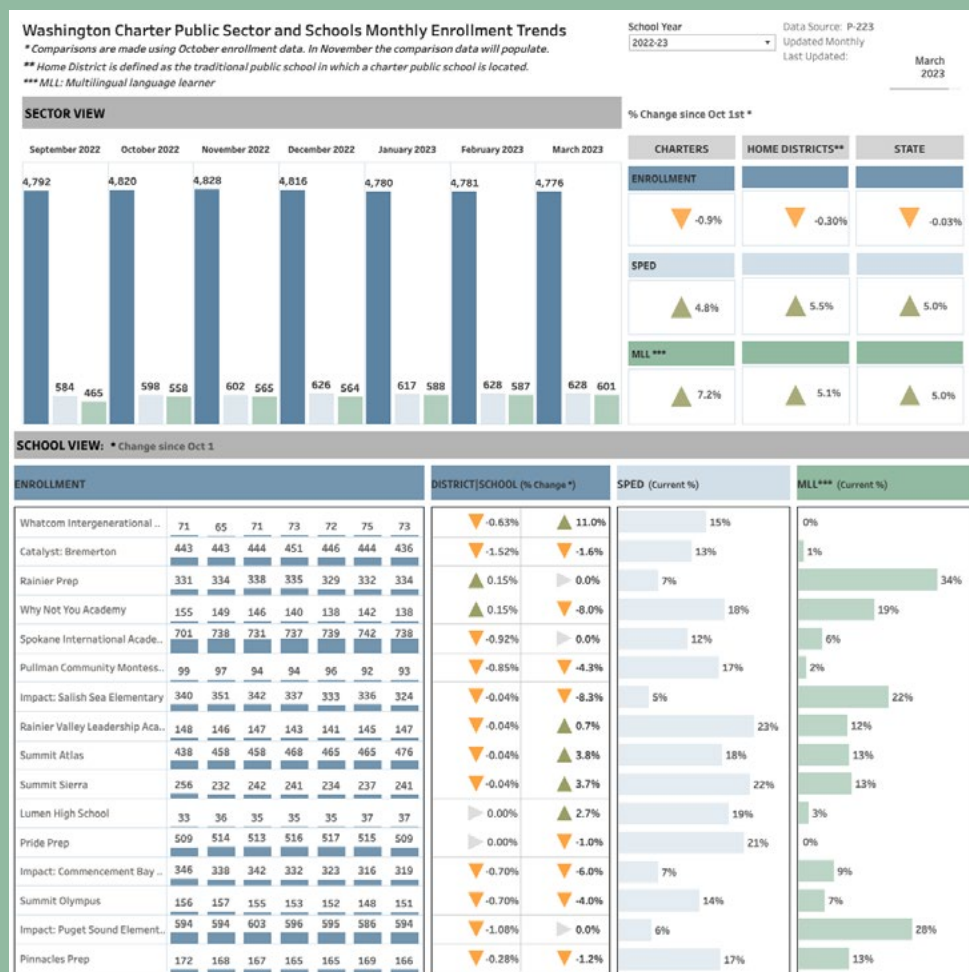
The College Success Program gives every one of our 90+ eighth graders more than 50 hours of dedicated time on tasks, including writing a personal narrative essay, building a resume and personal portfolio, completing a High School and Beyond Plan, attending high school open houses, and completing high school applications with the support of advisors. Together, these supports ensure that all Rainier Prep students are known, seen, challenged, and supported to ensure they are on a pathway to a college degree.

Overall, celebrating the diversity of our community is essential to our work of removing barriers to equity, access, education, and opportunity. We now have so many more community partners coming to Rainier Prep to teach, mentor, and share their experience with our students as part of our enrichment classes at the end of our school day. Because of that kind of partnership with our educators, our students gain an even greater perspective on how they as students are essential to our work and how they can lead our community.

RESULTS AND RESEARCH

In 2022, an illuminating series of studies on the Washington State charter public school sector was completed by the [Center on Reinventing Public Education \(CRPE\)](#). Findings from these studies, along with statewide academic data available on our newly launched Data Dashboard indicate that while the COVID-19 pandemic had an adverse effect on academic scores statewide, overall, charter public school students achieved proficiency at higher rates in their schools as compared to peers in traditional schools across all grades and subjects. While the sector is still relatively young, this promising data signals that access to a charter public school experience is benefiting student success.

WA Charters Launches Data Dashboard



WA Charters commissioned a broad evaluation to assess the data and reporting needs of school leaders, WA Charters teams and external partners. In response to the results, a data and visualization strategy roadmap was developed. In 2022, WA Charters launched our Data Dashboard, which has both internal and public-facing visualizations. The public-facing [Washington Charter Public School Data](#) aggregates statewide and school data on a webpage to ensure that policymakers, parents, voters, and all members of the public have transparent and easy access to public data about the state's charter public schools.

