

WASHINGTON STATE
CHARTER SCHOOLS
ASSOCIATION



Annual Report | 2023



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Financials

2023 was a year of progress for WA Charters and the charter sector, bringing new, significant public resources to our schools and showing continued, promising academic trends – particularly for young people who have the least access to educational opportunities.

As we have come to the end of this year of change, growth, learning, and progress, we are asking ourselves: what's next? The 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, our roadmap for success, is coming to a close, marking the end of a huge body of work that has helped us build a robust, community-rooted, and anti-racist charter support organization.

In 2023, we saw that work result in some amazing outcomes for our sector, our schools, our students, and our team, including:

- \$6.4M in new public funding this school year (2023-2024) for schools across the sector, following the same amount last school year (2022-2023).
- Academic trends showing strong recovery for charter students post-pandemic, and outstanding results for Black, Latinx, and low-income students.
- 16,000+ advocates working with us to help create a more equitable education landscape in Washington state.
- Two new, community-rooted charter public schools launching, and two operating schools authorized to expand grades to become K-12 institutions.
- Hundreds of graduates leaving our high schools ready for their next step.

Now, as we consider the road ahead, we are planning for a future where the momentum and growth we have achieved can continue to build. We have launched a new strategic planning process that will take our work from 2024-2026 and help us create an organization that can move further and faster toward the future, a future where charter public schools have all the resources, support, and flexibility they need to continue to break down some of our region's highest barriers to academic success for all students.

In community,
WA Charters Board of Directors

Vision

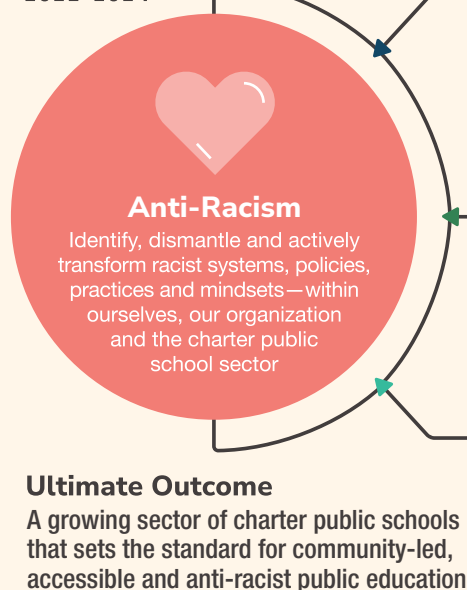
An anti-racist, student-centered public education system accessible to all students

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



Advocacy

Secure charter public school policy that advances equitable student outcomes via effective, community-rooted engagement

