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DOOMED TO FAIL

AN ANALYSIS OF CHARTER SCHOOL
CLOSURES FROM 1998 TO 2022



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parents seek a caring, consistent, and dependable learning environment for their children in an increasingly unstable world. At the same time, they are being lured from their neighborhood public school by school choice.

With a carefully crafted marketing campaign, a new charter school offers something different, promising something better than the neighborhood public school down the block.

However, as hundreds of thousands of families have found, enrolling your child in a charter school comes with enormous risk. Charter schools [close at far higher rates](#) than public schools.¹ And, unlike public school districts where infrequent closures are orderly with the district finding a new school for the child, charter school closures are often chaotic and abrupt, taking parents by surprise. As this report shows, that risk is far from negligible.

While research studies of charter closure rates typically measure year-to-year closures, such studies provide little guidance to families seeking to understand the risk of enrolling their child in a charter school. The questions that parents ask are more practical.

Will their kindergartener's school still exist next year or when they are in grade five? Will their high school student's school be offering diplomas come graduation year? Or will it be boarded up?

In short, parents want to know if they can depend on a school being there not only when their children start but also when they finish. Based on a marketplace model with fewer regulations, the charter sector is far more unstable than local public schools. Some schools that close have been open for only a few months, while others close after serving communities for ten years or more. Year-to-year closure rates do not indicate the longevity of schools and, therefore, provide limited information.

While the fate of each school cannot be predicted, we can show trends. What percentage of charter schools survive to the three-year mark? How many make it to year ten? Thirty-two years into the charter school "experiment," the handwriting is on the wall. As this report shows, the results are discouraging for those looking for security and consistency for their children.

As in our [first report on charter closures](#),² Researcher Ryan Pflieger, Ph.D. used the Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD), the primary database on non-private elementary and secondary education in the United States, to determine charter school closure rates

for this report. The instability in the sector we found in our first report still exists today, even with additional cohorts of schools in the mix — more than one in four charter schools close by the five-year mark.

By year 10, the failure rate jumps to nearly four in 10; five years later, almost 50 percent have closed. We now have five cohorts at the 20-year mark with an average failure rate of 55 percent.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF CHARTER CLOSURES BY OPENING YEAR COHORT

NUMBER OF YEARS OPEN	AVERAGE FAILURE RATE	NUMBER OF COHORTS
Year Three	16%	22
Year Five	26%	20
Year Ten	39%	15
Year Fifteen	49%	10
Year Twenty	55%	5

Although average closure rates provide important information, it is equally important to understand why charter schools close. Such information can inform parents of warning signs, giving them ample time to find another school.

Therefore, we analyzed news stories reporting charter closures during the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years to ascertain the contemporary reasons for closures.

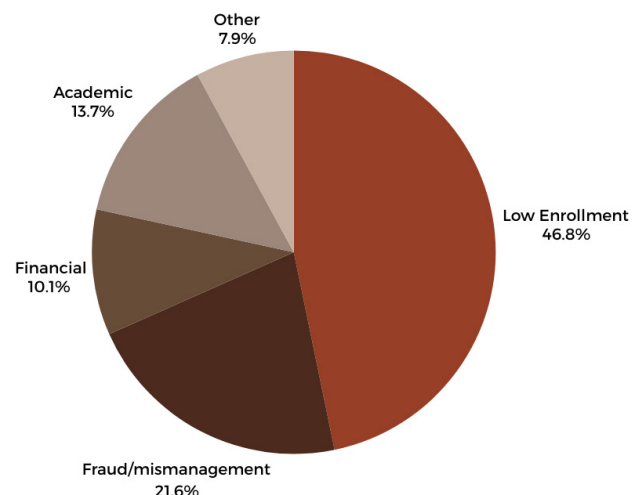
We included only closures reported in professional news services with stories that answered all three of the following questions:

1. Why the charter school closed
2. If the closure was voluntary or mandated by an outside agency
3. Whether the closure was abrupt or phased.

It is important to note that the included closures were not the only closures during those years. Some schools close with little or even no media notice at all. Nevertheless, we found a representative sample of closures across the 31 states represented on which to draw conclusions.

The pie chart below represents our findings.

FIGURE 1. REASONS FOR CHARTER CLOSURES: 2022-2024

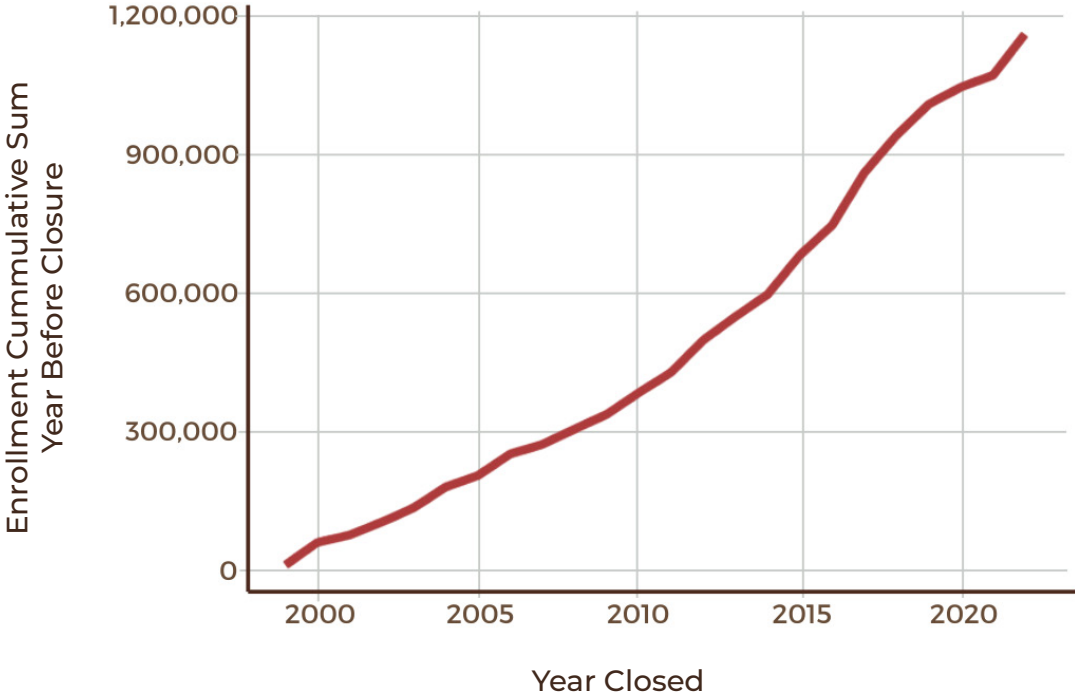


How the charter school is closed is of equal interest to parents. Despite commonly held beliefs, we found that most charters do not have an orderly closure initiated by their authorizer based on their inability to meet their academic goals. The process is very often chaotic.

Nearly 65 percent of all closures are undertaken by the schools' operators or board. Forty percent of all charter closures in the years we examined were abrupt, giving parents scant notice to find another school. In nearly all abrupt closures, schools had either watched enrollment drop but waited until they had no choice but to close, or the school closed due to fraud or mismanagement.

Here is the bottom line. Over the years, charter closures have broken their promises to more than one million children whose parents believed they had enrolled their children in a better, stable alternative to their local public school. In the marketplace model of schooling, when it comes to charter schools, it is buyer-beware. And in far too many cases, these schools were doomed to fail from the very beginning.

FIGURE 2. SCHOOL ENROLLMENT PRIOR TO CLOSURE: 1998-2022



INTRODUCTION

Based on the theory that only the best will survive and the worst fall away, blind allegiance to the model is stronger than allegiance to families whose lives are disrupted by school failures.

Between 1999 and 2022, more than 1.1 million students were affected by charter school closures, often with less than one month's notice. At times, the closures were so abrupt that families showed up to find a shuttered school, receiving no notice at all. Sometimes, a charter school that promises to open does not, leaving families scrambling and public schools overwhelmed with last-minute enrollees. The broken promise of better or more innovative education is shattered time and time again as charters fail to achieve viable enrollment or are mired in mismanagement and even outright fraud that forces them to close their doors. In state after state, we have created a wild west of charter expansion, resulting in schools starting with the best intentions but are doomed to fail.