Automation of data enables us to continually refresh and publish results to have the most current data possible. This means that schools, WA Charters, and our partners have access to early sector and school insights for continuous improvement efforts.

Three-Year Study Reveals Promising Charter Public School Trends and Best Practices

Our advocacy work is shaped by data that captures and evaluates our sector. The Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) recently completed a three-year study of charter public schools in Washington. Researchers pinpointed [how charter public school enrollment soared](#) in 2020, then continued to steadily grow through 2022. The study also reviewed the implications of this enrollment growth for charter public schools in Washington and elsewhere.

Studies of parent perceptions and satisfaction made it clear that following difficult experiences with traditional public schools, charter public school parents in Washington value their schools. Their ongoing

expectations are for charter public schools to retain staff, increase school resources and invest in community outreach while supporting a safe school community. In another set of interviews with charter public school staff and families, CRPE reported [specific practices](#) ranging from the use of new technology to mastery-based grading policies combined with interventions that helped students with disabilities maintain academic progress during the pandemic. Parents of students at Summit Public Schools, specifically, highlighted successes such as caring relationships between staff and families that boosted student resilience during disruptions caused by the pandemic.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: FAVIAN MARTINEZ

FAVIAN MARTINEZ is a celebrated alum and founding student of Rainier Prep's Class of 2019. His family took a "leap of faith" to send Favian to Rainier Prep, where hearing the school emphasize from Day 1 that college is the next step after you graduate from high school was a motivator for his parents. At Rainier Prep, as Favian's father observed, students are pushed to exceed what they thought were their limits. As a result, students discover what they truly can achieve, including expanded choices in their future.

Favian entered the 5th Grade at Rainier Prep – in his own words – as, "not too much of a scholar." On his first day at Rainier Prep, he remembers walking through the doors and instantly feeling a strong sense of community, as teachers immediately engaged with him, inquired about his well-being and his future goals. He formed a special connection with his



science teacher over the four years he attended Rainier Prep, spending lunch time and free periods discussing topics of interest to study as well as how to develop into the person he wanted to be. Favian is on track to graduate from O'Dea High School in 2023 and looks forward to attending Seattle University where he plans to pursue a degree in psychology.

Spring 2022 Statewide Results

Suggest Charter Public Schools Meeting Diverse Student Needs

For students and families, the impacts of the pandemic, from learning loss to mental health, are ongoing. Charter public schools are striving to partner with their communities as anti-racist, student-centered schools so every student receives support.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is an annual review of data regarding outcomes at public schools in the United States. The charter public school sector is not large enough in Washington State to serve as a specific breakout in its national assessment but a regular statewide data review of public school outcomes, the Smarter Balanced Assessment, provides a relevant snapshot of how students are performing in charter public schools.

The Smarter Balanced Assessment of Spring 2022 found that



Low-income students outperformed their peers
in home districts and the state in ALL tested subjects
(English Language Arts, Math, and Science)



Black students outperformed their peers
in home districts and the state in ALL tested subjects
(English Language Arts, Math, and Science)



Latinx students outperformed their peers
in home districts and the state in ALL tested subjects
(English Language Arts, Math, and Science)

Additionally, a 2021 State Board of Education report determined from statewide assessments that charter public school students performed higher than their traditional public school peers on seven of eight academic measures. The data underscores the value of public school options that ensure students find a pathway that best serves their individual needs, whether that is a traditional public school or a charter public school.



CLASS OF 2022

Each community-rooted charter public school in our state is founded on the principle that while traditional public schools serve many students well, not all students thrive in a traditional classroom. Graduation Day marks a milestone in each student's unique journey that is far bigger than any one classroom. In the charter public school sector, this yearly milestone is also an affirming reminder to school leaders, policymakers, community members, and advocates that more students would be proceeding with confidence into their futures if they had access to charter public school options that individualize and innovate based on their unique needs.

One of the reasons for success in charter public schools that graduates cite is the additional flexibility their school used to customize curricula to support their needs. This flexibility – which comes in exchange for a higher level of accountability – is the cornerstone of charter public schools. To ensure that flexible approaches are delivering results, data-based outcomes, such as graduation rates and the demographics of the students served by charter public schools, are tracked.

BY THE NUMBERS

6

NUMBER OF
WASHINGTON CHARTER
PUBLIC SCHOOL
GRADUATIONS IN 2022

280

NUMBER OF
WASHINGTON CHARTER
PUBLIC SCHOOL
GRADUATES IN 2022

82

NUMBER OF GRADUATES
WHO WERE FIRST
IN THEIR FAMILY TO
GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL

100%

GRADUATED
COLLEGE-READY

70%

ACCEPTED INTO A
FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE

GRADUATION SPOTLIGHTS



KOKNEEKA HOUSTON
Summit Public Schools, Tacoma

When it came time to apply to college, Kokneeka was ready. With weekly support from her mentor, she honed in on her plan for life after high school.

