

*Choice in North Carolina  
Education: 2003*

*By Karen Y. Palasek, Ph.D.*

*A Policy Report  
from the*



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## Summary: School Choice Trends in NC

**C**hoice in *North Carolina Education: 2003* looks at the availability and use of parental choice in North Carolina education. We focused mainly on choice for students in grades 3 to 8. In these grades there are more schools, and therefore more opportunities for choice, than in grades 9 to 12. When we measured choice, we included open enrollment with public schools — that is, school selection by parents rather than through involuntary assignment — plus magnet schools and charter schools. Private and home school enrollments complete the picture.

We wanted to examine a number of questions about school choice with this study. First, we wanted to see how many children attended a school of choice during the 2002-03 school year. We also wanted to see which N.C. communities offered the most choice options.

Our data showed that only seven school districts in the state allowed parents to choose schools under some kind of “open enrollment” plan. Nine school districts had magnet schools as part of their choice options. The most widespread option geographically, charter schools, had the fewest seats to offer students. Charters were available in 42 counties in North Carolina, but enrolled only two percent of the total 3rd-to-8th-grade student population.

In 69 of 117 school districts, parents had no public-school choice options at all. Eighty-seven percent of the students in grades 3 to 8 in North Carolina attended public schools in 2002-03. About 15 percent of all 3-8 students were enrolled in a public school of choice. With regard to non-public education, 6 percent of 3rd to 8th grade students were home schooled, and another 7 percent attended a private school outside the home.

The patterns that emerged from our study made it clear that public school choice is a concept that, for the most part, is very limited in North Carolina. What also became apparent is that choice options are distributed very unevenly, even among the districts that offer some school choice. The open enrollment and magnet school options in particular are located mostly in areas with big urban populations like Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Forsyth County, or in city districts like Asheville. Even given the large and growing student populations in these urban areas, systems where at least 50 percent of students attend a school of choice account for only 20 percent of all grade 3-8 public school students in the state.

A number of patterns emerged when we looked at choice enrollments in grades 3 to 8 vs. grades K to 12. The percentage of students enrolled in public schools increases as they move into the higher grades. The percentage of students in public schools in grades K to 12 was 91 percent in 2002-03, compared to 87 percent for grades 3 to 8 alone. There are more magnet and charter options available for grades 3 to 8 than when the higher grades are included. Private school enrollment was fairly constant, at 6 to 7 percent, in either measure. The percentage of children enrolled in home schools in grades 3 to 8 is almost double the percentage of students enrolled in home schools in K-12. Both home and private school choices are widely available throughout North Carolina, whereas public school choices are available only selectively.

## Purpose and Design of the Study

This study was designed to help inform parents and taxpayers about existing school choice in North Carolina. The first part of this study looked at the overall enrollment and location of choice schools in 2002-03. We also studied the data from each school system to determine the percentage of students enrolled in various types of choice schools. Finally, we ranked counties based upon types of public school choice, and the percentage of students able to exercise choice in that county. Data on 2002-03 private and home school enrollment complete the choice picture, and may begin to provide some information about recently renewed questions about participation rates in K-12 public education in North Carolina.

*Choice 2003* focuses mainly on data for grades 3 to 8. This reflects the fact that the potential for public school choice declines significantly by the time students reach high school. North Carolina's public high schools are large and few in number compared to the elementary and middle schools. As a result, the possibilities are limited in the upper grades. Third grade, the earliest grade in which state and federal accountability testing takes place, is a logical lower bound for this initial study.

Choice is one of the most controversial issues in education today. Parents see the issue from a number of angles. On the one hand, the choice of a school for their child is a natural extension of their parental rights and responsibilities. As taxpayers and citizens, they want the opportunity to exercise ownership over some part of the education system in North Carolina. As consumers, they want their children's time and their money spent effectively.

In addition to family concerns, there are community issues that affect education, particularly public education, in the state. Schools and districts are charged with pursuing a number of societal goals, such as equity among schools, diversity within schools, and the freedom of families to make choices about their children's education experience. The reality is that there are both shared and divergent goals within a given school system. In trying to pursue multiple ends, schools face a tough balancing act. School districts have tried to address these concerns in different ways and to different degrees. Public school choice is seen by some as a vehicle for improving the quality of K-12 education within the context of academic and social concerns.

## Defining Choice

North Carolina enjoys a great variety of schools, both inside and outside the public education system. The state offers traditional public schools, magnet schools and magnet programs, and charter schools (Figs. 1 & 2). Not every option is available in every school district in the state, however, and some districts offer far more opportunity for school choice than others.

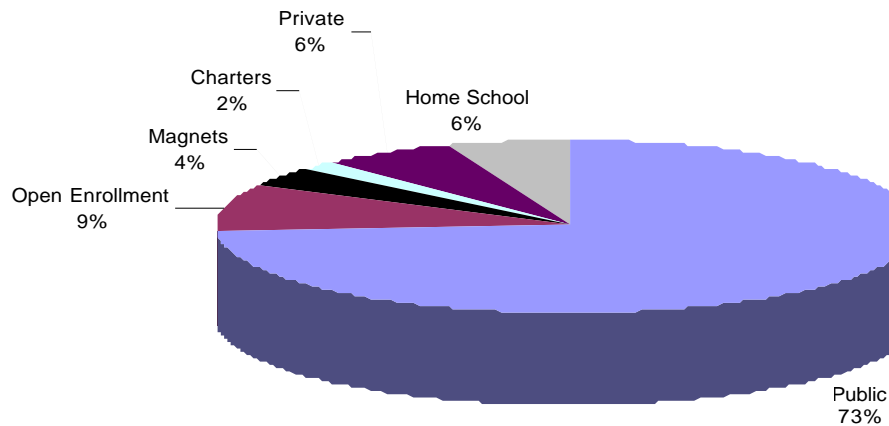
In addition, North Carolina has a modest but growing segment of students served by the non-public schools (Fig. 2). These include denominational and non-denominational private schools and home schools. The following describes the types of public and private choices examined in our study.

### *Open enrollment*

A very limited number of counties in North Carolina offer parents the option of open enrollment ( Fig. 3). In districts that offer this choice, parents can express their preference among public schools

Fig 1

**Percentage of all 3-8 Students in Choice Schools**



<u>TYPE OF ENROLLMENT</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
<b>PUBLIC</b>	<b>624,590</b>	<b>73.8 %</b>
<b>OPEN ENROLLMENT</b>	<b>67,019</b>	<b>9.3</b>
<b>MAGNETS (NOT IN OPEN ENROLL.)</b>	<b>25,549</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>CHARTERS</b>	<b>11,295</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<b>PRIVATE</b>	<b>44,750</b>	<b>6.2</b>
<b>HOME SCHOOL</b>	<b>39,772</b>	<b>5.5</b>

within district boundaries. Even where every family in the school district has a chance to rank their school preferences, some don't get a seat for their child in one of their chosen schools. The default option for unsuccessful applicants for schools of choice is assignment to a school by the school district.

Each school district decides on its enrollment policy—whether open, assigned, or assigned with transfer by request. Charlotte-Mecklenburg, for example, used an open enrollment system in 2002-03 that utilized several enrollment “zones.” Cumberland County routinely transfers between 4 and 8 percent of students at the request of parents, a range that is reflected in our data. Schools in both counties allow additional transfers if parents are willing to provide transportation outside the established county plan.

### *Charter Schools*

Though limited in number, charter schools offer genuine choice within the public school system. Since 1996, when the charter law in North Carolina was enacted by the North Carolina General As-

sembly, nonprofit organizations, parent groups, school districts, and private individuals have been eligible to apply for school charters. The statewide cap on charters is 100 schools, with a maximum of five per district permitted. At the opening of the 2003-04 school year, 99 of the 100 available charters had been allocated by the State Board of Education. Except through attrition, there is virtually no room for new charters in North Carolina at this point.