In 2020, the Network for Public Education issued its first [report on charter school closures](#).³ Rather than measure annual closure rates, we used an innovative approach — a cohort design to measure the lifespan of charter schools. Researcher Ryan Pflieger, Ph.D., used the Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD), the primary database on non-private elementary

and secondary education in the United States, to determine student displacement and charter school closure rates. Unique school identifiers, school-type designations, and enrollment data allowed Pflieger to determine the failure rates for cohorts of charter schools at the three, five, ten, and, in some cases, the fifteen-year mark. Dr. Pflieger determined those rates for all charter schools that opened between 1998 and 2017. The results were startling — more than a quarter of all charter schools closed by year five, and about half were gone by year fifteen.

To determine whether closure rates have improved since our first report, Dr. Pflieger added additional data from the 2018-19 to the 2022-23 school years, thus doubling the number of cohorts at the fifteen-year mark and providing us data for a first look at year 20.

Again, he analyzed cohorts of charter schools — schools that opened in the same year — over time. Few differences were found between our earlier study and this expanded one.⁴

More than one in four charter schools still closed by the five-year mark. With

minimal improvements in closure rates, the number of displaced students is increasing, with about 295,000 more students displaced between the 2017-18 and 2022-23 school years.

Only five cohorts of schools had 15 years of data available at the time of our 2020 report. For this update, Pflieger analyzed 10 cohorts at year 15, including schools opened and financed during the Race to the Top years when charter schools rapidly expanded and funding increased. Nevertheless, including the additional, better-resourced cohorts had a minimal effect on 15-year closure rates, which dropped from 50 percent to 49 percent. The same negligible one percent rate drop was repeated in all benchmark years. And for the five cohorts that made the 20-year mark, 55 percent are gone.

Some charter schools quietly shutter without media attention. Others close amidst scandal or parent protests. Some give parents ample warning, while others provide no warning at all. To better understand why charters close and what notice families have, we analyzed news reports on closures during 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years.

More often than not, we found patterns of decreasing enrollment or other warning signs that school officials ignored or failed to share with the families they served. We found the commonly held belief that charters are more academically accountable and close because of academic performance to be true only in a minority of cases. More than half closed because they could not sustain their enrollment or due to corruption or mismanagement of funding.

This report summarizes what we learned while highlighting cases that illustrate the effects of school closures on the families and communities they serve. We also show that school closures are more voluntary than forced, with 40 percent of closures giving parents little, if any, advance warning.

For charter advocates, [school closures are just a natural consequence](#) of the marketplace model.⁵ Those who embrace choice brush aside the instability for families and the disruption that charter churn inflicts on neighborhood public schools.

[Studies on school closures](#), including those focusing on charter schools, show little to no benefit to students, with many showing both long and short-term adverse effects.⁶

Public school parents have the security of knowing that their public school is unlikely to close and that if it does, the district must guarantee them a seat in another nearby school.

This is not the case with charter schools. School closure is not a bug but rather a feature of the system, and as private school vouchers expand and [K-12 enrollment continues to drop](#),⁷ closures will only accelerate.

Despite the evidence, charter expansion continues, aided by the federal Charter School Program grants. This report makes the case that it is time to rethink charter expansion and the oversight that should be in place. Students and taxpayers no longer deserve broken promises or schools doomed to fail.

section one:

METHODOLOGY

For parents, the question of charter closures is both personal and practical. Will their kindergartener's school still exist next year or when they are in grade five? Or will it be boarded up?

[Studies of charter closure rates typically focus on year-to-year closures.](#)⁸ While important for researchers, such studies provide little guidance to families seeking to understand the risk of enrolling their child in a charter school. That is because studies determining how many schools close each year provide no information on how long the school served students.

For parents, the question of charter closures is both personal and practical. Will their kindergartener's school still exist next year or when they are in grade five? Will their high school student's school be offering diplomas come graduation year? Or will it be boarded up?

Although every school's fate cannot be predicted, we can show trends. Therefore, this report's first research question is: What percentage of charter schools survive to reach benchmark years, and has that figure substantially improved since 2018?

The U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD) is the most comprehensive and rigorously collected database of public elementary and secondary schools in the United States.

Charter school designations began appearing in that database in 1998, although the first charter school was opened in 1994.

Researcher Dr. Ryan Pflieger used enrollment numbers to accurately determine the openings and closures of charter schools because some schools appear in the database years before opening or remain after student enrollment is gone. If a school reported enrollment in year X followed by no enrollment in year Y, we categorized it as closed in year Y. This is based on several assumptions and facts. By including only schools that showed actual enrollment, we eliminate the possibility of counting schools as closed when, in fact, they never opened at all.

Because enrollment determines school funding, staffing levels, and more, we assume that schools do not systematically underreport enrollment numbers. In rare cases where schools fail to report enrollment, we could wrongly assume these schools had closed, which would overestimate closure rates.

However, the reverse is also true. If a charter school closes before it reports enrollment, that school would not be re-

ported as closed, resulting in an underestimation of closures. We also include schools as open if they show even one student enrolled, even though schools with five or fewer students are unlikely to be functioning charter schools.

We use the first year that the school reports enrollment to determine when it opened. Public schools that convert to charter schools have an opening year that reflects when their status is changed to charter. The reverse is also true. If a charter converts to a public school, they are recorded as closed. If a charter changes its NCES number, which is rare, the “closure” is offset by the opening of a new charter school with the new number.

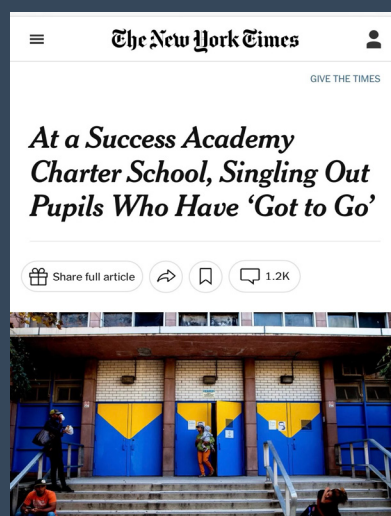
Closure underestimation also occurs when a charter school closes, and another school opens in the same charter chain using the closed school’s NCES number. For example, as described by New York City public school advocate and Executive Director of *Class Size Matters* Leonie Haimson below, the Success Academy chain manipulates closures to create new schools and avoid the city’s charter cap. Because the same NCES number is used, the two closures are undetectable in the CCD.

The appendix at the end of this report provides definitions of key concepts and a more detailed discussion of our methodology.

Success Academy Fort Greene was the infamous “got to go” school and was originally an elementary school in New York City’s District 13.⁹ Some years back, apparently due to falling enrollment, this school closed, and yet another school with the same name opened up at another site in District 14, 1.5 miles away, as a middle school.

Success Academy then closed the Fort Greene middle school in District 14, also apparently due to falling enrollment, and opened a new Sheepshead Bay elementary school in District 22 more than 7 miles away. On their own website, this new school is correctly called Success Sheepshead Bay and enrolls K-1 grades.¹⁰

The listing in the CCD is for the first school (Success Academy Fort Greene), now with the Success Sheepshead Bay address.¹¹ You can read more about what Leonie Haimson refers to as Success Academy’s three-card monte here.¹²



In addition to updating closure rates, this report examines why charter schools close and the factors surrounding those closures. We classify closures into one of four categories most frequently cited in closure studies: insufficient enrollment, fraud/mismanagement, financial collapse, and academic failure. If the closure cannot be attributed to one of the above, we classify it in a fifth category, “other.” We also report the percentage of schools closing abruptly without providing sufficient notice. We defined an abrupt closure as one that is both announced and occurs during the same school year or after the school year ends, forcing families to find a new school for the fall after the regular enrollment period.

Finally, we provide an analysis of the frequency of closures imposed by agencies outside of the school based on the accountability system, as well as voluntary closures initiated by the school’s operators.