“ I love that you can stay with one mentor through all of high school. You see yourself grow and they can see you grow. Every mentor group is a family,” Kokneeka said. Kokneeka started her own business, Faith & Mercy, selling body butter, last year, and is now attending Whitworth University to study accounting and pursue her dream of helping teens in her community develop financial literacy.



RAEANN WOODS
Lumen High School, Spokane

A founding student at Lumen High School and the proud mother of a young toddler, RaeAnn is pursuing a community college pathway.

“ I am most proud of being the person that I have become. Being a mom while completing high school was not how I envisioned high school. I am most proud of being able to say I didn't give up when life got tough. Some days are harder than others, but I am proud to say I did it. Not only for my son but for myself.”

2022 LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

Significant Progress, Unfinished Business Ahead

The 2022 legislative session featured progress and stalemate. WA Charters' top two advocacy priorities were addressing charter school funding inequity and extending the five-year authorizing window allowing for the establishment of more charter public schools.

While our priority bills, HB 1591 (to provide levy equalization funding for charter public schools) and HB 1962 (to extend the time frame for establishing new charter public schools), both died in committee during session, the final version of the state supplemental operating budget included enrichment funding for certain charter public school students.

This one-time funding (for the 2022-23 school year) was a significant win in a challenging environment, although it was limited to small school districts, tribal compact schools, and charter public schools that have fewer than 800 students, are in urban or suburban areas, and have less than \$18,000 per pupil in

budgeted expenditures for the 2021-22 school year.

We view this as an important legislative victory for the charter public school sector that sets the stage for future policy gains.

Finally, during the interim between the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions, WA Charters engaged in months of advocacy with OSPI and the U.S. Department of Education regarding federal stimulus funding (i.e., ESSER funding) for the five new charter public schools that began operating in the fall of 2021. Our interpretation of federal law and related guidance differed from that of OSPI. In the end, it turned out that our interpretation was

correct, and the U.S. Department of Education instructed OSPI to revise its allocations for the new charter schools, resulting in \$2.3 million more in ESSER funds for newly opening charter public schools than OSPI originally calculated.

Broadly, our wins were significant. We continued to make important progress in (1) growing support for charter public schools among a bipartisan group of legislators; (2) centering racial equity and anti-racism in our advocacy efforts; (3) elevating the voices of charter public school students, parents, educators, and community members; and (4) broadening our coalition of stakeholders and community-based organizations willing to support and advocate for our policy priorities.

This session we saw the emergence of new legislative supporters and champions for charter public schools. Specifically, 17 legislators (10 Democrats and seven Republicans) signed on as sponsors of HB 1591 while 10 legislators (eight Democrats and two Republicans) sponsored HB 1962. Prior to and during the session, we continued to build and cultivate relationships with members of the Legislative Black Caucus and

ONE-TIME FUNDING (FOR THE 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR)

SCHOOL	OSPI original ESSER allocation (per pupil)	OSPI revised ESSER allocation (per pupil)
Impact CBE	\$500	\$3,615
Pinnacles Prep	\$625	\$2,420
PCM	\$798	\$1,812
WIHS	\$1,250	\$2,013
WNYA	\$721	\$4,005

Members of Color Caucus. We met one-on-one with nearly every member of these caucuses, we hosted a first-ever school tour specifically for Legislative Black Caucus members in November, and we facilitated a charter public school policy roundtable discussion for the Legislative Black Caucus in January.

Our progress in 2022 was significant nationally, too. There are only a handful of states where charter public schools have achieved full parity with district schools with respect

to local levies. The funding equity provision included in the final enacted budget in Washington, while a partial and incomplete victory, was the largest amount of charter public school enrichment funding ever included in the state budget. As such, it establishes a significant precedent going forward for the use of state funds to help address the funding gap created by charter public schools' lack of access to local property tax levies.

The pathway forward is clearer than ever.

Covering the Conversation – Media Highlights in 2022

Leading media outlets in our state continue to editorialize and report on the role of charter public schools in Washington's public school system.

In the last quarter of 2022, we developed and deployed a new approach to engagement with journalists to help inform the policy conversation regarding charter public schools. Media outlets saw significant turnover in their newsrooms and editorial boards in 2022, further stretching resources while also necessitating a focused methodology to outreach and information-sharing. The value of contextual reporting on issues that affect charter public schools is profound. In the months ahead, we will support increased awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing the sector and the ripple effects of unequal and imbalanced consideration of these specific public schools and the communities they serve across Washington.