One of the most distinctive features of charter schools is that they aren't guaranteed pupils. All enrollment in charter schools is enrollment by choice. As public schools, charters face fewer regulations than do regular schools. In exchange for semi-autonomous status, they also receive less funding than do regular schools. The cost of buildings and real estate are assumed by charter owner/entrepreneurs. If a school fails, or is closed by the State Board, the education entrepreneur bears the loss.

The public funding that charter schools do receive is tied to enrollment. Their dollar allotment is equal to the average per-pupil funding in the local district. Like regular public schools, charters receive additional funds if they serve students with limited English-proficiency or special needs. Financial survival, however, requires that each school attract and retain students.

Fewer regulations and more flexibility are the hallmarks of charter schools. Compared to regular public schools, charter schools have more flexibility in curriculum and staffing. Even so, at least 75 percent of elementary-level teachers must be state certified. In middle and high schools, at least 50 percent must hold a valid state license. Under No Child Left Behind, the federal-level accountability law, charter schools will probably emphasize faculty credentials more heavily. The "highly qualified" provision of NCLB requires verifiable subject mastery in each teacher's instructional area. As a result, some charter schools may decide to increase the percentages of state licensed teachers whom they hire. State licensure is one of the most straightforward ways for a school to satisfy the "highly qualified" provision under the new federal law.

Parents find charter schools appealing for a variety of reasons. One is a school's freedom to define its mission and methods. A school may emphasize technology, literacy, discipline, culture, or science, for example. The philosophy of each school tends to reflect the perceived needs and priorities of the families it serves. And if families are dissatisfied, they can exit for the regular public schools. In some cases, parents see charters as a last resort within the public system. Children who perform poorly in regular schools sometimes flourish in a charter setting — more individualized attention is the most often cited reason.

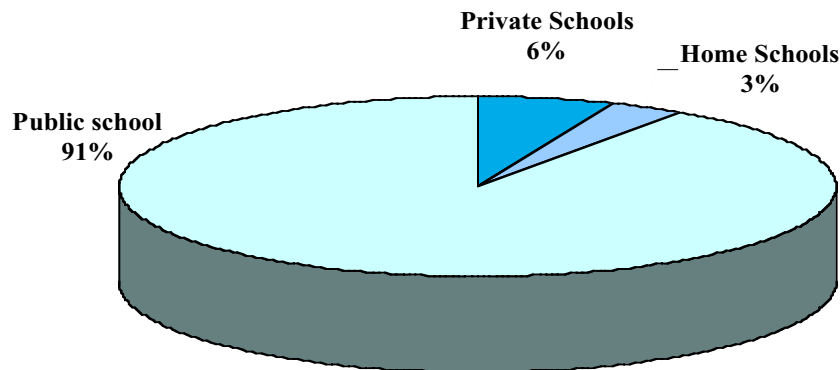
Parents who opt for charter schools usually enter a lottery for enrollment. Charters are open to any child eligible to attend public school in North Carolina, and the law doesn't require applicants to live in the county where the charter school is operating. Because unsuccessful applicants will need to enter another school, most charter schools don't maintain waiting lists. Charter schools are unique among public schools because they offer families a choice of 'taking or leaving' their product. The continued demand for seats in charter schools is evidence that families value the options that charters provide, and can't find elsewhere in public education.

### *Magnet schools and programs*

Where they exist, magnet programs are an important element of choice within the public system. These programs are designed to attract students with specialized offerings that are not part of the usual, traditional approach to grades 3 to 8 education. Examples from the wealth of magnet choices in Forsyth County, for example, include an International Baccalaureate program starting in the elementary years, a performing and visual arts program, and a technology program.

Fig 2.

**Percentage of all grade school students in various type of schools  
across North Carolina**



**Number of Students in Various School Types**

<b>Public Schools</b>	<b>1,384,345</b>
<b>Home Schools</b>	<b>52,724</b>
<b>Private Schools</b>	<b>92,890</b>
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>1,529,959</b>

The specialized programs that characterize magnets are “built around a common focus,” such as nature or the arts, while integrating the curriculum with the North Carolina standard course of study. Magnet choices can involve entire schools, or just selected disciplines within a school.

In this study, we have assumed that students attending magnet schools and programs are there by choice. A small number of students are, in fact, assigned to magnet schools as their base or neighborhood school. Because we cannot know whether they would have chosen that school anyway, we count any students in a magnet school, assigned or not, among those who have exercised a choice.

One hundred eighty-one schools either have magnet programs or are magnet schools in North Carolina, according to the Department of Public Instruction. In counties that have both magnet schools and some degree of open enrollment, it isn’t possible to distinguish whether open enrollment choices overlap magnet choices. Counties like Mecklenburg have both, for example. We simply count all magnet attendance as a part of the reported percentage of students who attended their choice school in 2002-03.



### *Private schools*

The North Carolina Department of Non-Public Education tracks enrollment in private and home schools in the state. According to DNPE, a total of 92,890 students attended various private institutions in North Carolina in 2002-03. Grades 3 to 8 made up 45,688, or almost half of the K-12 students. In both private and public schools, about half of the students are in grades 3 to 8. As students move into middle and high school grades, private school enrollment in the state grows slightly, moving from 6 percent for grades 3 to 8 alone, to 7 percent for grades K-12 overall.

Private schools are broken down into independent or religious schools. Of the 661 private schools serving any portion of the K-12 grades, 193 schools, or 29 percent, are non-religious independent schools. The remaining 71 percent, a total of 468 schools, have some religious affiliation.

Since North Carolina has no publicly-funded voucher system, families and private funding pay for tuition and expenses at these schools. Tuition varies widely among private schools, ranging at the extremes from under \$1,000 to over \$20,000 per year.

Total enrollment in North Carolina's private schools grew by a little over one percent between 2001-02 and 2002-03.

### *Home schools*

Data on home schooling are likely to be less exact than are any other school data for the state. The Department of Non-Public Instruction begins to register families in July for the upcoming year. DNPE statistics report the total number of families registered, by county, across the state.

Because parents cannot register their child in a home school until age 7, any children who begin earlier are not counted at all. In 2002-03, 26,422 families registered as home schools in North Carolina. To determine student enrollment, DNPE multiplies the number of registered homes by the estimated number of homeschooled children per family. In 2002-03, DNPE estimated two children per family in each home school, or 51,571 students statewide. Using the DNPE statistics, the North Carolina Education Alliance calculates 3rd to 8th grade home school enrollment at 39,543, about 75 percent of the total number of students reported in all grades.