Our source for the above analyses is news stories, often more than one, reporting on the closure of charter schools during the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years.

section two:

CLOSURES BY COHORT

The impact of charters that close in such a short period of time is devastating. A five-year-old enrolled in kindergarten on the day the school opened would be on the street before they could enroll in middle school.

Between 1998 and 2022, approximately 12,000 charter schools opened and enrolled students. By 2002, more than 36 percent of those charter schools closed. This includes schools that opened in 2022 whose closure would be reported in 2023 and beyond, which is outside the years of the study.

Over 600 schools that opened in that period never made it to year two. Although some had fewer than ten students, others had large enrollments. For example, when Georgetown Charter School in Delaware shut down in March of its first year, 600 students were left without a school, with three months left in the school year. According to a [report in Education Week](#),¹³ about 46 percent of the students enrolled in their local public or private school; however, the remaining half were “homeschooled” or did not finish the year at all. During its short life of seven months, it had managed to accumulate \$1.5 million of debt.

CLOSURE RATE BY 10 YEARS

[Our last report](#) explained how a school’s first few years are the riskiest.¹⁴ Our analysis of 22 cohorts of charter schools

shows a 16 percent failure rate during the first three years, down just one percentage point from our 2020 report when the failure rate at the third-year benchmark was 17 percent.

By year five, the number creeps higher still. More than one in four are gone. In 2000, charter failures at the five-year benchmark were 27 percent. Now, the rate has dropped slightly to 26 percent.

Although nearly all of these short-lived schools shut down, some rebranded and reopened in a different location, only to fail again while leaving even more displaced children behind. Such was the case with Indianapolis’s Ignite Achievement Academy, part of the city’s Innovation Schools Network that replaces public schools with charter schools.

Ignite Achievement Academy enrolled students as a charter school for the first time in 2017. [Ignite was created to “rescue” an Indianapolis public school](#), the Elder Diggs School.¹⁵ The rescue [takeover was a disaster](#).¹⁶ Scores tumbled to single digits, attendance plummeted, and teacher turnover soared. One teacher was discovered to have a criminal record.

The month that Ignite Achievement Academy was to begin the new school year, the school escaped its problems and likely closure [by transforming itself into The Genius School](#), a different charter school located in another part of the city in a building where two other charter schools were housed.¹⁷ [In its first year](#), its finances plummeted as its enrollment fell from 350 to 71.¹⁸ Less than two years later, the new failing charter school again escaped accountability and closure by [becoming a private school](#)¹⁹ in another location with publicly funded vouchers funding its [\\$9,010 tuition](#).²⁰ The school, now unaccountable for student performance under the voucher system, is led by the principal of the two failed charter schools. It is now housed in a church.

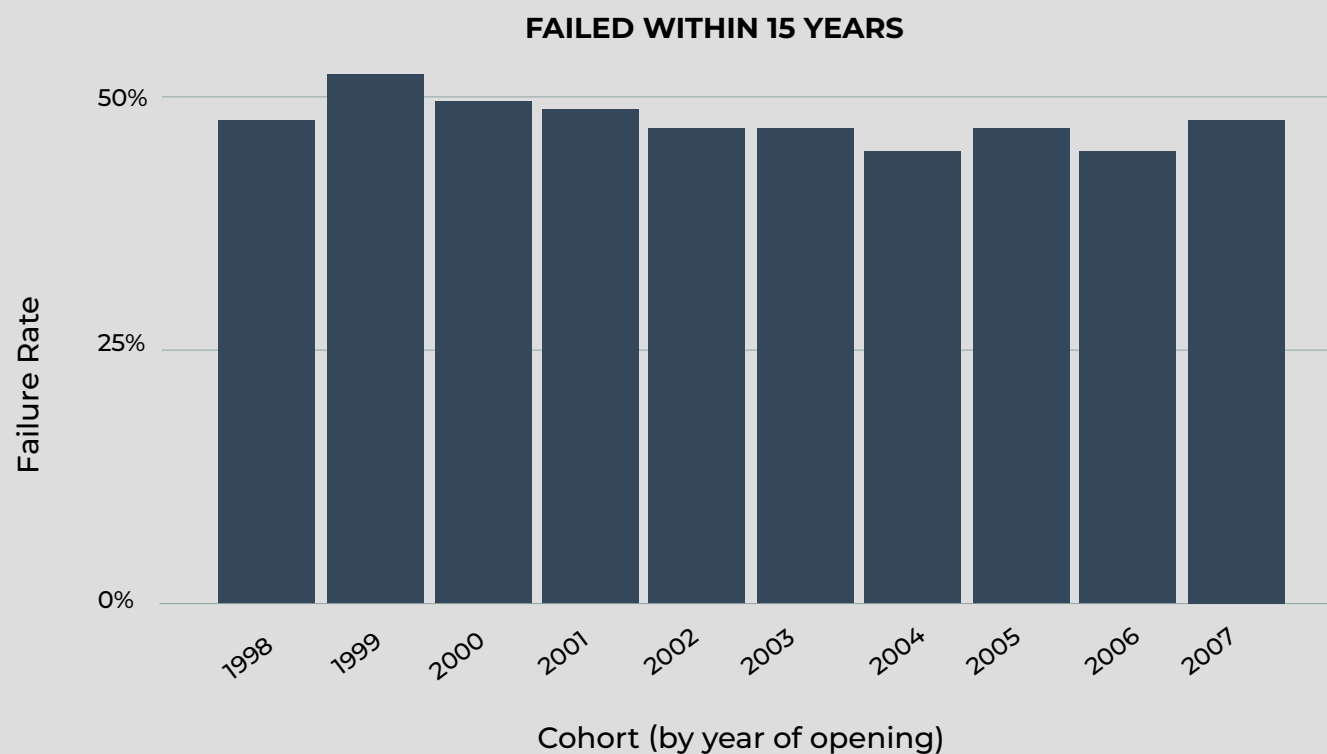
CLOSURES BY YEAR 10 AND BEYOND

At the ten-year mark, the failure rate jumps to 39 percent, a one-percentage-point decrease from our 2020 report.

However, as in 2020, most of those failures occurred in the early years. By year ten, the majority of failures occur during the school’s first four years, after which the rate begins to decline.

Ten cohorts of charter schools (1998–2007) reached the fifteen-year mark by 2022. At

FIGURE 3. CHARTER CLOSURES AT THE 15-YEAR MARK BY COHORT



year 15, nearly one in two of those schools was gone.

Failure rates were relatively stable, ranging from 46 percent to 54 percent.

We also now have five cohorts (1998-2002) that reached the twenty-year mark or beyond. Three thousand twenty-two charter schools opened in those early years. Of those schools, 1,640 (55 percent) were gone by year 20, showing that even well-established charter schools are still in danger of failing.

In summary, the additional new cohorts added to the analysis brought cohort closure rates down slightly. However, we predict that the downward trend will not likely continue. The added years included COVID-19 years when charter schools received a large influx of cash. During COVID, [USA Today's Craig Harris found](#)²¹ the charter sector received at least a \$1 billion bonus from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) as “businesses,” as well as all extra funding given to all schools during the pandemic. These funds helped keep some financially at-risk charters afloat, an example of which we present later in this report.

In addition, even as the K12 population decreases, there is increased competition for students from new charter schools and, in many states, from expanded private school and homeschool voucher programs. As we now show, enrollment decreases are the primary driver of charter school closures.

“I do try to make them aware that [a charter school] could close at any point,” Pringle said, adding that even she didn’t fully understand that until her own daughter’s charter school closed in the early 2000s.

- From: [When Minnesota charter schools fail, vulnerable students pay the price.](#) The Minnesota Star Tribune.²² Ms. Pringle is a senior organizer for The National Parents Union, a pro-school choice organization funded by the Walton Family Foundation.

TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF CHARTER CLOSURES BY OPENING YEAR COHORT

NUMBER OF YEARS OPEN	AVERAGE FAILURE RATE	NUMBER OF COHORTS
Year Three	16%	22
Year Five	26%	20
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Year Twenty	55%	5

section three:

WHY CHARTER SCHOOLS CLOSE

Insufficient enrollment was the most frequent reason charter schools closed during the past two school years, accounting for 47 percent of all closures. This trend appears to be accelerating.