The Seattle Times

[READ ARTICLE](#)

Fix the law to improve charter schools

Editorial, 1/23/2022

[READ ARTICLE](#)

Charters are solid alternatives to Washington's traditional public schools

Editorial, 1/24/2022

[READ ARTICLE](#)

Education: Charters are public schools

Letter to the Editor, 2/11/2022

[READ ARTICLE](#)

Leave charter-school funds in the budget

Editorial, 3/2/2022

[READ ARTICLE](#)

Charter-school audit is accountability in action

Editorial, 3/15/2022

“

Washington charter schools are public – they are publicly-regulated and funded schools with no sectarian affiliation.

Evaluate charter [public] schools on the correct facts.

PHILIP A. TALMADGE

(former state Senator and Washington Supreme Court Justice), *Letter to the Editor, Seattle Times*

”



Charter public school staff and students in Olympia for meetings with legislators

Informing the Conversation, Supporting Communities

In the closing months of 2022, we welcomed a new agency to our efforts, True Blue Strategies, to collaborate on and oversee the second phase of our ongoing paid media campaign, a critical component of our strategic plan to inform key audiences of the role that charter public schools play in our state's public education system. While public opinion research suggests that the basic facts of charter public schools are not well known, this same research also highlights clear opportunities for parents, policymakers, and community leaders to learn more about the tuition-free, accessible, and public school option that community-rooted charter public schools offer across our state.

PARENT ADVOCACY

In 2022, 40 of our core parent advocates joined students, school leaders, and staff for a total of 52 virtual meetings with a bipartisan group of legislators from across Washington, including meetings with legislators representing the districts in which our schools are located, key legislators serving on the education and fiscal committees, and members of the Legislative Black Caucus and Members of Color Caucus. These meetings provided our advocates the opportunity to replace myths about charter public schools with the reality that community-based, charter public schools are critically important in all communities, and in particular, to many Global Majority students. Advocates also invited legislators to visit charter public schools in Washington in the interim after the legislative session, an opportunity to continue to raise awareness and build support. These tours, often led by student ambassadors, resulted in a positive shift in legislators' impressions of charter public schools.

In May 2022, a delegation of Washington charter public school parents and students flew cross country to attend National Charter Schools week in Washington, D.C. Convened with peer advocates from 20 states numbering over 1,000 strong, parents united for a Day of Action hosted by the National Alliance to show collective strength for our schools. Of grave concern was the reality that nearly 65 percent of all charter public schools are single-site community-based schools, and new proposed regulations by the U.S. Department of Education threaten schools across the country. In particular (and all too familiar for Washington State families), the proposed new rules and regulations would make it more difficult for community leaders to start, expand, and grow charter public schools.

14 parents and students participated in the DC trip, and many were surprised and inspired to see how many other families across the country showed up and participated in advocating for our schools and students. They were connecting, building relationships, hearing stories, and learning that they were not alone. During the rally at Lafayette Park, families were fired up and ready to let President Biden know why charter public schools are so important to them and their communities. They heard heartfelt speeches from parents and students about their journey to a charter public school and how it changed their education trajectory. The experience continues to echo today, with stronger connections between charter public school parents in our state who continue to focus their advocacy on how best to support all students in Washington. Importantly, the parents and students who participated in D.C. came home to Washington and remained actively involved in our state advocacy efforts, including recruiting other families to join in the work.



Charter public school families at rally in Washington, D.C.

EXPANDING IMPACT

WA Charters Programs and Partners

WA Charters' ultimate vision of an anti-racist, student-centered public education system accessible to all students entails collaboration with mission-aligned partners. We support work that makes an impact beyond our charter public school sector in the broader K-12 education system.

This ultimate goal of expanded impact is deep-seated in two innovative sector partners. One of the major milestones of 2022 was the spin-off of the True Measure Collaborative. Once a program housed within WA Charters, it has advanced to an independent organization that supports not only charter public schools, but other schools and systems, including traditional school districts and community nonprofits. Joule Growth Partners, which has offered strategic finance support to charter public schools across our sector, has also grown and broadened its impact to other social impact organizations.

WA Charters programming evolves with the needs of our sector and stakeholders. We have offerings that encompass all stakeholder groups to ensure engagement

across our audiences and partners. In 2022, for parents and advocates, our programming included workshops and informational sessions. Rising leaders, educators, and school fund development teams benefited from two different programs for leaders and educators: the Transformative Leadership Fellowship and the Fundraising Learning Series. We also saw increased engagement – particularly among prospective Global Majority school founders – in our online course about how to navigate the complicated process of founding a charter public school in Washington. WA Charters also offered trainings for charter public school board members designed to reflect sector priorities that also supports accountability as part of our sector's layered system of oversight.