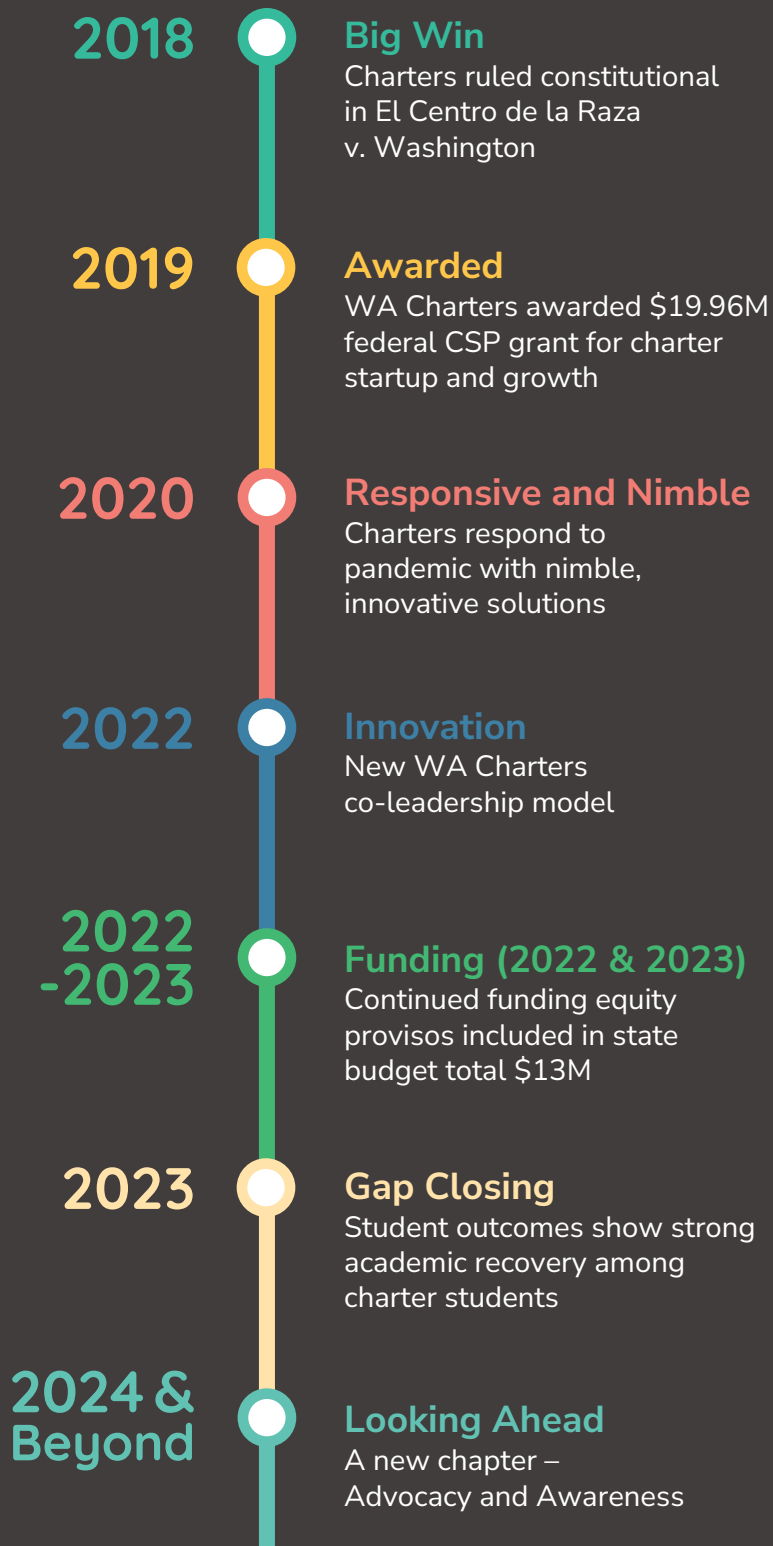
School Quality & Member Services

Provide outstanding services in support of anti-racist, student-centered, community-rooted schools to charter public school members

Organizational Effectiveness

Focus on continuous improvement to serve as trusted backbone organization, championing innovative and anti-racist organizational and sector practices

Evolution of WA Charters



As we wind down our current strategic plan (2021-2024) we are reflecting on the last five years of work, and the amazing wins we've accomplished, together.

The sector has accomplished extraordinary things in the face of huge headwinds.

Throughout, WA Charters' role has been to advocate for and support systems that create the conditions necessary for a thriving, anti-racist, student-centered, and community-rooted sector.

We have accomplished so much alongside our schools, our community, and our partners: a new law, a successful legal battle in the Washington State Supreme Court, more equitable funding for schools over the last two years, promising academic results, and game-changing school models, to name just a few. The sector as a whole has lived into the promise of the original charter policy - removing barriers to education access that have stood in the way of so many students and families.

When we stepped into our co-leadership roles in 2022, we were one year into a three-year strategic plan rooted in big goals around advocacy wins, quality member services, and enhanced organizational effectiveness all built on a foundation of aspiring anti-racism. As we look back, we are incredibly proud of the work we've accomplished as a sector:



BRIDGING THE GAP TO FAIR CHARTER FUNDING: Since 2021, we've made enormous strides ahead in our advocacy work – from building significant new relationships with Global Majority-led organizations with aligned policy goals to growing our grassroots advocacy base to over 16,000 supporters.

Washington state included a budget proviso for levy equalization funding in both 2022 and 2023, making it just a handful of states with a funding equity-related policy win and bringing a total of almost \$13M in state funding equalization for charter public schools over the course of the two school years. While this does not close the unfair funding gap for charter public school students, it sets a strong precedent for achieving fair funding over the long term.

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES WHILE GROWING THE SECTOR: The last three years have been tumultuous for schools, as we have adapted to the changes brought by the pandemic and grappled with the ongoing impact of systemic racism across our nation. School support services nimbly adapted alongside our schools to provide first, the operational pathway through and out of pandemic response, and then to double down on our commitment to academic gains for our students.

From school year 2021-2022 to the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, seven schools have opened and two schools were authorized to expand their grades. In that same period, WA Charters has administered federal Charter School Program (CSP) subgrant awards totaling \$6.2M to schools across Washington.