Our first report provided general information on why charter schools closed in three cities: Milwaukee; Tucson, Arizona; and Detroit. The reasons provided some general information but little detail. For example, state data does not indicate whether sufficient notice was given to families to find another school. Nor does it report whether the school was forced to close by their authorizer or if it was the decision of the charter board.

To answer these questions, we did a deeper dive. For this report, we searched for news stories documenting charter closures during the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. We analyzed those stories to determine the following:

1. Why the charter school closed
2. If the closure was voluntary or mandated by an outside agency
3. Whether the closure was abrupt or phased.

It is important to note that the included closures were not the only closures

during those years. Only closures reported in professional news services with stories that answered all three questions were included.

We report on 139 charter closures: 59 schools during the 2022-2023 school year and 80 schools during the 2023-2024 school year.

The 59 news stories about 2022-2023 school closures represent less than half of all schools reporting no enrollment (closed) to the CCD for the 2022-2023 school year.

For the rest, we either could not find news reports, or the stories we found did not provide enough detail to answer the three research questions.

Because the CCD had yet to publish the 2023-2024 school year tables as of the writing of this report, we do not know what proportion of closed schools the 80 schools represent.

Given the content of the stories and the reasons for closure, we suspect that the 2023-2024 number of closures has increased, as we explain below.

WHY DO CHARTER SCHOOLS CLOSE?

The categories we created were based on the patterns we observed in addition to the observations of other studies:

Insufficient Enrollment: Enrollment determines funding. A school becomes fiscally unstable when enrollment dramatically drops or gradually slides, triggering a closure.

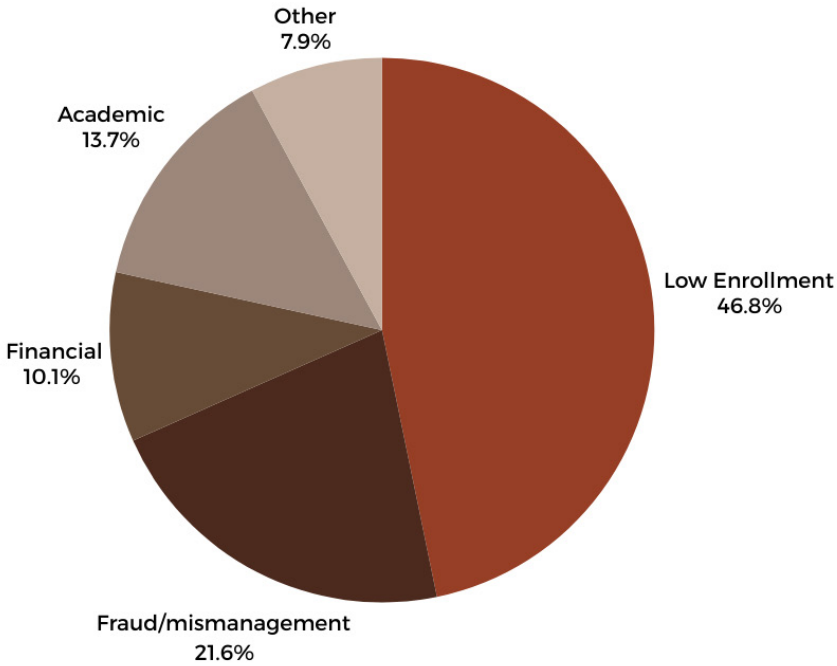
Scandal/Mismanagement: This category includes fraud, theft, or other illegal behavior. It also includes misreporting attendance data and other acts of gross mismanagement sufficient to close the school.

Financial Collapse: Although it is challenging to disentangle financial collapse from enrollment declines, this category includes closures where financial issues were reported as the primary reason for closure. These causes included the excessive borrowing of funds from another school in a charter chain, overspending on facilities, and poor planning.

Academic: Academic reasons for closure include schools that shut down voluntarily or have their charter pulled by their authorizer for not meeting their academic goals.

Other: This category is a catchall for reasons not included above and not of sufficient number to be a category on its own. Examples include shutdowns due to high numbers of uncertified or insufficient staff, disputes with their for-profit

FIGURE 3. REASONS FOR CHARTER CLOSURES: 2022-2024



operator, and a charter transforming to a public school without a given reason.

INSUFFICIENT ENROLLMENT

Nationally, K-12 enrollment is dropping due to lower birth rates. Authorizing new charter schools only exacerbates the under-enrollment problem, both for existing charter schools and neighborhood public schools.

In 2022-2023, 39 percent of all charter closures could be attributed to insufficient enrollment; in 2023-2024, insufficient enrollment was why more than half (52 percent) of all charter schools closed.

Jubilee Academies Highland Park: 2010-2023

On August 14, 2023, Jubilee Academies Highland Park in San Antonio, Texas, began the school year. Two weeks later, parents were informed that [the school would close](#) by mid-September.²³ Fami-

In 2022, the U.S. Department of Education [attempted to include community impact information in the materials submitted by federal Charter School Program grant applicants](#).²⁶ They reasoned that the justification for a new charter school should be based, in part, on enrollment trends. However, due to pressure from the charter lobby, The Department backed off and excluded the requirement.

lies would have to find another school or agree to bus their child to another Jubilee school. Two hundred and ten students were displaced.

NEXT High School: 2015-2023

The 2023 closings of the [two campuses of NEXT High School](#) in Greenville, South Carolina, may offer insight into why closings based on insufficient enrollment are accelerating.²⁴

The news story noted that the charter school took a sizeable financial hit due to “competitor schools.” In 2018, NEXT High School’s enrollment was 393 students. In 2021, enrollment had dropped to 328 following the 2017 opening of Legacy Early College, an additional charter high school in Greenville. In 2022, when the charter school announced it would close, yet another charter high school, Green Upstate High School, opened twenty minutes away. Enrollment dropped to 278.²⁵

The school lost \$882,000 in revenue, prompting the school’s board to vote to close at year’s end. In some cases, insufficient enrollment was intricately entwined with other factors, as some schools inflated projections and enrollment to increase funding.

Eagle Charter School of Nevada: 2023-2024

[Eagle Charter School opened for the first time in August of 2023](#). It promised an enrollment of 306 students and was funded accordingly. However, only about 150 students actually enrolled in the school. Rather than return the money owed, Eagle spent it, owing taxpayers nearly \$1 million. It then submitted a

budget with a surplus for which there was no justification, removing all office staff from the budget. Realizing that this charter was incapable of sound management without an office and had no plan to return the money, the State Public Charter School Authority revoked the school's charter.

In June of 2024, 300 students, many of whom were homeless, [were left scrambling to find another school](#) less than two months before the new school year would begin.²⁷

FRAUD/MISMANAGEMENT

Fraud and/or mismanagement accounted for over 21 percent of the 2022-2024 school closure reports we reviewed for this report. Below are three stories that are typical of the patterns we found in this category of shutdowns.

Coastal Waters Chartered Public School: 2022-2024

Beginning in the fall of 2022, only a few months after New Hampshire's Coastal Waters Chartered Public School opened, parents and board members alerted the New Hampshire Department of Education about concerns they had with school leadership and student health and safety. By September 2023, the Police Department began a criminal investigation.

In January 2024, [the charter school shut down](#) amid an ongoing investigation for alleged embezzlement and fraud.²⁸

By the time the school closed, its enrollment had decreased by more than half in one year. Only 47 students remained. Parents scrambled to determine wheth-

er the credits awarded by the school would transfer to local private and public schools.