INNOVATIVE PARTNER SPOTLIGHTS



TRUE MEASURE COLLABORATIVE

TRUE MEASURE COLLABORATIVE

At the intersection of shared values and policy expertise is expanded opportunity to connect and create change. The [True Measure Collaborative](#) (TMC), founded in 2014, was originally developed by WA Charters as a partnership between WA Charters, Seneca Family of Agencies, and the Puget Sound Educational Service District. Each brought unique resources and expertise and each – in its own way – focused on ensuring inclusionary schoolwide and classroom practices for all students. The intent was to incubate the model within the charter public school sector until expansion to traditional public schools and districts. After eight years of developing the TMC's service model and establishing a foundation toward sustainability and broadened impact, the TMC

transitioned to become a separate entity supporting not only charter public schools, but also districts and community-based organizations (CBOs).

The timing is no coincidence. The impacts of the pandemic amplified critically necessary capacity to serve students with learning differences and the TMC provides training, consulting, coaching and technical assistance to educators in schools and districts to improve inclusionary practices. Today, the TMC has supported the successful launch of 17 charter public schools in Washington. Onsite training and coaching provided during planning and opening years ensured that compliance benchmarks have been met, and staff have been better prepared to meet the learning needs of a diversity of enrolled students. Today, we are proud of the fact that 93 percent of students with disabilities in schools served by the TMC learn alongside their peers in general education classrooms at least 80% of the school day, as compared to the state average of 62 percent.

Q&A with Sarah Okun, Executive Director, TMC



What were some learnings from early charter public school clients that spurned innovation or evolution of services at TMC?



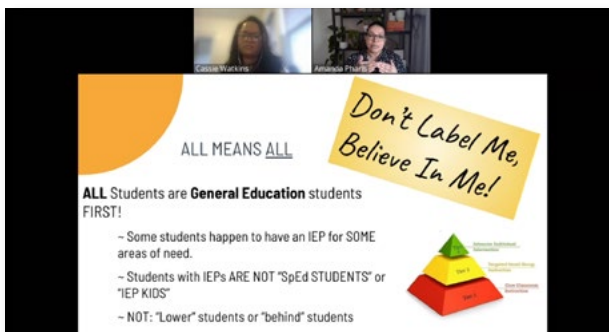
We've learned from working with charter public schools that a significant challenge often lies in bridging the gap between inclusive mindsets and inclusive practices. Over time, we have refined our work to be supportive of bridging this gap – working alongside school teams to bring their inclusive vision to life in the day-to-day operations of their school buildings by co-developing strong systems and partnering with school leaders to provide staff with the individualized coaching needed to build capacity. Working with a statewide sector of charter public schools of varying sizes, instructional models, and leadership experience levels taught us early on that our services are only effective if they are tailored to the needs of specific charter public schools. This has been informative of our model and carries over into our current work with non-charter schools and districts.



Specifically, what is your vision for what's ahead in the sector/in public education?



Washington is in the early stages of prioritizing the expansion of inclusive education practices at the state level. Our vision for what's next in Washington is the realization of what the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has [described](#) for inclusionary practices which includes the fundamental reality that “all students have a right to meaningfully participate in the general education setting, both academically and socially to the fullest extent possible.” The TMC continues to develop relationships with statewide agencies and has begun directly contributing to statewide initiatives such as Special Education teacher retention and the provision of job-specific training for Special Education teachers. Our team is proud of the value we have already added to the statewide initiatives around inclusive education and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead to continue the work.



True Measure Collaborative staff leading virtual workshops and trainings at school sites



Bill Kiolbasa, Liesbeth Kozlowski, and Corey Baron



Joule Growth Partners visiting Why Not You Academy, Des Moines, WA

jg^p

JOULE GROWTH
PARTNERS

JOULE GROWTH PARTNERS

In former roles ranging from Finance Director to National K-12 Program Officer and WA

Charters CFO/COO, Bill Kiolbasa realized a consistent challenge for nonprofits, including charter public schools, was scaling up to fully realize their mission. Time after time, Bill observed the tension created by the need for high-level financial leadership pressured by the reality that below a certain size, it could be difficult to hire a full-time Chief Financial Officer with strategic expertise who was also in charge of critical accounting functions. In May 2019, he founded [Joule Growth Partners](#) (JGP) and a year later, joined with Matt Paolini, whose deep roots in non-profit financial leadership, Washington charter public school finance, forecasting and accounting added muscle to JGP's

operations. JGP has flowed into a critical niche as social impact partners providing high-level strategic finance support grounded by strong, clean accounting under the watchful eye of Liesbeth Kozlowski, and amplified by the business strategy input and back-end operational know-how of Corey Baron. Today, JGP's client base has expanded to include other social-impact organizations, recognizing the connection between strategic financial leadership support, and fully realizing their missions.