We've been amazed by the grit and perseverance of our students whose academic results have shown they are recovering to pre-pandemic levels at a faster clip than their traditional public-school peers. And for two years running we've seen our Black, Latinx, and low-income students outperforming their peers in traditional public schools on statewide math, ELA, and science exams.

LEADERSHIP WITH EQUITY AT ITS CENTER: Reimagining systems is in the charter DNA, but the work of forging new practices that center equity must go beyond the classroom to be truly meaningful. We knew that to lead effectively and to create a leadership model aligned with WA Charters' values, we needed to challenge systems within executive leadership. Building on the experience and wisdom of community leaders before us, we built a three-leader model that is founded on the strength of our diverse voices, experiences, and identities.

We've seen some strong outcomes from our co-leadership model. Ninety-one percent of our team reported a sense of belonging on our most recent survey, 100% said they felt that there was an increase in working across power dynamics, and 92% reported feeling like they could provide honest feedback to managers and peers. Other organizations have looked to us as a model and adopted some of our approaches already, and we hope that this model will set a new pattern for leadership across the charter sector.

We are so proud of the ways WA Charters has worked to achieve the ambitious goals set out in our 2021-2024 strategic plan, and we're excited to see it happen again in a new chapter for our sector.

Onward,
Haid, Natalie, and Rekha

2023 Milestones

National Highlights

Washington is among just a few states to achieve additional public resources to offset unfair funding.

“From a national perspective, this type of local levy offset funding is relatively rare, particularly in blue states. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) is not aware of any state where charter schools have achieved full parity with district schools with respect to local levies, and according to NAPCS only a handful of states have made significant progress.”

— Todd Ziebarth, Senior Vice President, State Advocacy and Support, NAPCS



Encouraging Academic Results



For the second year in a row, Black, Latinx, and low-income students in charter public schools outperformed their traditional public-school peers in all tested subjects (ELA, Math, and Science).

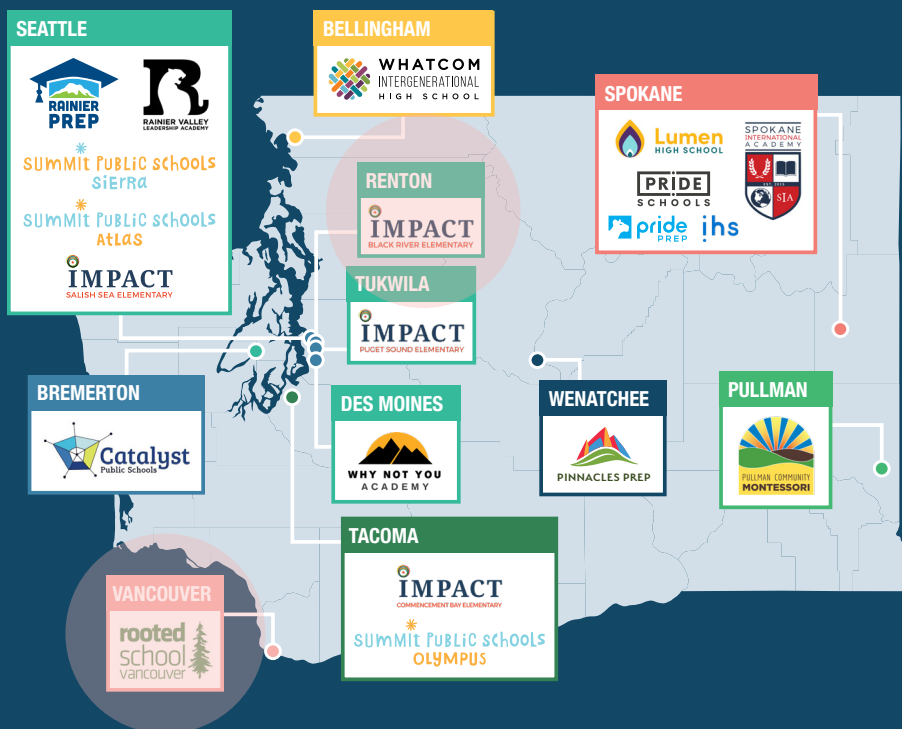


Charter public school students are returning to pre-COVID levels of achievement more quickly than their traditional public school peers.