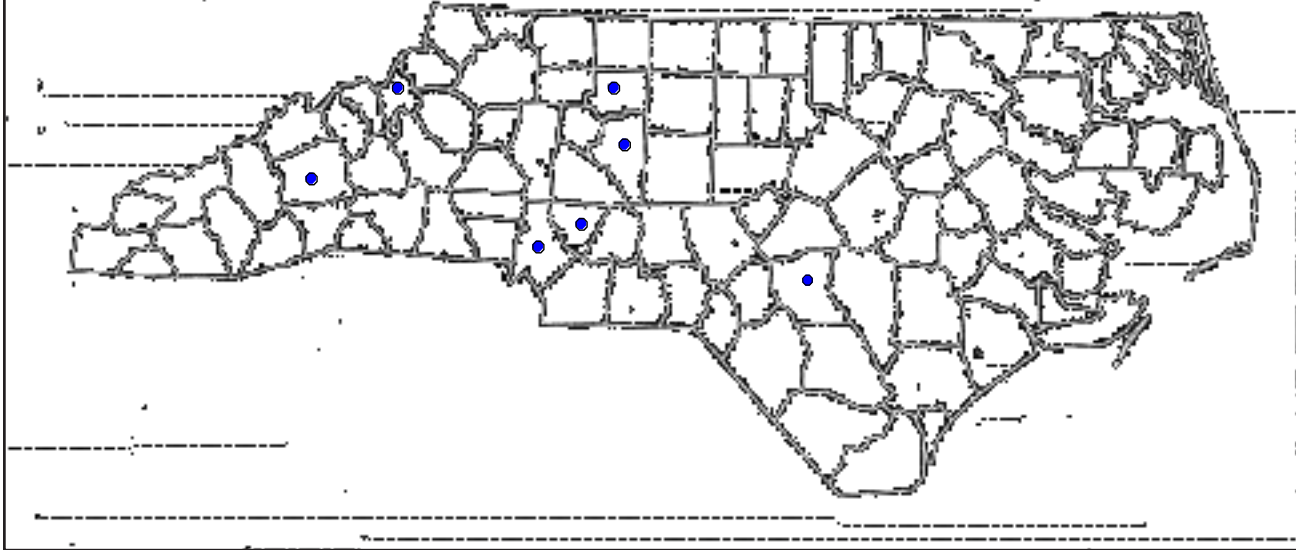
The National Home Education Research Institute advises a margin of error for home school participation at plus or minus 10 percent. At the national level, home school participation was somewhere between 1.7 million and 2.2 million children in 2002-03.

Estimates from the North Carolina Department of Non-Public Instruction put the growth of home schooling in North Carolina at about 10 percent for the 2002-03 year, as compared to 2001-02. It is relatively easy to comply with home school law in North Carolina. This may have contributed to the growth in this choice in past years. According to NHERI, the average annual rate of increase in home schooling nationally is 7 to 15 percent. North Carolina's home school participation rate has increased by an average of 19 percent for the past nine years.

The cost of home education is a personal choice for families. Excluding foregone family income, dollar outlays of several hundred to several thousand dollars per student annually are well within the normal range.

Fig. 3

### COUNTIES OFFERING OPEN ENROLLMENT



#### Counties offering open enrollment and the number of students using the scheme

AVERY COUNTY	1,158
ASHEVILLE CITY	1,737
KANNAPOLIS CITY	151
CUMBERLAND COUNTY	2,415
LEXINGTON CITY	310
FORSYTH COUNTY	22,051
MECKLENBURG COUNTY	39,197

## Statewide Distribution of Students

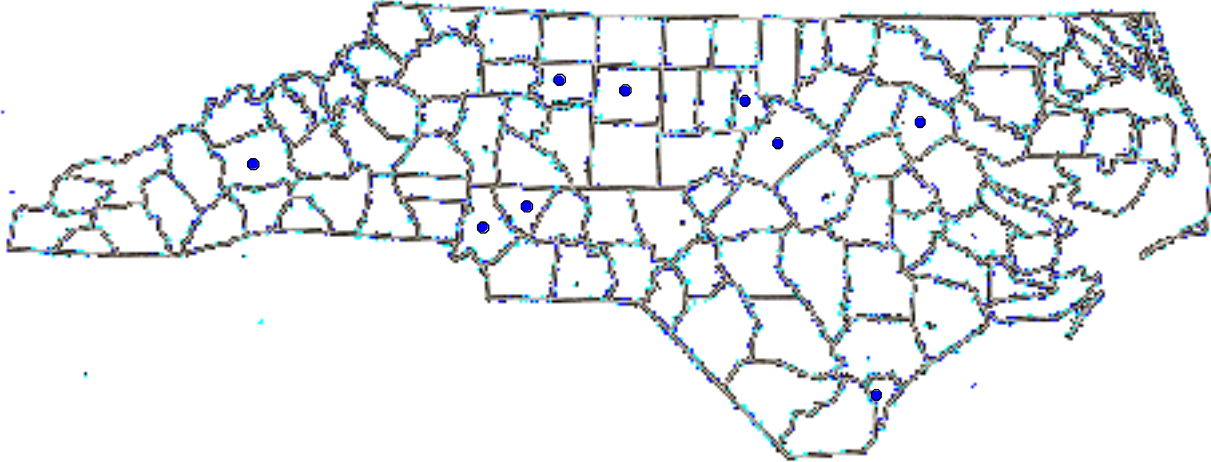
The pie chart in Figure 1 shows the distribution of students in different types of schools in North Carolina for grades 3 to 8. The graph identifies open enrollment, magnet school enrollment outside of open enrollment plans, charter enrollment, and private and home school enrollment. In general, districts don't separate the count for magnet enrollment from the count for choice enrollment into regular schools. Charter schools, because they are technically individual districts, do keep separate enrollment counts, making their numbers easier to track. Combined, traditional and magnet programs made up 85 percent of enrollment among all 3rd to 8th grade students. Charter enrollment added another 2 percent in 2002-03, bringing public school enrollment to 87 percent. Private or home schools accounted for the remaining 13 percent of 3rd to 8th graders. Private and home schools attracted almost the same number of students, with private schools enrolling slightly more than half of the 84,294 students in this category.

### *Mapping out choice by county: Open enrollment*

As the data show, few districts — seven in all — have adopted open enrollment as a policy (see Fig. 3). If parents have the ability to transfer children easily within the district, and the district reports the percentage of students that regularly do so, they are counted in the open enrollment numbers.

**COUNTIES WITH MAGNET PROGRAMS/ SCHOOLS**

Fig.4



<b>Counties with Magnets and Student Numbers in 3-8 grade</b>	
<b>Asheville City</b>	<b>815</b>
<b>Cabarrus County</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Durham County</b>	<b>1,897</b>
<b>Edgecombe County</b>	<b>561</b>
<b>Forsyth County</b>	<b>20,781</b>
<b>Guilford County</b>	<b>2503</b>
<b>Mecklenburg County</b>	<b>3664</b>
<b>New Hanover County</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>Wake County</b>	<b>20,197</b>

SOURCE : DPI

*Magnet schools by county*

The availability and distribution of magnet programs in North Carolina are extremely uneven. Statewide, only 10 of 117 counties offer any magnet programs or magnet schools (Fig. 4). In grades 3 to 8, 50,809 children attended these schools in 2002-03. We considered all children attending these schools to be attending by choice, even though a few were assigned to a magnet school as their base location.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg appears typical of a district that might be expected to have a large magnet enrollment, due to the central urban setting and large school-age population. The small number of students actually counted in Charlotte-Mecklenburg magnet schools most likely reflects the influence, and overlap, of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg open-enrollment policy.

Parents in Charlotte-Mecklenburg made choices among all schools within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools system. The district was divided into zones for purposes of school choice, and schools provided transportation inside the family's residential zone.

Some of the successful choices in Charlotte-Mecklenburg were undoubtedly magnet schools, but within the overall choice structure, only 3,664 enrollments could be identified separately. Of the nine counties offering any magnets, Forsyth had the largest enrollment, and New Hanover County the smallest.

By far, more students were enrolled in magnet programs in grades 3 to 8 in Wake and Forsyth than in any other counties in the state. The Wake enrollment of 20,197 students was 40 percent of all 3rd to 8th grade students in magnet schools statewide. Forsyth's 20,781 students accounted for another 41 percent. As the magnet schools map reveals, choice of magnet programs around the state was limited to a very few counties.