JGP's expertise has enabled WA Charters to keep a tighter, well-resourced focus on stabilizing and strengthening its policy initiatives in the midst of upheaval in schools moving through the impacts of the pandemic. JGP supports schools with building strong, compliant financial and operational systems via back-office, coaching, and contract CFO supports. As a result of their support, our schools have stronger systems and are more sustainable.

Q&A with Bill Kiolbasa, CEO and Founder, JGP



How does your work connect to the experiences, outcomes, and futures of students in charter public schools?



First and foremost, we try to remember that our role is simply one of support. School leaders and teachers are impacting kids' lives day-to-day. Our job is to help provide them with a solid organizational foundation from which to do so, and whenever possible, free up as much time as we can so they can better focus on students.



What innovations or unique offerings does JGP bring to charter public schools that has impact at a school and sector level?



The charter sector here in Washington is pretty uniquely complicated on the financial reporting side. Because we recognize how difficult it can be, we continually push to keep things as simple and clear as possible for our clients to be in regulatory compliance.

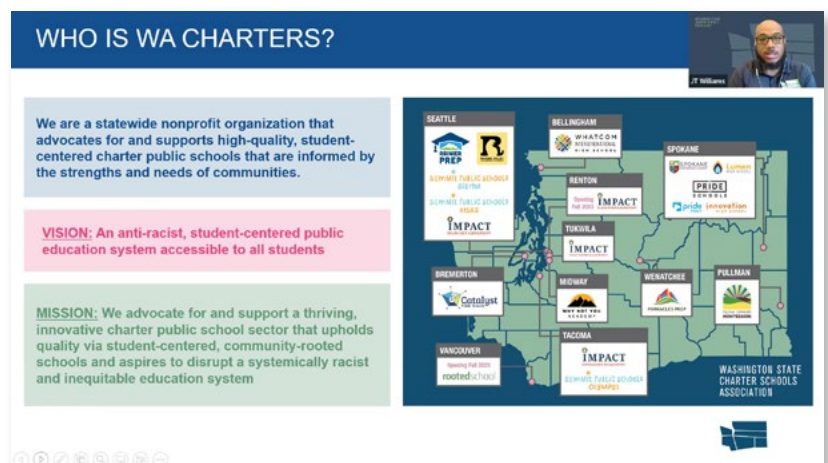
We have also received positive feedback from national groups about our insistence on multi-year planning at all times. It can be tempting, and is common, for nonprofits to fall into the habit of looking at finances year to year at budget time. However, one key to long-term impact and programmatic success is to make decisions with several years in mind, and I think we help keep that timeline in focus.

OFFERINGS FOR EVERYONE

FOR PARENTS AND ADVOCATES

For parents and community members who are deeply invested in their communities and committed to social justice and educational equity, we have many different advocacy opportunities, from being a digital advocate willing to call or email legislators, to attending a meeting with legislators, participating in a school tour or roundtable discussion.

Every month, our advocacy and organizing team hosts 1-2 free virtual workshops on topics that help families navigate K-12 education, post-secondary education, and explore charter public school topics. In addition to sharing valuable information with families, these workshops allow families to connect and learn how to advocate for their students and schools. Some of the workshop topics include Preventing Summer Learning Loss, How to Pay for College, and Special Education Basics. As we move through these topics, we introduce families to WA Charters, what we do, and why we need to advocate for charter public schools across the state. The advocacy workshops include Charters 101, Advocacy 101, 201, and 301. These sessions give community members a greater understanding of how the state legislature works and how families can impact legislation in Washington.



Presentations by WA Charters advocacy and organizing team

FOR LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER FELLOWSHIP

Since 2021, the [Transformative Leader Fellowship](#) has aimed to nurture, support, and connect new leaders from charter public schools across the state through cohort-based, professional development that can strengthen and unite Washington's charter public school sector. Led and facilitated by three



exceptional leaders bringing national and local school leadership expertise—Dr. Ayanna Gore, Rahman Branch, and Greg Ponikvar—the TLF creates a space for leaders to learn from one another and to grow individually while also positively impacting the sector at large.

This year, the TLF focused on the most pressing needs identified by its twelve cohort members: retaining talented teachers, building a diverse staff, improving instruction, building restorative learning environments, having courageous conversations, and leading with authenticity and vision.

“

I have participated in this cohort for the last two years. It is probably one of the best gifts WA Charters could have ever given me, my staff and my students. I am a better, well-balanced, confident leader because of it.



MELISSA PETTEY
Lumen High School

“I have appreciated anticipating in structured consultancies to workshop my own personal leadership challenges with trusted peers, and building community with other educational leaders. Everything we did was always so aligned to what I am doing at my school, so I can implement feedback and suggestions quickly to improve my work immediately.