According to the Seacoastonline report, parents were appalled by the lack of both transparency and state oversight of the charter school. As one parent [told reporter Sarah Gibson](#) of New Hampshire Public Radio, "...without transparent oversight or the same legal requirements as public schools, our children were put at risk multiple times, and their education has suffered."²⁹

This school, a disaster from the day it opened, had been awarded a [\\$1.36 million grant](#) from the U.S. Department of Education's Charter School State Entities Program.³⁰

The Gates School: 2021-2023

Two years after opening, the Gates School in North Charleston, South Carolina, a school designed for children with dyslexia, was [shut down by its authorizer](#) for failure to provide special education services.³¹ The Charter Institute at Erskine, reported, "...students with disabilities are owed more than 220,000 minutes of special education services that the school was required by law to provide."

Despite what the authorizer described as extensive support to the school, it was never able to provide anything close to the instruction that its students with disabilities deserved.

Memphis Academy of Health Sciences: 2010-2022

In the two examples above, problems

arose in the charter schools' earliest years. That is not always the case. Even longstanding schools are shut down for mismanagement and fraud. The Memphis Academy of Health Sciences, one of the oldest charter schools in the city, opened in 2010. [It was shut down in the spring of 2022](#)³² after it was discovered [that administrators used school funds](#) to finance trips to Las Vegas, purchase a \$5,000 hot tub, make childcare payments, purchase massage services, buy NBA tickets, and engage in additional misappropriations from 2015 to 2019.³³ Within five years after opening, those entrusted to run the school had begun stealing tax dollars for themselves. It took years before their scheme was discovered. According to Chalkbeat Tennessee, about 750 students were displaced.

The above cases are not isolated incidents. Since 2017, the Network for Public Education has identified [nearly 400 stories](#) in the news of embezzlement and fraud, not including gross mismanagement.³⁴ In nearly all cases, the school is forced to shut down.

FINANCIAL COLLAPSE

As reported above, charter schools enter a downward financial spiral when their enrollment sharply drops, or they never achieve sufficient enrollment for the school year. Ten percent of 2022-2024 charter closures that we examined were the result of financial failures caused by various factors, including poor management.

Upper Mississippi Academy: 2016-2024 [In an investigative piece in the *Minnesota Tribune*](#), reporters Mara Klecker and Jeffrey Meitrodt explain the recent fail-

ure of one Minneapolis charter school, Upper Mississippi Academy, which suddenly closed in May due to financial collapse.³⁵ After three successful years as a small school, the school moved based on the belief that enrollment would continue to increase and would expand further in a newer building. Instead, it declined. According to the journalists, rather than reduce spending, the school's CEO continued to spend even after the board instructed the administrators to freeze hiring more staff. The school spiraled financially, unable to pay its bills.

The authors used the closure of Upper Mississippi as an exemplar of the multiple failures of the charter movement in the state where charters began. According to the reporters, "The disruptive churn of those closures is further evidence that the country's oldest charter school system is too frail to uphold the movement's initial promises of innovative education to raise achievement for all. Charter schools have succeeded in other states. But the ones in Minnesota have largely failed to outperform public schools in academics."

"It's been more like a year, I feel like, where we've been like, 'Oh, we're closing, we're not closing, we're closing, we're not closing,'" Harden said. "And that's been kind of frustrating for us."

- 7 Pillars parent Cerosha Harden from April 2023 report by 11 Alive news.

7 Pillars Academy: 2019-2024

The inability to run a financially sound school occurs even when enrollment is sufficient. That was the case in [the closing of the 7 Pillars Academy](#) in Clayton County, Georgia. 7 Pillars closed, stranding 250 students after five years of operation. In shutting down the charter school, The Clayton County School District that authorized the school stated that it could not meet its financial goals. Confusion followed when the school gave parents mixed messages, claiming it would become a private school after its appeal to the state was denied. The school shut down at year's end, closing early and [shortchanging teachers and administrators promised pay](#).³⁶

Summit Academy-Denali: 2013-2023

Over 600 middle and high school students were displaced when the Bay Area's [Summit chain decided to close](#) its Denali schools.³⁷ The chain stated it had insufficient money to keep the schools open after the COVID-19 stimulus funds disappeared. However, the charter chain, which receives generous funding from philanthropy and taxpayers, still ended with [more than a \\$28 million balance](#),³⁸ paying its CEO more than \$574,000 a year.

Placer Academy Charter School: 2018-2022

Placer Academy Charter School in Rocklin, California gave parents only four days' notice when it [shut its doors](#) in the middle of the school year, leaving 200 students without a school.³⁹ Like many charter schools shut down for financial reasons, Placer wanted to construct a new school but did not have a financial

plan to make it happen. Costs were high after COVID-19, and their private funding deal fell through.

Time and again, we have found that charter boards' ambition to expand, believing that "if we build it, they will come," results in the failure of their modest but successful schools. Ten percent all charter failures result from financial mismanagement.

ACADEMIC CLOSURES

Charter schools began, in part, to improve student achievement. They are most often justified as helping students "escape" failing schools. The grand bargain of charter schools is more freedom from regulations in exchange for greater accountability — schools must deliver on academic goals or be shut down. In our investigation of charter school closures during the last two years, we found that slightly more than 13.5 percent of all closed charters were closed primarily for academic failure.

These schools were generally closed by their operators, often after they were given opportunities to improve. We also found that poor academics were often cited in articles about charters that closed due to enrollment, financial problems, or fraudulent operations.

Erie Rise Charter School: 2011-2023

When [Erie Rise Charter School closed in 2023](#), it had negotiated new achievement benchmarks with the Erie Public School District in Pennsylvania for years.⁴⁰ However, problems existed beyond academic failure. It had no permanent CEO for three years and did not properly run its special education pro-

grams. One former parent who pulled his four children out and placed them in the district's schools [told the Erie Times-News](#), "This Erie Rise is the worst school I have ever seen."

According to the *Erie Times-News*, "The school district estimates it will spend about \$3.4 million in taxpayer funds this academic year to pay students' tuition⁴¹ at Erie Rise, which is a public charter." Large tuition payments to charter schools [deplete Pennsylvania School District budgets](#), leaving stranded costs behind and increasing the burden on local taxpayers.⁴²

Even as the school was being shut down, it was [under investigation](#) by the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Education.⁴³ Nearly 300 students were stranded by the closure.

The Tennessee Achievement School District

The Tennessee Achievement School District (ASD) was created by the state legislature in 2010 as an experiment designed to transform schools with test scores in the bottom five percent of the state and turn them into high-achieving schools in the top 25 percent within five years. It was a dismal failure. Chris Barbic, who served as the ASD's first superintendent, [kept six schools to run directly](#) and then turned the rest over to charter operators.⁴⁴ At its peak, 82 percent of the schools were charter schools.

Charters run by KIPP, one of the best-known operators of charter schools, failed. YES Prep, founded by Barbic in Houston, pulled out. Just over a decade into the "experiment," the majority of

ASD charter schools have closed or returned to their districts as public schools.

Philadelphia attempted a similar experiment with its low-performing schools, flipping public schools into Renaissance charter schools during a 2010 initiative led by former superintendent Arlene Ackerman.

According to a [Chalkbeat 2023 analysis](#), the remaining Renaissance charters are performing worse on the state tests than district schools.⁴⁵

The Achievement School District cost Tennessee one billion dollars at the last count. Barbic moved on to the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, where he still pushes his failed model via the City Fund. The Tennessee legislature is in the [process of shutting](#) the ASD down.⁴⁶

Below is more in-depth reporting on the Achievement School District by teacher Gary Rubenstein, who has researched the ASD since its beginnings.

OTHER REASONS

Of the 140 school closures we investigated, only eleven did not close for one of the reasons above.

Great Work Montessori charter school in Colorado would close periodically due to a lack of staffing until it finally shut down at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. The staffing crisis was so bad the charter could not administer the state tests. Staffing shortages have caused the closure of three other schools during the past two years. Others had trouble finding adequate facilities.

DOOMED TO FAIL: THE ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

In the early 2000s, education reformers believed unionized teachers were the primary factor in depressing student achievement. They presented a handful of 'high-performing' charter schools as proof. The film *Waiting for Superman* promoted this belief.