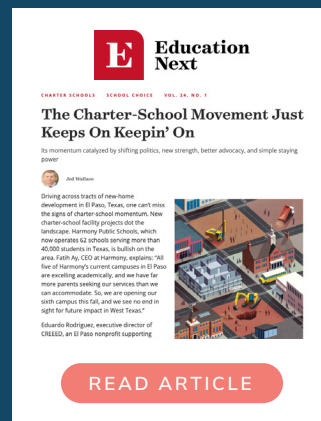
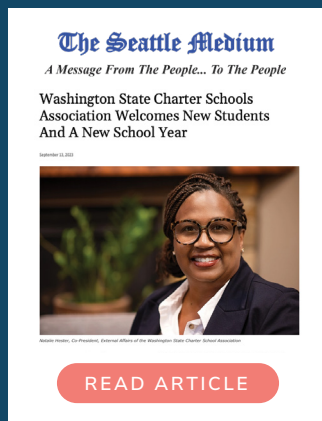
Two NEW, Game-Changing Schools

Rooted School Vancouver
Rooted School Vancouver exists to provide students with personal pathways to financial freedom.

Impact | Black River Elementary
Black River Elementary in the heart of Renton is the fourth school in the Impact Public Schools Network.



Raising Awareness About Key Issues



Growing a Community of Exceptional School Teams

This year, WA Charters launched and expanded statewide Communities of Practice (CoP), which are created so that **the efforts of one can benefit all**. Charter public schools have fewer operational resources, less access to networks of peers, and fewer centralized supports than traditional public schools.

Re-Establishing the Charter Coalition

The Charter Communities Coalition is a group of organizations that seeks to build broad community and legislative support for and understanding of Washington's charter public school sector to ensure high-quality, innovative public schools that center and **meet the needs of historically and systemically marginalized students, families, and communities**.

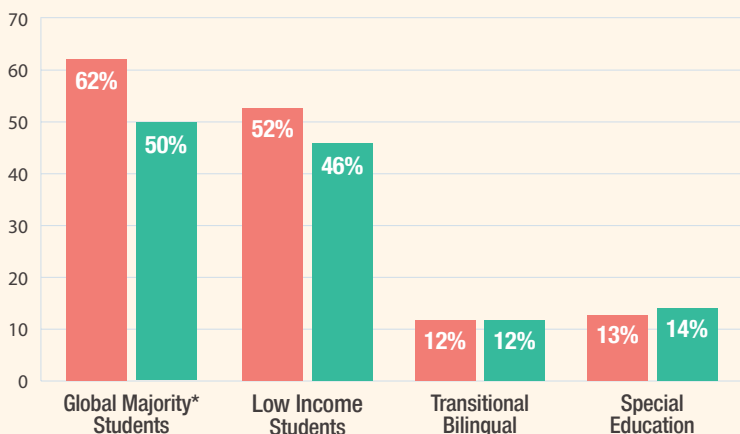
Increasing Funding for Students Across Washington

Charter public school students receive **75 cents on every dollar spent on traditional public-school students**. In the 2023 session, WA Charters advocated alongside partners to help drive more funding into schools, resulting in \$6.4M in public funding offset allocated to charters across Washington for the 2023-2024 school year.

Student-Centered, Community-Rooted

Charter public schools enroll higher rates of Global Majority* and low-income students than traditional public schools

Source: 2021-22 Cedars and OSPI Report Card data



Washington Charter Public Schools

Washington State Schools

* Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

Washington state charter public schools employ **over double the number of Global Majority* teachers** as compared to the statewide average.

36%

14%

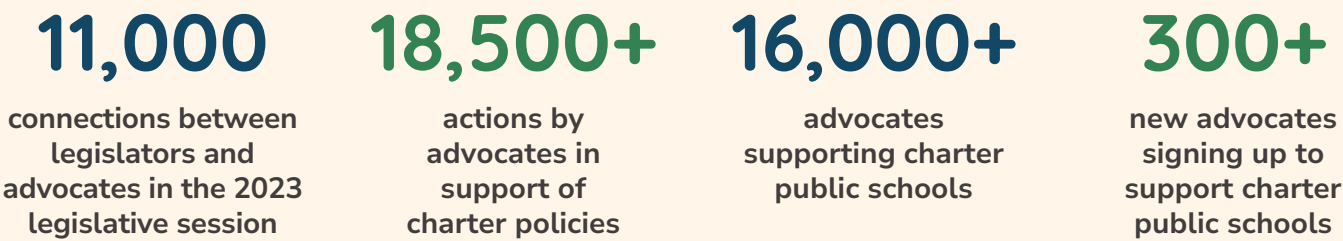
Charter public schools serve over five times the rate Black/African American students compared to traditional public schools.