SHALEA SEMANA
Vice Principal Impact Public Schools,
Puget Sound Elementary

”



FUNDRAISING LEARNING SERIES

Launched in 2021, the [Fundraising Learning Series](#), is a newsletter and video series highlighting equity-driven fundraising practices and tactical learnings to help schools raise money and center student and community voices. In the 2021-2022 school year, the series produced 11 newsletters and 14 videos featuring 11 speakers from across Washington's nonprofit sector and around the country. We highlighted topics on ethical storytelling, institutional funding, corporate partnerships, major gifts, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in fundraising, and student-led campaigns. In the 2022-23 school year, the series features more content on board topics: recruitment, belonging, and governance; facilities lending and financing; community-centric fundraising; and capital campaigns.



“CHARTER STARTER” COURSE

With the support of SchoolWorks, WA Charters offers an [online course](#), “Introduction to the WA State Charter Public

School Application Process,” which aims to help potential founders clearly understand and navigate the process of starting a charter public school in Washington state. The course covers the critical components of the charter application, providing best practices for school design and tips for avoiding common pitfalls in the writing process. It also emphasizes the importance of community-centered school design and features the perspectives of current Washington charter public school leaders.

Of the 50 registrants who participated in 2022, 42 percent self-identified as people of the Global Majority. Of those, 31 are seeking to start schools in Western Washington, four in Central Washington, and six in Eastern Washington. The course has demonstrated ongoing demand from a diversity of communities across the state to open more charter public schools, signaling the importance of ongoing advocacy to re-open Washington's authorizing window to allow for new schools across the state.

FOR CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS

LUNCH & LEARN

A new offering for charter public school board members, WA Charters and the Washington State Charter School Commission co-hosted a virtual Board Member Lunch & Learn on December 9, 2022, to provide state-of-the-sector updates, 2023 Legislative priorities, and review best practices around board oversight and accountability, as well as board governance training. Board members from 16 schools across Washington State attended and engaged with our team and the state authorizer. The session achieved its goal of bolstering strong governance and accountability practices amongst our school board community. 2022 marked our first state-wide board convening. We plan to host these convenings on a quarterly cadence throughout the year. See the 2023-2023 member charter school board training offerings and resources [here](#).

GRANTMAKING AND FEDERAL CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Startup funding for charter public schools in Washington was a significant body of work for WA Charters in 2022, including administration of the \$19.96M [Charter School Program](#) (CSP) grant award to Washington state, as well as intermediary grantmaking to the sector for school planning, launch, growth, scale, and emergency needs – including ongoing COVID-19 response.

CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM GRANTMAKING

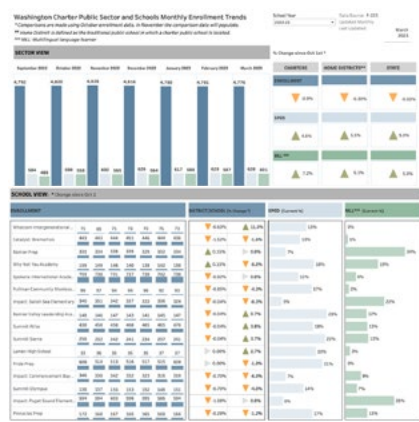
90 percent of the CSP funds are distributed by WA Charters through sub-grants of up to \$1.5M over five years to Washington state charter public schools for startup and expansion. Remaining funds are used to provide resources to support the overall quality and growth of Washington's charter public school sector and administration of the grant. To date, the organization has awarded eleven sub-grants through the program and intends to run an expansion sub-grant competition in 2023 for the remaining two available sub-grants.

In addition to funding sub-grants for new school and expansion efforts, the CSP grant has also been instrumental in supporting Washington's authorizers in developing protocols for charter renewals and expansion of existing charter public schools. The grant is also funding a multi-year research project on promising practices at Lumen High School in Spokane and Catalyst Public Schools in

Bremerton. Lastly, grant funds have supported parent involvement and advocacy trainings and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainings for charter public schools.

DATA DASHBOARD

Notably, this funding enabled the development and 2022 launch of a large-scale [data dashboard](#) for the charter public school sector. The CSP grant has been invaluable for supporting the charter sector in Washington state.



INTERMEDIARY FUNDING

WA Charters' intermediary funder role continues to be critical for schools as they have inequitable

access to public funding. In 2022, WA Charters granted funds to the majority of the charter sector's schools at various stages of planning, startup, and growth. We also administered a significant COVID-19 response fund, which – alongside the enormous amount of federal funding passed through to all public schools through federal relief packages - supported schools' response to and recovery pathways from the pandemic.