These reformers believed that a large-scale charter experiment would either prove or disprove the hypothesis once and for all. Therefore, in 2006, after Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana created the Recovery School District (RSD), where all the schools in New Orleans were turned into charter schools. However, because the students who returned to New Orleans were different from those in the city before, and there was an enormous influx of philanthropic funding, it was impossible to determine if the charter experiment worked.⁴⁴

Reformers needed a new experiment where the schools would keep the same students they already had, but the staff at those schools would be replaced with nonunion charter school educators, and charter chains or start-up charter boards would run the schools.

Race to the Top provided Tennessee the funding and incentive to test the reformers' hypotheses. Teach For America's rising star, Kevin Huffman (ex-husband of Michelle Rhee), was the state's Commissioner of Education. He hired Chris Barbic, another TFA alum who had founded the YES Prep Charter Network in Houston, to be the superintendent of what would be called the Achievement School District. The strategy was to identify schools whose test scores were in the bottom 5 percent of the state and turn them over to different charter operators. The old schools were dissolved and reopened as new schools with new staff. Huffman and Barbic promised that they would "catapult" the schools from the bottom 5 percent to the top 25 percent in just five years.⁴⁸ Then, the ASD would take on another batch of low-performing schools.

The ASD reached its peak with 33 schools. However, year after year, its charter schools remained in the bottom 5 percent. By 2015, Chris Barbic had resigned from the ASD and taken a position with the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. In an interview, he blamed the failure on "intergenerational poverty" rather than acknowledging the failure of the charter model, when, like community public schools, they truly take all comers. Because it took over existing schools, ASD charter schools

could not shape enrollment with policies and practices like the YES Prep charters he founded.⁴⁹

The ASD started to shrink. Some schools were returned to their original districts as public schools despite not reaching the top 25 percent threshold. Other schools were transferred over to a different initiative called the Memphis-Shelby County Schools iZone program. The majority of all ASD charters, including those run by KIPP, have closed, with only seven remaining in the ASD, still at the bottom in performance.⁵⁰

Beginning in 2015, legislative bills have been proposed to dissolve the ASD. On April 1, 2024, the Tennessee Senate, in a unanimous vote, finally decided they would not be played as fools anymore.⁵¹ If this bill is approved by the Tennessee House, as expected, the ASD will end in July 2026. Over one billion dollars have been spent.

- Gary Rubenstein

section four:

THE PROCESS OF CHARTER CLOSURES

We were shocked by the proportion of charter schools that abruptly closed. Forty percent of the stories we found on charter closures during the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years indicated that the notice and physical closing happened during the same school year or over the summer.

In addition to studying why charter schools have closed during the past two years, we explored two additional questions. The first was how much notice parents usually get of the closure, and the second was whether the closure was voluntary or part of the accountability system.

ABRUPT AND PHASED CLOSURES

We defined an abrupt closure as one that is announced and occurs during the same school year or that is announced and occurs during the summer months before the new school year. Phased closures occur when the school announces that it will not open during the following school year, providing parents adequate time to search for a school.

Because abrupt closures occur after the charter lottery process, it is difficult for parents to find another charter school if one exists in their area. Even if another

charter school is nearby, only four states require charter schools to take new students once the school year begins.

"She's supposed to go to college this fall, and now I don't even know if she'll be able to get the support she needs to graduate from high school," she said.

- *Anonymous parent quoted by New Hampshire Public Radio commenting on the abrupt closure of Leaf Charter School.*⁵²

Parents can be assured that their child will be welcomed at their local public school. That's what public schools do.

However, abrupt charter school closures burden public schools once the school year starts and staffing and service levels have been set. As class sizes and case-loads rise, public school students also pay a price when a nearby charter school closes. Of those abrupt closures, nearly 75 percent were due to insufficient enrollment or fraud/mismanagement.

Only 60 percent of charter closures were phased, that is announced in advance, during a school year, with the closure occurring the following school year.

VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY CLOSURES

Involuntary charter closures comprised 35.5 percent of the closures we studied;

“No plan of action could correct or address the mismanagement of funds that spanned over four years prior that allowed MAHS [Memphis Academy of Health Sciences] employees to operate to the detriment of MAHS. “

- Brittany Monda, Assistant Superintendent of Charter Schools, as reported by [Chalk Beat Tennessee](#).⁵³

a state charter board, district board, or other authorizing board told the school that it must relinquish its charter. The charter closure was usually phased in for the next school year.

In the case of charter schools that were abruptly shut down, conditions were so bad, or there was such malfeasance, the authorizer felt that students were put at risk if the charter school was allowed to operate till the end of the school year, as was the case of the [Eagle Charter School](#) of Nevada discussed earlier in this report.⁵⁴

In other cases, abrupt involuntary closures occur when the charter operator refuses to accept the decision of its authorizer, even after appeal.

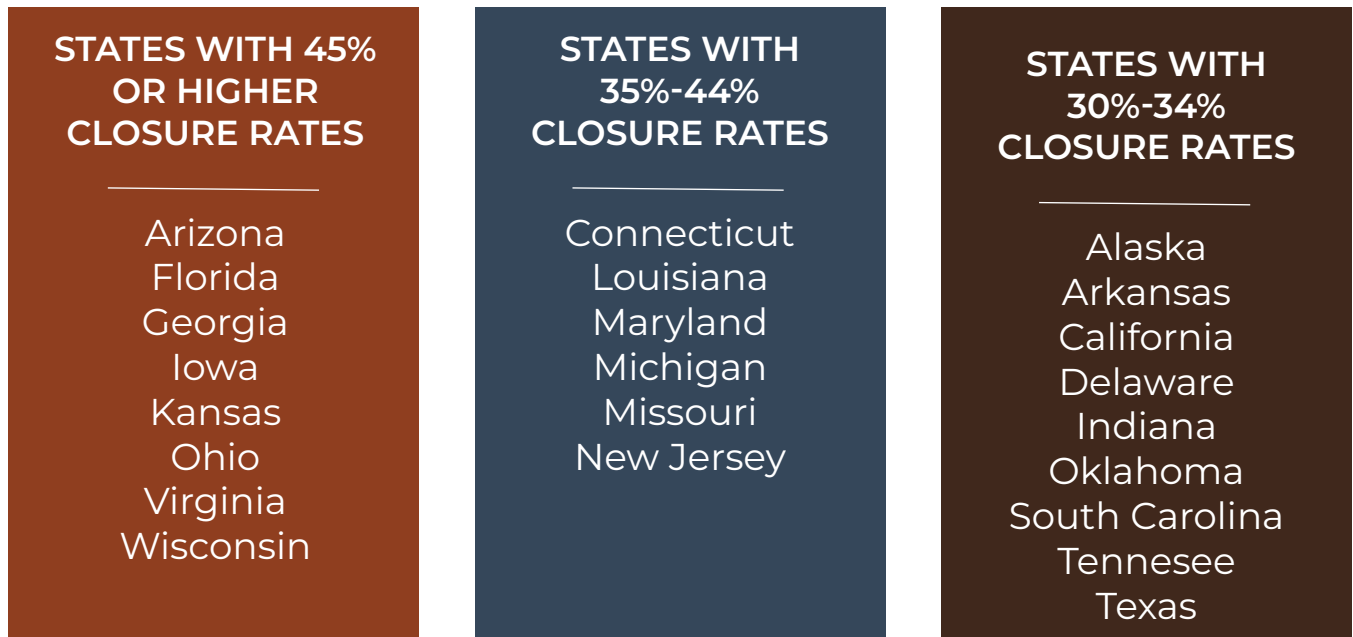
For example, the North Oakland Community Charter School's operators challenged the decision to close the school, leaving parents hanging until August 2024, when the [school finally shut down](#) after the courts stepped in.⁵⁵

However, the majority of closures, 64.5 percent, are decided by the Boards that run the schools. Some are motivated by anticipation that the charter will not be renewed due to failure to meet academic goals. Most, however, are made for the reasons discussed in this report.

Unsurprisingly, 66 percent of these cases occur because there is insufficient enrollment to run the school successfully. The second most frequent reason is fraud/mismanagement, which accounts for 13 percent.