27%

5%

Building a Community of Action

We support our schools and the families they serve to advocate for issues that matter the most to them. Our advocates are at the heart of our work, moving policies forward that matter to them, both within their communities and in Olympia. **The result: \$6.4 million in enrichment funding for charter public schools this school year.**



The dogged commitment and passionate investment of time from our advocates has helped build relationships with key decision-makers in Olympia. We saw double the number of Democrat legislators signing on or co-sponsoring charter-related bills, as compared to last session and triple the number of Democrat sponsors of the charter funding equity bill between 2020 and 2024.



“It’s unacceptable that any student in Washington has less of an opportunity than another. There has been plenty of time to get it right. This is inequitable. It’s wrong. And I’m committed to fighting for those parents and students who want the right to learn in ways that best fit their way of life, culture, and learning capabilities.”

— Washington State Representative Debra Lekanoff

Coalition Partners

We cannot do our work without the partnership with values-aligned organizations across Washington, particularly the critical members of the Charter Communities Coalition.



Supporting Community-Rooted Schools

WA Charters' school services and programs supported the statewide network of charter public schools to fulfill their promise of bringing high-quality, community-rooted education to the regions they serve. In 2023, WA Charters developed programs aimed to help break down geographic barriers and provide connection across the state among charter leaders, staff, and educators. While the authorization window for new charter schools remained closed in 2023, schools continued to grow in response to community demand by expanding the grades they served. WA Charters provided technical support and funding to expanding schools through the pre-authorization process and beyond.

EXCEPTIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP The Transformative Leader Fellowship (TLF) and High School Leaders Network create collaborative spaces for networking, best practice exchange, and problem-solving. Developed in partnership with the Marshall Leadership Institute and 360 Accelerator, the programs help us grow and retain talent in the charter sector and support the careers of community-rooted leadership across our communities.

POWERFUL TEAMS The Operations Community of Practice and Racial Equity Identity Groups are statewide programs that bring together school staff across all levels of leadership to create meaningful connections and build tools for effective operations and equity-focused school-wide practices.

STRONG BOARDS Charter public school boards have big responsibilities to their schools and their communities. In support of strong, anti-racist, and deeply accountable board leadership, WA Charters launched a series of programs for board members in 2023 including a Lunch and Learn training series and monthly Board Chair Meet-Up.

EXPANDING GRADE BY GRADE Rainier Valley Leadership Academy will add six grades, expanding from a 6-12 to a K-12. Catalyst Bremerton will serve an additional four grades by expanding from a K-8 to a K-12.

“Expanding RVLA at the elementary level signifies a powerful commitment to nurturing the local community by actively challenging systemic oppression and the school-to-prison pipeline. This expansion aims to foster a learning environment for the future’s most outstanding leaders in our country, where young minds are empowered to dismantle ingrained and societal biases through liberatory education, collaborative problem-solving, and community leadership experiences.”

— Rainier Valley Leadership Academy CEO, Baionne Coleman



“This approval moves us closer to our ultimate vision for Catalyst – a school where scholars can build a strong understanding of themselves, envision the world in which they want to live, and develop the agency to access the future of their dreams.”

— Catalyst Co-Founder and CEO, Amanda Gardner

Students Graduate Ready for College and Career

Kaden Boren is the proud father of a 2-year old son and recent high school graduate from Lumen High School, a charter public school in Spokane. One of the charter sector's 245 2023 graduates across six charter public schools, Kaden is hard at work making plans for a bright future.

"I'm an entrepreneur," says Kaden. "It can be challenging not having very much free time, but I'm proud that I was able to maintain a job while going to school and raising a child, all at the same time. When I'm on vacation at the lake – my son loves the water – it feels rewarding knowing how hard I worked so that we could have that time together."

"At my old school, I felt like I was just a number," Kaden says. "It was so big and it was so easy to sit in the back of the room and be forgotten about or skip class. But at Lumen, all the teacher were bugging me to make sure I went to class. When I would feel overwhelmed, my teachers understood what I was going through and would help me out when everything felt like it was too much. They knew when to give me extra time and when to bug me to make sure I was keeping on top of my schoolwork."

During his studies at Lumen High, Kaden participated in the launch of a new pilot at the school that places students on internship pathways. He encourages incoming students to find these types of opportunities outside of their classwork. "I enjoy working on different things, making plans and then seeming them come to life," Kaden says. Today, he has already started a car detailing business and trades stocks. He is also looking into reselling products on the Amazon marketplace.