Forsyth treats nearly 100 percent of its schools as magnets, which puts most 3rd to 8th grade students in a choice school. Wake County's magnet program provides a way for families to exert choice within a system that otherwise places students in schools by assignment. As part of the assignment formula in Wake, a few students are assigned to magnet schools as their base school. The majority of students attending magnets, however, elect those programs as an alternative to school assignment or to charters.

As school districts try to decide how to handle issues of diversity within school populations, some advocates of choice are looking to the creation of additional magnet programs. If successful, they hope to entice parents to choose schools, particularly those in poorer neighborhoods, that they otherwise might avoid.

### *Charter schools by county*

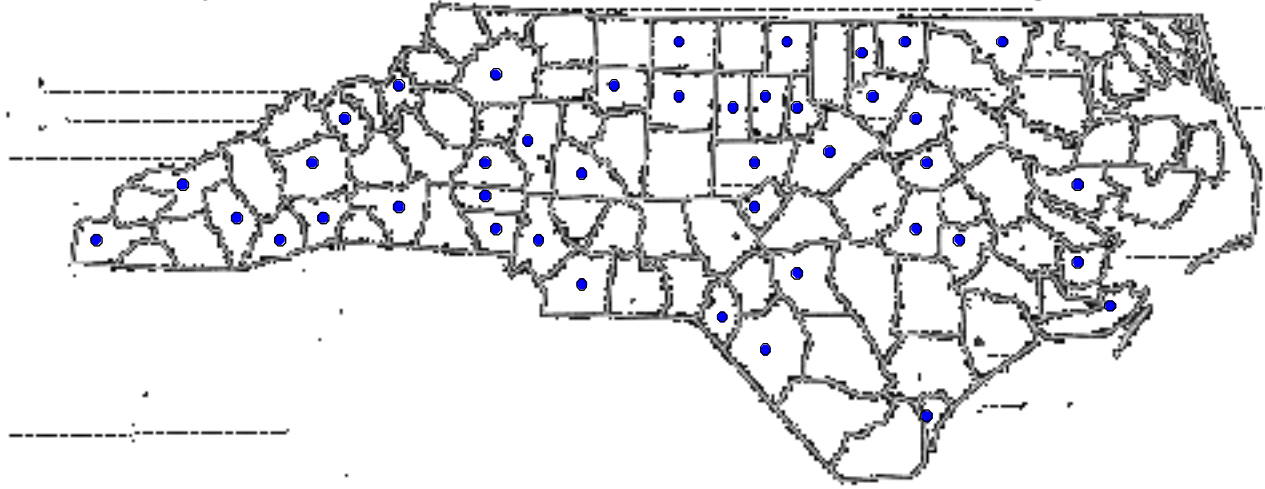
Charter school law has limited the total number of available schools in the state to 100. Other than by special legislative exemption, individual counties are limited to five charters each. Forty-two counties — 44 districts, including the city districts within counties — offer charter schools as a choice (Fig. 5). In grades 3 to 8, 11,065 students attended these schools in 2002-03.

The range in charter school availability is very wide. The largest 3rd to 8th grade enrollment was in Wake County, where 1,609 students found seats in charter schools last year. At the extreme low end, Wayne County reported 17 3rd-to-8th grade students in charters. On average, there were slightly more than 260 students per district seated in charters in 2002-03. Except for Wake, Mecklenburg, and Forsyth, the typical district had fewer than 100 students in grades 3 to 8 in charters. Charter schools are popular choices, and even parents in large districts find that there are usually more applicants than available seats.

Franklin, Wayne, Swain, Cherokee, Lee, Scotland, and Rowan counties all had fewer than 50 seats available for grades 3 to 8 in the 2002-03 school year, and a majority of counties — 30 — had total student enrollment in charters of fewer than 200 students.

Charter schools are subject to the same achievement standards as regular public schools in North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> Five of the charter schools now operating in the state serve students with backgrounds of abuse, incarceration, or homelessness. These students would be considered 'alternative populations' in traditional schools. The charter schools that serve these students have appealed to the State Board of Education for treatment as "alternative schools" under No Child Left Behind. If the request is approved, achievement requirements that apply to non-charter alternative schools would apply to the charters working with alternative populations.<sup>1</sup>

Fig. 5

**COUNTIES WITH CHARTER SCHOOLS****CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN 3-8 GRADE, BY COUNTY**

ALAMANCE-BURLINGTON	350	FRANKLIN COUNTY	33	NEW HANOVER COUNTY	188	TRANSYLVANIA	123
AVERY COUNTY	57	GASTON COUNTY	205	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	118	UNION COUNTY	255
BEAUFORT COUNTY	51	GUILFORD COUNTY	932	CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO	173	VANCE COUNTY	192
BUNCOMBE COUNTY	67	HENDERSON COUNTY	102	PAMLICO COUNTY	252	WAKE COUNTY	1,609
ASHEVILLE CITY	356	IREDELL-STATESVILLE	351	PERSON COUNTY	134	WARREN COUNTY	77
CARTERET COUNTY	59	JACKSON COUNTY	112	ROBESON COUNTY	108	WAYNE COUNTY	17
NEWTON-CONOVER	74	LEE COUNTY	28	ROCKINGHAM COUNTY	116	WILKES COUNTY	100
CHATHAM COUNTY	194	LENOIR COUNTY	63	ROWAN-SALISBURY	36	WILSON COUNTY	332
CHEROKEE COUNTY	36	LINCOLN COUNTY	234	RUTHERFORD COUNTY	192		
CUMBERLAND COUNTY	46	MECKLENBURG COUNTY	1,254	SCOTLAND COUNTY	16		
DURHAM COUNTY	846	MOORE COUNTY	137	MOUNT AIRY CITY	93		
FORSYTH COUNTY	1,036	NASH-ROCKY MOUNT	496	SWAIN COUNTY	45		

**Private schools by county**

Private schools represent about 6 percent, or 44,751, of the 3rd to 8th grade students across the state. There is a wide range of private denominational and non-denominational schools. A broad range of tuition costs accompanies private school choice as well.

Perhaps surprisingly, 30 districts in 13 counties report no private school enrollment whatsoever. Since the North Carolina Department of Non-Public Education compiles private school data by county rather than by school district, city districts like Chapel Hill-Carrboro and Asheville are included in the county data. Due to the DNPE's county-based reporting, our tables present city districts as zero/non-reporting systems, even though some undoubtedly had private school student enrollments in grades 3 to 8 (Fig. 11). In Appendix 2 to this study, we show the estimated the number of private school students attending city-district schools. This allowed us to rank all 117 districts in the state by the percentage of students in schools of choice. Elsewhere, we report the data by county — the reporting format used by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

The five counties with the highest private school enrollment in 2002-03 were Mecklenburg, Wake, Guilford, Forsyth, and Durham. Private enrollment in these counties amounts to 51 percent of grades

3 to 8 private enrollment across the state. Mecklenburg, with 8,632 students, is far above the average county enrollment of 383 private 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Avery, Hoke, Jones, Martin, and Caswell counties, on the other hand, have fewer than six private school choice students in grades 3 to 8.