Voluntary closures are more likely to be

abrupt (45 percent), which is especially disturbing because, in many cases, enrollment slides and financial problems were not sudden at all. Yet, according to the news reports in our database, parents were caught by surprise when the decision



was made.

The graphic above shows the states with the highest rate of charter closures, based on the total number of charter schools ever opened with enrollment in the state.

Although Iowa, Kansas, and Virginia have high closure rates, small numbers of schools and students are represented. Between 2004 and 2006, Iowa experimented with seven charter schools, six of which have closed. One converted back to a district public school. One additional charter school opened and closed, and a few recently opened.

Kansas engaged in a similar charter experiment in the early 2000s, funded by a Charter School Program grant. Virginia's handful of charter schools are under the control of districts and begin and end in response to their needs.

Notably, no state with a numerical cap on charter school growth has a charter failure rate exceeding 30 percent.

section five:

STUDENT DISPLACEMENT

Approximately 1.1 students were enrolled in charter schools that closed from 1999 to 2022.

As the figure below illustrates, the number of displaced students is increasing with time and at a slightly faster rate.

While there are some cases when the charter school is taken over by the district as a public school, which allows at least some students to remain if they wish, the vast majority are shutdowns. As this report documents, they often occur with little warning.

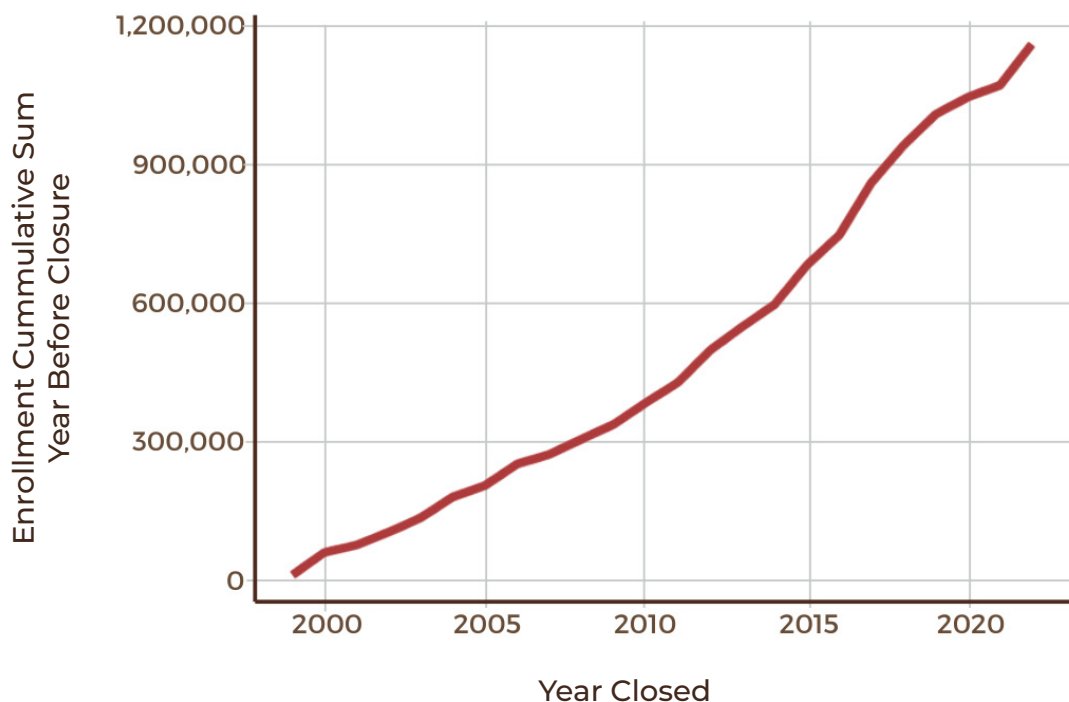
We believe that the 1.1 million student

figure is an underestimation of how many children have been affected. Although some families stay until a charter's demise, others see the writing on the wall and leave the year before.

Enrollment patterns for closed schools in those we examined in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 bear this out.

For the most part, the enrollment in the school the year before closure was higher than the year it closed. This pattern

FIGURE 4. SCHOOL ENROLLMENT PRIOR TO CLOSURE: 1998-2022



was observed across all reasons for closure, not just in closures due to insufficient enrollment.

The number of students in each state who have been displaced depends on the number of charter schools and the length of time the state has had a charter school law.

Ohio, where for-profit operators run 50 percent of all charter schools, has displaced more than 56,000 students as its schools opened and shut, with the number of closed charter schools nearly matching the number of charter schools presently open.

The first Arizona charter school opened in 1995. That state now has nearly as many closed charters as the 556 schools that reported enrolling at least one student in the CCD during the 2022-23 school year. Those closures have displaced more than 80,000 since 1998.

Research conducted over decades is clear. School closures, whether public or charter, [negatively affect students across various outcomes](#), including decreases in achievement, attendance, and graduation rates.⁵⁶

[One study](#) found that these negative effects of school closures extend after students finish school, including income and higher education attainment.⁵⁷

This is especially concerning given that charter closures, as demonstrated in [our earlier report](#), are most likely to affect the most disadvantaged children.⁵⁸

“I’ve seen lots of kids charter-school hopping. By fifth grade, I saw kids who were in their third or fourth school,” said Olutimilehin Olusanya, who has taught at a handful of charter schools in the Twin Cities, including Legacy of Dr. Josie R. Johnson Montessori in north Minneapolis, which closed abruptly in January. “It’s really hard for kids to jump around like that and miss foundational skills.”

- From: [When Minnesota charter schools fail, vulnerable students pay the price](#). The Minnesota Star Tribune, September 2024.⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

The high rate of charter school failures identified in [Broken Promises](#), our last report on charter closures, continues with little improvement.

The more years pass, the clearer the picture becomes — charter schools are not a long-term, stable alternative to neighborhood public schools. We can now see that closures continue to increase beyond the fifteenth year to the twentieth year.

And when schools fail, whether in the school's first year, seventh, or fifteenth, children, families, and staff pay the price.

As we delved into when and why charter schools closed, we were dismayed to find how abrupt so many closures were. From dated news stories, we could ascertain when the closure was announced and when it occurred. Reports gave insight into whether the closure was orderly and planned or sudden and chaotic.

Many closures — four in 10 — occurred without sufficient warning, with schools closing mid-year or abruptly before the new school year began.

Too many of the reports quoted dismayed parents who were left scrambling to find a school. If their choice was another charter school, they faced the reality that only four states (Connecti-

cut, Georgia, Idaho, and Massachusetts) [require charter schools to admit new students mid-year](#).⁶⁰

When the Georgetown Charter School in Delaware shut down in March of its first year, 600 students were shut out, and most of them never enrolled in a new school to finish the school year. According to [a report in Education Week](#), parents hoped the school would reopen the following year. It never did.⁶¹

Most of the young children who did enroll in another school after the collapse of Georgetown Charter went to their local public school. More often than not, the burden of a nearby charter's closure falls upon the local public school, which finds itself with an unexpected influx of students. Public schools can't plan for staffing and materials if the local charter school fails. There is no way of knowing when or if a nearby charter school might put 600 young elementary school children on the street.

We found commonalities in the reasons why charter schools close. One reason was repeatedly cited: the school failed to attract and retain enough students. Insufficient enrollment was the most

frequently given reason charter schools closed, accounting for 47 percent of all closures.

This trend will likely only accelerate. Nationally, K-12 enrollment is dropping due to lower birth rates. Although new voucher programs predominantly fund students already in private schools and even homeschools, given their rapid expansion and funding increases, these alternatives will likely draw even more students from neighborhood public and charter schools.

According to the Common Core of Data, in 2022-2023, 966 charter schools, more than 12 percent of all charter schools, had fewer than 100 students--nearly four in ten of that 12 percent, with fewer than 50. These figures only include charter schools reporting enrollment. Unless they experience dramatic enrollment increases, many of these schools are likely doomed to fail.

We also found that additional factors, including financial stress and low academic achievement, accelerated enrollment drops. When a charter school begins to fail, multiple factors indicating poor performance are often involved.