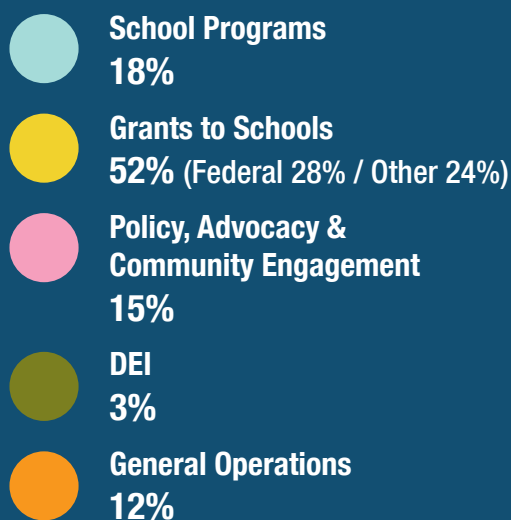
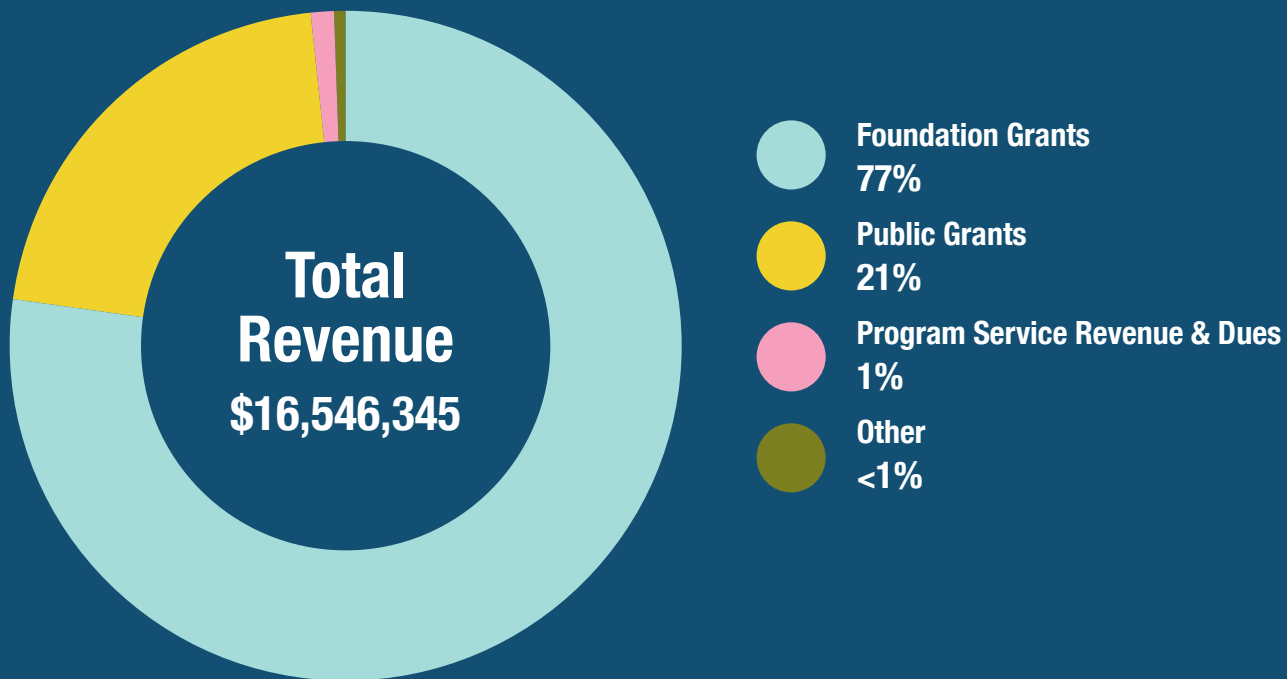
WA Charters continues to iterate and evolve its grantmaking practices to ensure high-quality grant compliance and support anti-racist and equitable practices, including assessing our grantmaking practices on the Equitable Grantmaking Continuum developed by Vu Le and the Nonprofit AF team.

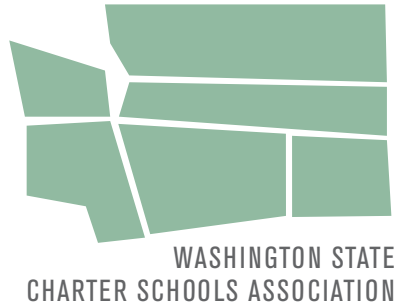
As WA Charters continues to implement our 2021-24 strategic plan, we are working with partners to develop a potential pathway toward exiting the intermediary funder role. This work is ongoing and evolving alongside the sector's political and public funding landscape.

2022 FINANCIALS

January 1, 2022-December 31, 2022

Preliminary financials; audited financials will be available in mid-2023





Invest in a more equitable education sector through advocacy, giving, in-kind support, or volunteerism!

Visit www.wacharters.org/take-action to learn more.

wacharters.org / info@wacharters.org / 206.832.8505