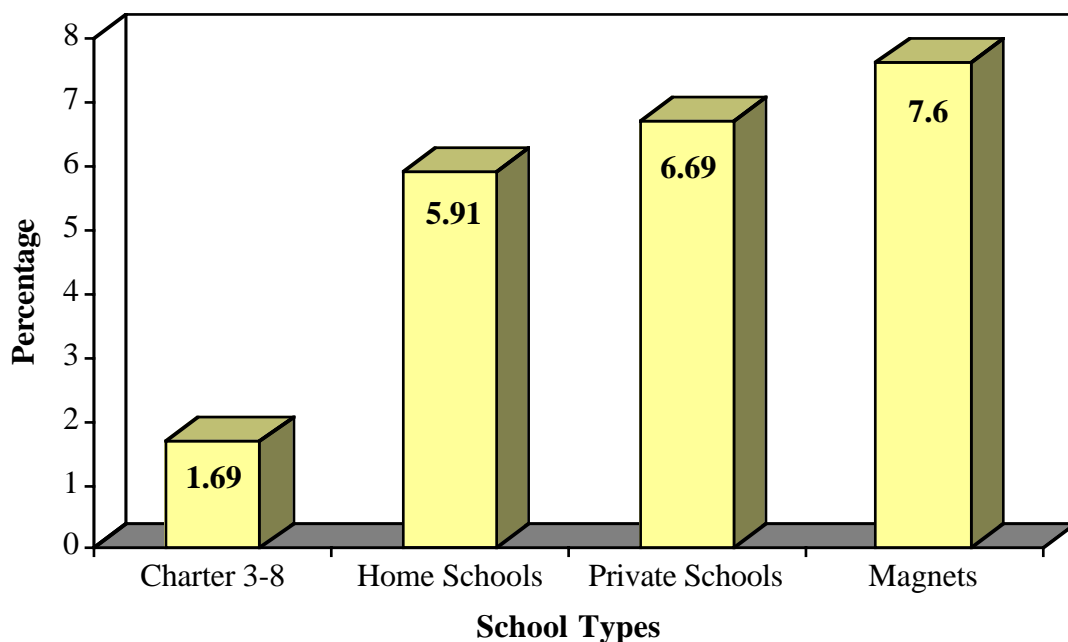
### *Home schools by county*

Reporting methods for home schools are similar to those for private schools. The 17 city districts reported no home schoolers because their numbers are part of the wider county data. Graham is the only county that reported no 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade home school enrollment for 2002-03. The 39,543 home school children in grades 3 to 8 were distributed quite unevenly around the state.

There were an average of about 338 students per county in home schools in 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade last year. Wake had the largest enrollment, with 3,615 students, while Tyrrell reported only 18. Wake, Mecklenburg, Buncombe, Guilford, and Forsyth had the largest home school enrollments in the state, with 11,111 students in all. Those five districts accounted for 26 percent of the total grades 3 to 8 home school enrollment in North Carolina. The smallest enrollments were in Bertie, Camden, Alleghany, Hyde, and Tyrrell, with a total of 153. Those counties had less than half of one percent of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade home school students between them.

For grades 3 to 8, home school children make up slightly under 6 percent of the total student enrollment in North Carolina, and according to DNPE, operated in every county except Graham in 2002-03.

Fig. 6 **Percentage of 3-8 graders in various schools with respect to all 3-8 graders**



## Ranking Counties by Choice

To see where the greatest school choice occurred in 2002-03 in North Carolina, we created four categories for North Carolina's school districts. In the first category are districts that have zero choice-school enrollment, or no report of enrollment, for grades 3 to 8. Our second category lists counties that had less than 5 percent of available students enrolled in the specific choice program. The third category contains counties with at least 5 percent, but less than 10 percent, of students in choice schools. The fourth and final category identifies counties that had 10 percent or more students from grades 3 to 8 in the school choice program.

Counties that offered open enrollment, magnet schools, or charter schools were considered counties "with choice" in our study. The "choice" label was used to separate assignment-only public school districts from those that offered public school options.

The data revealed that in 69 of 117 districts, there were no public schools of choice: magnets, charters, or traditional schools with open enrollment (Fig. 8). In 28 districts, fewer than 5 percent of the 3rd to 8th grade students were able to exercise some choice within the public system. In another nine districts, between 5 and 10 percent of the students enrolled in a public school of choice. And in only 11 North Carolina districts did more than 10 percent of the students go to public schools of choice.

### *Open enrollment rankings*

In 2002-03, seven districts offered open enrollment to parents. They are Mecklenburg, Forsyth, Avery, Asheville City, Kannapolis City, Lexington City, and Cumberland. About 43 percent of open enrollment options were located in metropolitan areas or in the city school systems in North Carolina. There was wide variation in the percentage of successful choice applicants across those counties. It ranged from virtually 100 percent in Forsyth, Asheville City, and Avery Counties, to under 10 percent in Cumberland. In absolute numbers, Mecklenburg had the largest number of students participating in an open enrollment program. In 2002-03, 39,197 students in grades 3 to 8 gained admission to a school of choice.

The number of students using the open enrollment option across North Carolina is about 67,000, or nearly 9 percent of all 3rd to 8th grade students. A caution: magnet schools continue to exist in some districts with open enrollment, which makes separate student counts difficult to determine.

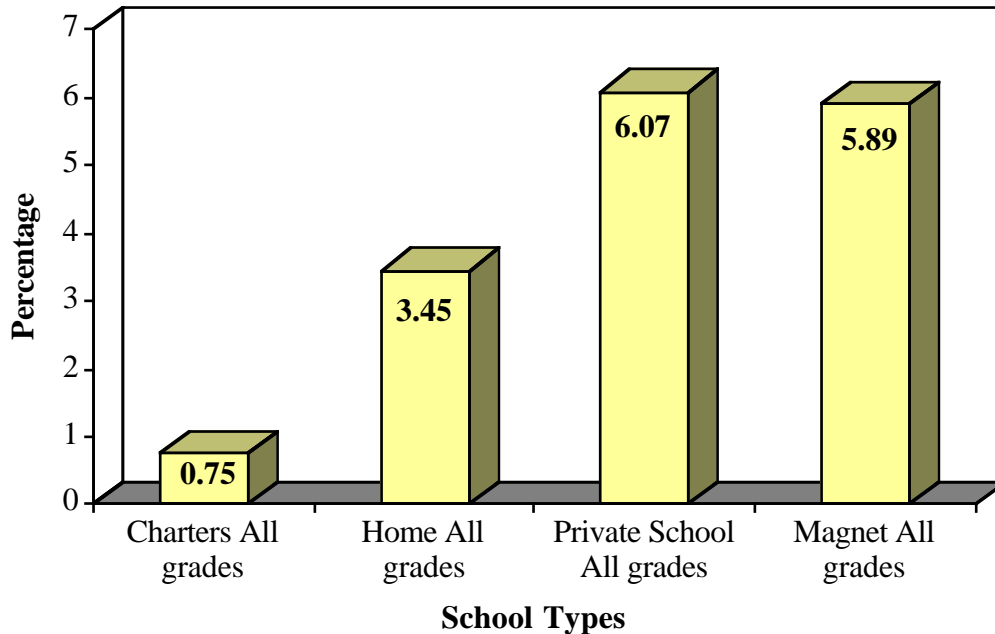
### *Charter enrollment*

North Carolina does not have a widespread network of charter schools. The table reveals that 73 districts had no charter school enrollment for grades 3 to 8 in 2002-03 (Fig. 8). In 35 districts, less than 5 percent of all 3rd to 8th grade enrollment was in charter schools. Six districts had between 5 and 10 percent of the total 3rd to 8th grade population in charter schools, while only 3 had more than 10 percent (Fig. 9).

The table that accompanies Figure 9 ranks the counties by increasing enrollment within each category. This shows, for example, that in the category where 10 percent or more of the students in grades 3 to 8 in the district were enrolled in charters, Asheville City had the largest number. Pamlico and Forsyth counties followed Asheville. For districts with enrollment between zero and 5 percent, Wayne had the smallest charter enrollment, and Nash-Rocky Mount had the largest.