"Before Lumen High, I was just going to school and going to work. I was doing the same thing every day," Kaden remembers. "After the programs I could access while at Lumen High, I could see more for myself and get my hands onto stuff outside of school, too. These experiences helped me get better at what I want to do after I am done with school when I am running a business of my own."



Ready for the Future

According to Washington STEM, by 2030, less than half of new jobs in Washington will offer family-wage salaries. Of these family wage jobs, **96% will require a postsecondary credential**. And we are seeing charter students graduate ready for their next step.

High School Graduate SPOTLIGHTS

“I proved to myself that I can do it. When I started high school, I had doubts about whether I could complete this journey because my anxiety was telling me that I couldn’t do it. Today, I’ve shown the world and myself that I’m not going to fall through the cracks.”

DENISHA’S PATHWAY: “I’m going to college with a full scholarship and will pursue my dreams.”

— Denisha Shipps | Summit Olympus, Tacoma



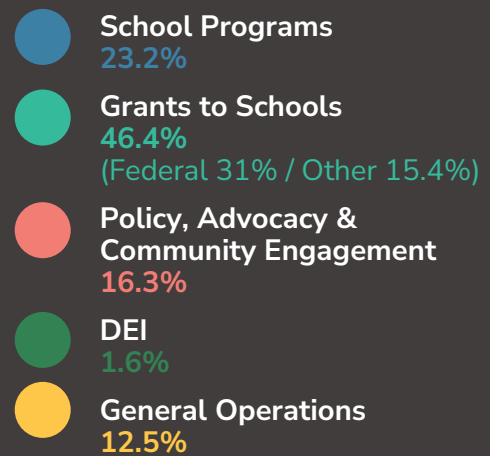
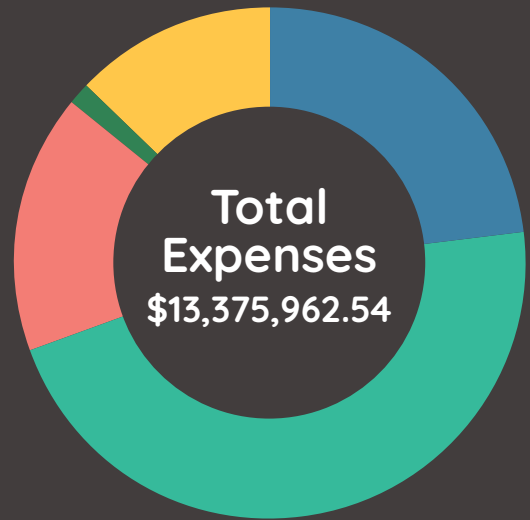
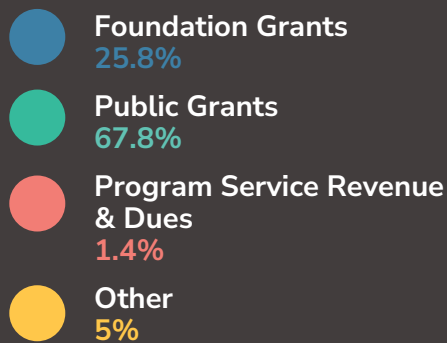
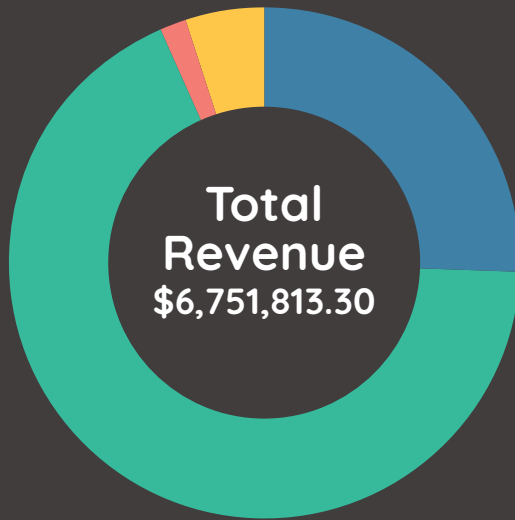
“At my high school, there were more kids that looked like me and it felt more like home when I went to class. Since I felt more comfortable, I could learn more about what I want to do with my life. It helped me develop passions and put me on track.”

MARSHAWN’S PATHWAY: “I might want to work as an electrical engineer, and I can start studying for that at Seattle Central before transferring to a four-year university.”

— Marshawn Jones | Rainier Valley Leadership Academy, Seattle

Financials

January 1, 2023-December 31, 2023



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

Visit www.wacharters.org/advocate/ to learn more.

wacharters.org | info@wacharters.org | 206.832.8505