Low enrollment pushed some schools to submit fraudulent enrollment figures. Outright thievery, teachers without credentials, and incompetent financial governance also contributed to the drop in enrollment. We found a multi-factor downward spiral in many charter closures.

Fraud and/or severe mismanagement of the school was the second most fre-

quently found reason charter schools failed. Fraud and/or mismanagement accounted for over 21 percent of the 2022-2024 school closure reports we reviewed for this report.

Loose charter laws that allow charter school boards to give out no-bid contracts to friends and relatives or even to fellow board members make charter schools a magnet for those who wish to enrich themselves. Because voters do not oversee or elect charter boards, it becomes easy for board members to appoint cronies and lax supervision to occur.

Although most states allow charter schools to be run by for-profit operators, it is not a coincidence that states with large proportions of charter schools run by for-profit operators, such as Arizona, Florida, Michigan, and Ohio, have some of the highest charter school failure rates.

These states allow individual operators to open a nonprofit school and then take hefty management fees or even sweep all dollars in and provide services at costs that are not publicly disclosed, even to governmental authorities and, in some states, even the charter school board.

Incompetence and poor decision-making were typical in charter failures due to financial collapse (10 percent). Even those with the best intentions do not always have the skill set to run an organization as complex as a school competently.

Without the oversight of a district office supported by an elected school board

and the added regulations that keep governance in check, charter schools can stumble along until they fail.

Yet, curiously, the charter lobby at both the state and federal levels resists charter reform and instead presses for funding and opening more charter schools. They argue that there are long waitlists in existing schools.

Although charter school enrollment sharply increased during COVID-19, it has leveled off, with much of the COVID increase being attributed primarily to enrollment in virtual charter schools when brick-and-mortar schools were closed. Even if enrollment slowly creeps up, if school openings exceed realistic demand and pull students from existing charter schools, more schools will be doomed to fail.

For example, The National Alliance of Public Charter Schools touts Texas as a state with growing enrollment in charter schools. [According to the Alliance](#), in a state with over 6 million charter and public school students, between 2022 and 2023, charter schools increased by 18,841 students.⁶²

[According to the Texas Education Agency Report, more than 89,000 seats in Texas charter schools are unfilled.](#)⁶³ The number of empty seats exceeded the number of new students who entered the charter system.

The [Houston Chronicle](#)⁶⁴ reported that nearly every Texas charter school that opened since 2017 overestimated its projected enrollment. Nevertheless, 185 charter schools opened between 2020

and 2022, while 55 closed. Many were closed campuses of a charter chain in a state that allows chains to expand virtually unchecked.

The churn of charter schools wastes tax dollars in an already underfunded Texas public school system and all states with high charter failure rates.

For every child, a charter school's closure represents a broken promise. It does not matter if her school closure is due to too few students, mismanagement, poor academics, or competition from a newer, better-marketed school that opened down the block; the closure of that school shatters relationships and trust. And as this report shows, far too many of the schools opened were doomed to fail from their very beginnings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our research summarized in this report, we make the following recommendations:

- **Establish hard caps on charter growth:** In light of our findings on high rates of closures by states, we examined charter laws to see if any patterns emerged. Disappointingly, none did. States with multiple authorizers and states with one authorizer had similar charter failure rates. Short charter renewal periods or long charter renewal periods did not matter.

However, we did notice that all states with a strong charter cap, regardless of how long it had charter schools or what proportion of its students attended them, had failure rates below 30 percent. Until significant factors related to charter closures can be identified, charter moratoriums and caps are advised, especially in light of K12 enrollment declines.
- **Identify the factors associated with charter failures in the first three years and use those findings to inform the charter authorization process.** If a charter school fails quickly, likely, it should never have been opened. Identifying key factors in early charter failure and integrating what is learned into the authorization process can reduce failures by denying authorization to proposals that should never have been approved.
- **Include K-12 demographic projections in the charter authorization review process.** New charter schools should not be opened if local enrollment is falling and a sufficient number of public and charter schools exist to serve students. School districts do not open a new school when enrollment is projected to decrease. Taxpayers would never stand for it. The same should be true when it comes to charter schools.

A more holistic approach that includes local public and charter school enrollment and capacity must become part of the authorization process. Choice for the sake of choice is irresponsible.
- **Investigate the mismanagement, misdeeds, and illegal activities associated with charter school closures.** State legislatures should require their State Department of Education to thoroughly investigate and analyze acts of gross mismanagement and fraud, especially those that result in school closings. Such information can inform the needed revision of charter school

laws. Both states and the U.S. Department of Education should conduct research. Such research could result in policy decisions that reduce such instances, reducing charter closures.

- **End the Federal Charter School Programs (CSP).** The federal Charter School Programs (CSP) began in 1994 to kickstart the creation of charter schools when few existed. It began as a simple grant program to the states funded by Congress and administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

As the charter lobby grew, it pressured Congress to expand the program to six different funding streams, which spend nearly half a billion dollars a year. Because applications are not fact-checked nor properly vetted, this program has led to enormous waste, including a billion dollars being given to schools that never open or that close. The funding of charter schools should be left to the state. By inserting itself into the process, the federal government has enabled the closures and churn we describe in this report.

APPENDIX

Charter school. The CCD includes a code for charter status. We used the definition provided by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES): “A school providing free public elementary and/or secondary education to eligible students under a specific charter granted by the state legislature or other appropriate authority, and designated by such authority to be a charter school.”

Enrollment. The number of students in a school as of October 1st. The guidance from NCES to schools is to collect enrollment on or as close to October 1 as possible. The CCD reports, “Membership is the count of students enrolled on October 1 of a school year.”

Open and closed status. Our analysis considered a charter to be open when it first enrolls students and closed when it no longer reports enrollment. Charter schools were also listed as closed if they converted to public schools—in other words, they closed as a charter. Likewise, public schools that converted to a charter were listed as open in the year of conversion.

School. We used school IDs (SCHID) assigned by the U.S. Department of Education and a state name to identify and track schools across time, as recommended by NCES, for longitudinal analysis. SCHIDs remain constant when the LEAs affiliated with the charter schools change, while the NCESSCH can vary in this type of situation. SCHIDs are made available within the CCD.

METHODOLOGY

To begin the analysis, it was necessary to identify all charter schools and when schools opened and closed. For this purpose, we reviewed more than 2 million records in the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data (CCD). The CCD is the most comprehensive and rigorously collected database of public elementary and secondary school information in the United States, including Puerto Rico and Guam. CCD annual submissions for each year between 1987 and 2022 were downloaded and combined. Data before 1998 were excluded because charter school status was not reported in the CCD before that year. The last year of data examined was the 2022-23 school year, the most recent available at the time of analysis.

There are several ways to identify schools in the CCD. We used school IDs (SCHID) assigned by the U.S. Department of Education, combined with a state ID (equivalent to FIPS), to identify and track schools across time, as recommended by NCES for longitudinal analysis. SCHIDs remain constant when the LEAs affiliated with charter schools change, while the NCESSCH can vary in this situation. SCHIDs are

made available within the CCD. Analyses conducted using the NCESSCH number did not change the trends identified with the SCHID.

We used the charter status of schools provided in the CCD, cleaning as needed. Note that charter schools that lost or relinquished charter status and became district public schools were included in tallies of closed charter schools. Public schools that changed their status to charter schools were included in tallies of open charter schools.

We used the most meaningful indicator of school open/close status we could find — enrollment numbers. The CCD's designation of school status (open, closed, new, future, changed agency, etc.) was sometimes misleading from the perspective of school closure. We found schools designated as "open" for several years only to disappear from the dataset without showing any enrolled students.

Because no opening year could be identified for this set of schools, they were excluded from the numerator and denominator in the closure rates. By not including those schools, we eliminated the possibility of counting schools as closed when, in fact, they never opened at all. There were 1,073 schools listed in the CCD as charter schools that never reported enrolling students as of 2022-2023. Based on the data available in the CCD, we do not know which schools opened and closed before reporting enrollment data. In cases like this, we undercounted both closed schools and the number of displaced students.

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