Fig. 7

**Percentage of all students in various schools with respect to total student population**



### *Magnet enrollment and percentages*

In the case of magnet school enrollment, the opportunity for choice is concentrated in just a few districts (Fig. 10). A majority of districts — 107 — had no magnet schools or magnet programs at all. In three counties, less than 5 percent of the total grades 3 to 8 population was enrolled in magnets. In only two counties did enrollment include between 5 and 10 percent of the 3rd to 8th grade students. The counties listed in the tables are again ranked, within each category, from smallest to largest enrollment. Cabarrus had the smallest magnet enrollment of the seven magnet counties, and Forsyth had the largest. The range went from a high of 20,781 students in Forsyth to 104 students in Cabarrus.

### *Private enrollment and county percentages*

Private schools enrolled 6 percent to 7 percent of all students across the state in grades 3 to 8. State law governs the establishment of private schools, so regulations are not district-driven. Our calculations show that 56 districts had between zero and five percent of 3rd to 8th grade students enrolled in private schools in 2002-03, another 22 districts had 5 to 10 percent, and there were nine districts where more than 10 percent attended private schools (Fig. 11). In all, 44,751 3rd to 8th grade students attended private choice schools in North Carolina last year. Forsyth, Orange, Wake, and Mecklenburg counties led the state with the highest percentages of students enrolled in private schools in 2002-03.

### *Home school enrollment and county percentages*

As the charts show, 18 districts reported zero enrollment for grades 3 to 8, or no data, for home schools in 2002-03 (Fig. 12). With the exception of Graham County, these were city districts whose numbers were included by the Department of Non-Public Education in county enrollment figures.



Home schooling in the early grades is still more common than home schooling in grades 9-12. As the county percentage breakdown shows, 53 districts in North Carolina had between 5 and 10 percent of all 3rd to 8th graders enrolled at home. Another 36 districts had between zero and 5 percent in home schools, and 10 percent of the districts in North Carolina had over 10 percent of all 3rd to 8th graders in home schools in 2002-03.

Numerically, there were more Wake County students in grades 3 to 8 enrolled in home schools — 3,615 — than in any other district. This represents between 5 and 10 percent of all 3rd to 8th grade students from Wake. In Forsyth County, parents enrolled more than 10 percent — 1,269 3rd to 8th grade students — in home schools. The county with the smallest home school enrollment in grades 3 to 8 in 2002-03, at just 18 students — was Tyrrell County.

## Conclusion

**N**orth Carolina had 69 counties in 2002-03 with no public schools of choice. Among counties with some choice, there are a few observations and comparisons we can make. The graphs for all students in K-12, and for grades 3 to 8 only, illustrate patterns of enrollment in the different types of schools we studied. In 2002-03, magnet schools enrolled 7.6 percent of the students in grades 3 to 8, private schools enrolled 6.7 percent, and home schools enrolled 5.9 percent of 3rd to 8th graders across North Carolina (Fig. 6). Charter schools were far behind, enrolling only 1.7 percent.

By the time students move into the high school years, the pattern of choice changes (Fig. 7). A comparison of private, home, magnet, and charter enrollment percentages illustrates the shift that takes place among these options. For students in grades K-12 overall, private school enrollment far outpaces the percentage enrolled in any of the other options. Almost 7 percent of all K-12 students in North Carolina were enrolled in private schools in 2002-03. Magnet school enrollment shifts from 7.6 percent in grades 3 to 8, to less than 6 percent of students in the larger K-12 group. Home school enrollment for K-12 was 3.5 percent, only about half the percentage that were enrolled in home schools in grades 3 to 8 alone. Charter schools accounted for less than 1 percent of the total K-12 enrollment in 2002-03.

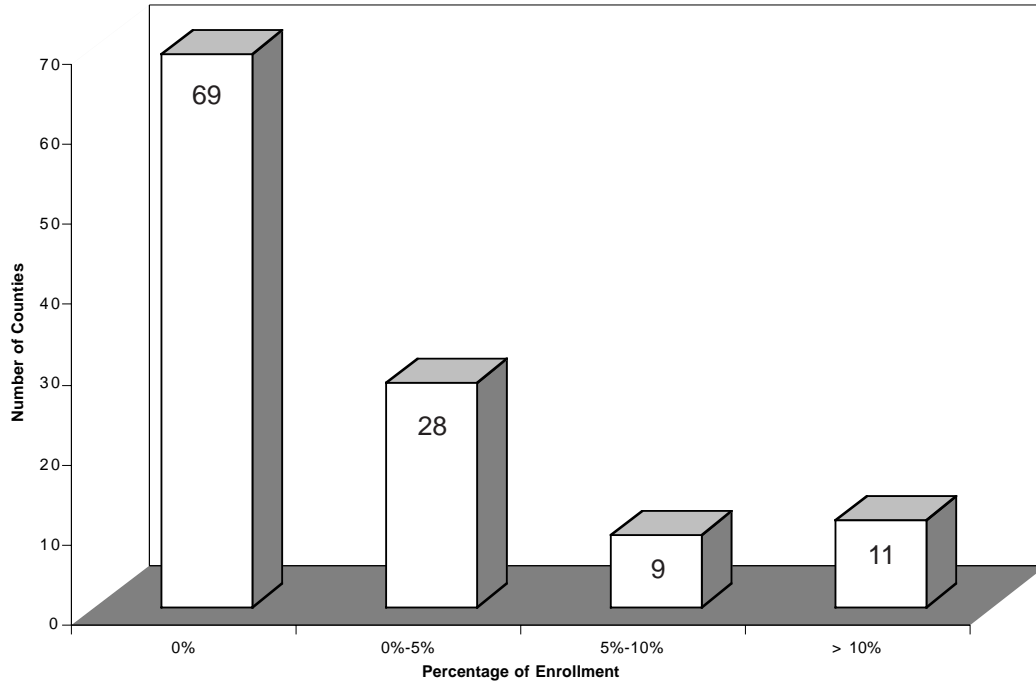
Regardless of how choice patterns are shifting, the majority of families had no choice among public schools in 2002-03, and relatively few chose (or were able to afford) private or home school options. In only five systems in the state — Asheville City, Avery, Forsyth, Mecklenburg, and Wake — were most 3-8 students enrolled in a public or private school of choice (Fig. 13). While three of these systems are among the largest in the state, fully 80 percent of North Carolina students in grades 3 to 8 reside in districts where most are assigned to a public school, whether their parents would choose it or not.

If choice serve the purposes of children and parents, through better accountability, efficiency, and freedom to choose, North Carolina is not serving most of its young public school population. Making the open enrollment and magnet options available over greater geographic areas of the state would serve to increase choice, as would removing the cap on charter school creation.

Preliminary studies that link achievement to choice in public schools show promising positive effects. And experiences in private schools of choice, as well as in home schools, show high overall achievement across the entire range of per-pupil spending. These early indicators suggest that there is little to lose, and much to gain for students, in exploring the options associated with school choice for a greater number of children in North Carolina.

Fig. 8

Public School Choice Enrollment Percentages by School System

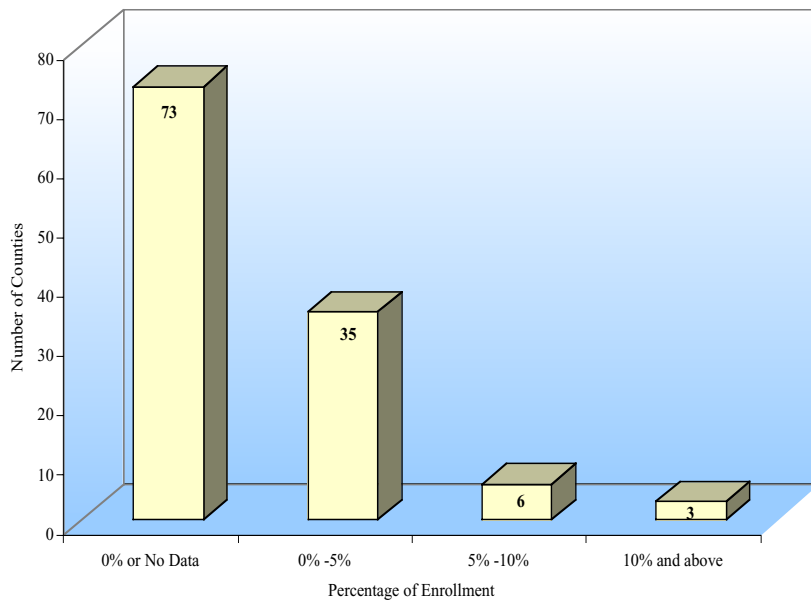


**PUBLIC CHOICE ENROLLMENT AS SHARE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL 3-8 ENROLLMENT**

0%		0% -5%	5% -10%
ALEXANDER COUNTY	HARNETT COUNTY	ALAMANCE COUNTY	KANNAPOLIS CITY
ALLEGHANY COUNTY	HAYWOOD COUNTY	BEAUFORT COUNTY	NEWTON-CONOVER CITY
ANSON COUNTY	HERTFORD COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY	CHATHAM COUNTY
ASHE COUNTY	HOKE COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY	JACKSON COUNTY
BERTIE COUNTY	HYDE COUNTY	CARTERET COUNTY	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
BLADEN COUNTY	MOORESVILLE CITY	CHEROKEE COUNTY	MOUNT AIRY CITY
BRUNSWICK COUNTY	JOHNSTON COUNTY	FRANKLIN COUNTY	SWAIN COUNTY
BURKE COUNTY	JONES COUNTY	GASTON COUNTY	TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY
CALDWELL COUNTY	MACON COUNTY	HENDERSON COUNTY	WILSON COUNTY
CAMDEN COUNTY	MADISON COUNTY	IREDELL COUNTY	
CASWELL COUNTY	MARTIN COUNTY	LEE COUNTY	<b>10% and above</b>
CATAWBA COUNTY	MCDOWELL COUNTY	LENOIR COUNTY	AVERY COUNTY
HICKORY CITY	MITCHELL COUNTY	LINCOLN COUNTY	ASHEVILLE CITY
EDENTON/CHOWAN	MONTGOMERY COUNTY	MOORE COUNTY	CUMBERLAND COUNTY
CLAY COUNTY	ONSLow COUNTY	NASH COUNTY	LEXINGTON CITY
CLEVELAND COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	NEW HANOVER COUNTY	DURHAM COUNTY
KINGS MOUNTAIN	PASQUOTANK COUNTY	CHAPEL-HILL/CARRBORO	EDGEcombe COUNTY
SHELBY CITY	PENDER COUNTY	PERSON COUNTY	FORSYTH COUNTY
COLUMBUS COUNTY	PERQUIMANS COUNTY	ROBESON COUNTY	GUILFORD COUNTY
WHITEVILLE CITY	PITT COUNTY	ROCKINGHAM COUNTY	MECKLENBURG COUNTY
CRAVEN COUNTY	POLK COUNTY	ROWAN COUNTY	MECKLENBURG COUNTY
CURRITUCK COUNTY	RANDOLPH COUNTY	RUTHERFORD COUNTY	PAMLICO COUNTY
DARE COUNTY	ASHEBORO CITY	SCOTLAND COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY
DAVIDSON COUNTY	RICHMOND COUNTY	UNION COUNTY	
THOMASVILLE CITY	SAMPSON COUNTY	VANCE COUNTY	
DAVIE COUNTY	CLINTON CITY	WARREN COUNTY	
DUPLIN COUNTY	STANLY COUNTY	WAYNE COUNTY	
GATES COUNTY	STOKES COUNTY	WILKES COUNTY	
GRAHAM COUNTY	SURRY COUNTY		
GRANVILLE COUNTY	ELKIN CITY		
GREENE COUNTY	TYRRELL COUNTY		
HALIFAX COUNTY	WASHINGTON COUNTY		
ROANOKE RAPIDS CITY	WATAUGA COUNTY		
WELDON CITY	YADKIN COUNTY		
	YANCEY COUNTY		

Fig. 9

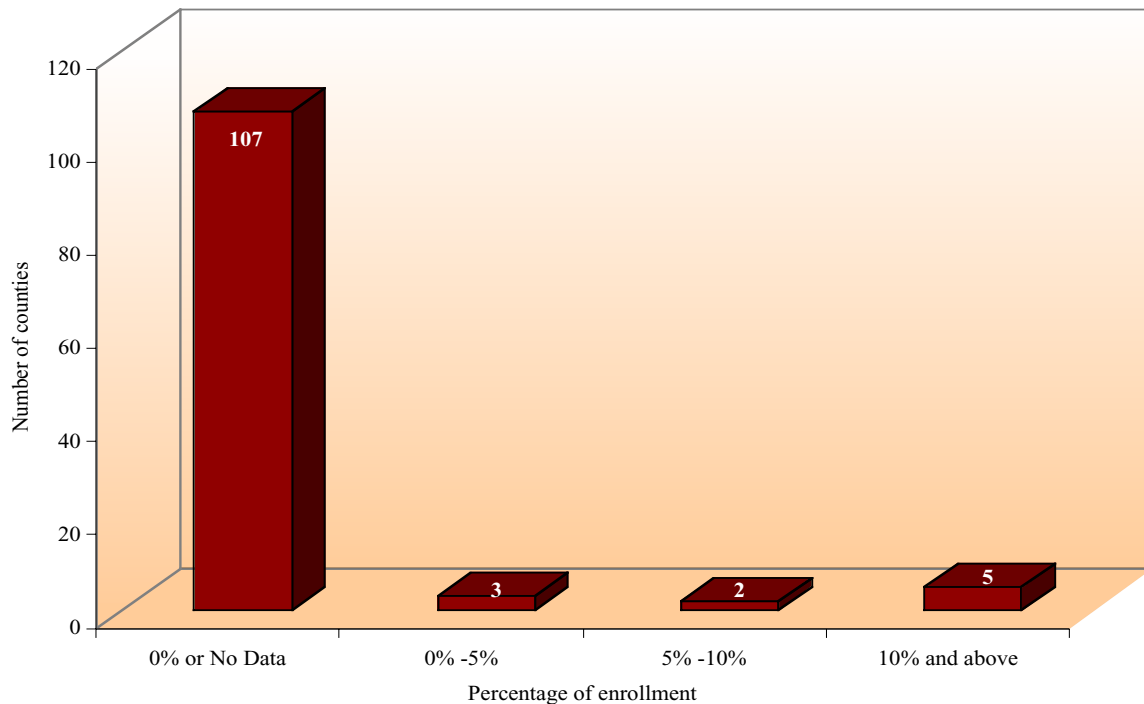
Grade 3-8 Charter enrollment as % of All 3-8 enrollment



CHARTER ENROLLMENT AS A SHARE OF ALL 3-8 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT			
0%	0% -5%	5% -10%	10% and above
ALEXANDER COUNTY	ROANOKE RAPIDS CITY	WAYNE COUNTY	DURHAM COUNTY
ALLEGHANY COUNTY	WELDON CITY	CUMBERLAND COUNTY	NEWTON-CONOVER
ANSON COUNTY	HARNETT COUNTY	ROWAN-SALISBURY	JACKSON COUNTY
ASHE COUNTY	HAYWOOD COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY	TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY
BERTIE COUNTY	HERTFORD COUNTY	SCOTLAND COUNTY	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
BLADEN COUNTY	HOKE COUNTY	LEE COUNTY	MOUNT AIRY CITY
BRUNSWICK COUNTY	HYDE COUNTY	FRANKLIN COUNTY	
BURKE COUNTY	MOORESVILLE CITY	ROBESON COUNTY	
CABARRUS COUNTY	JOHNSTON COUNTY	LENOIR COUNTY	FORSYTH COUNTY
KANNAPOLIS CITY	JONES COUNTY	GASTON COUNTY	PAMLICO COUNTY
CALDWELL COUNTY	MACON COUNTY	BEAUFORT COUNTY	ASHEVILLE CITY
CAMDEN COUNTY	MADISON COUNTY	CARTERET COUNTY	
CASWELL COUNTY	MARTIN COUNTY	ROCKINGHAM COUNTY	
CATAWBA COUNTY	MCDOWELL COUNTY	HENDERSON COUNTY	
HICKORY CITY	MITCHELL COUNTY	NEW HANOVER COUNTY	
EDENTON/CHOWAN	MONTGOMERY CNTY	UNION COUNTY	
CLAY COUNTY	ONSLow COUNTY	WILKES COUNTY	
CLEVELAND COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	CHEROKEE COUNTY	
KINGS MOUNTAIN	PASQUOTANK COUNTY	MECKLENBURG COUNTY	
SHELBY CITY	PENDER COUNTY	MOORE COUNTY	
COLUMBUS COUNTY	PERQUIMANS COUNTY	GUILFORD COUNTY	
WHITEVILLE CITY	PITT COUNTY	ALAMANCE-BURLINGTON	
CRAVEN COUNTY	POLK COUNTY	IREDELL-STATESVILLE	
CURRITUCK COUNTY	RANDOLPH COUNTY	CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO	
DARE COUNTY	ASHEBORO CITY	RUTHERFORD COUNTY	
DAVIDSON COUNTY	RICHMOND COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY	
LEXINGTON CITY	SAMPSON COUNTY	LINCOLN COUNTY	
THOMASVILLE CITY	CLINTON CITY	VANCE COUNTY	
DAVIE COUNTY	STANLY COUNTY	PERSON COUNTY	
DUPLIN COUNTY	STOKES COUNTY	AVERY COUNTY	
EDGEcombe COUNTY	SURRY COUNTY	WARREN COUNTY	
GATES COUNTY	ELKIN CITY	SWAIN COUNTY	
GRAHAM COUNTY	TYRRELL COUNTY	WILSON COUNTY	
GRANVILLE COUNTY	WASHINGTON COUNTY	CHATHAM COUNTY	
GREENE COUNTY	WATAUGA COUNTY	NASH-ROCKY MOUNT	
HALIFAX COUNTY	YADKIN COUNTY		
	YANCEY COUNTY		

Fig. 10

**Grade 3-8 Magnet enrollment as a % of all 3-8 enrollment**

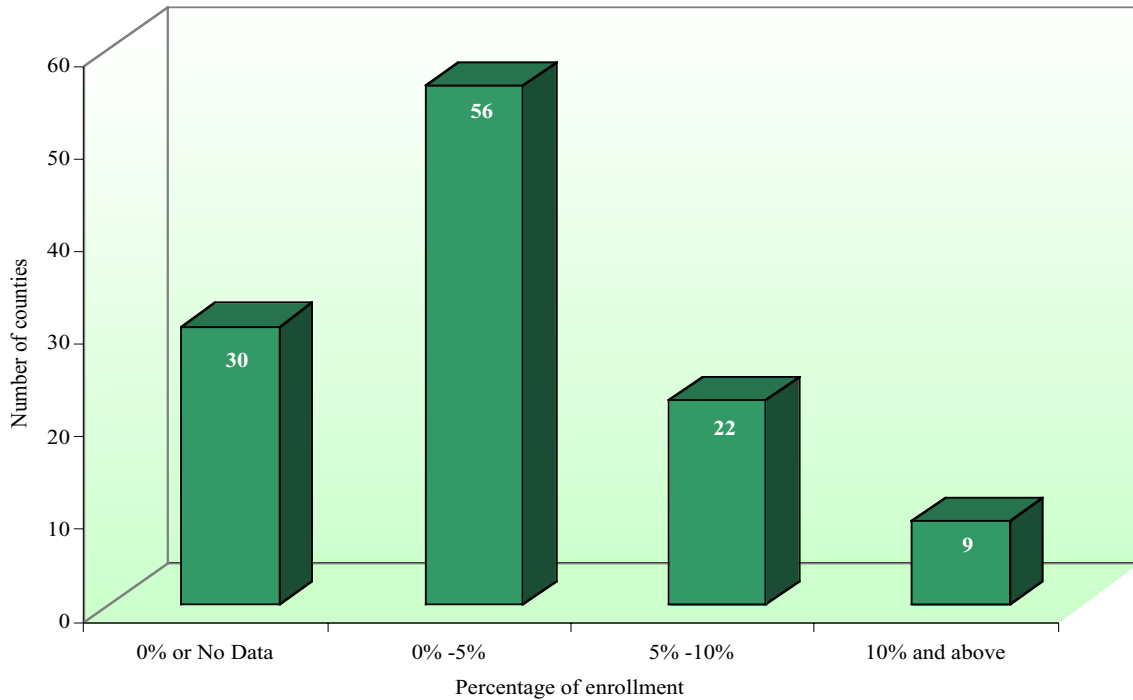


**COUNTIES & CITIES WITH PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLMENT FOR MAGNETS**

0%				0% -5%
ALAMANCE-BURLINGTON	COLUMBUS COUNTY	JACKSON COUNTY	RICHMOND COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY
ALEXANDER COUNTY	WHITEVILLE CITY	JOHNSTON COUNTY	ROBESON COUNTY	FRANKLIN COUNTY
ALLEGHANY COUNTY	CRAVEN COUNTY	JONES COUNTY	ROCKINGHAM COUNTY	NEW HANOVER COUNTY
ANSON COUNTY	CUMBERLAND COUNTY	LEE COUNTY	ROWAN-SALISBURY	
ASHE COUNTY	CURRITUCK COUNTY	LENOIR COUNTY	RUTHERFORD COUNTY	<b>5% -10%</b>
AVERY COUNTY	DARE COUNTY	LINCOLN COUNTY	SAMPSON COUNTY	MECKLENBURG COUNTY
BEAUFORT COUNTY	DAVIDSON COUNTY	MACON COUNTY	CLINTON CITY	GUILFORD COUNTY
BERTIE COUNTY	LEXINGTON CITY	MADISON COUNTY	SCOTLAND COUNTY	
BLADEN COUNTY	THOMASVILLE CITY	MARTIN COUNTY	STANLY COUNTY	<b>10% and above</b>
BRUNSWICK COUNTY	DAVIE COUNTY	MCDOWELL COUNTY	STOKES COUNTY	DURHAM COUNTY
BUNCOMBE COUNTY	DUPLIN COUNTY	MITCHELL COUNTY	SURRY COUNTY	EDGECOMBE COUNTY
BURKE COUNTY	GASTON COUNTY	MONTGOMERY COUNTY	ELKIN CITY	WAKE COUNTY
KANNAPOLIS CITY	GATES COUNTY	MOORE COUNTY	MOUNT AIRY CITY	ASHEVILLE CITY
CALDWELL COUNTY	GRAHAM COUNTY	NASH-ROCKY MOUNT	SWAIN COUNTY	FORSYTH COUNTY
CAMDEN COUNTY	GRANVILLE COUNTY	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY	
CARTERET COUNTY	GREENE COUNTY	ONSLow COUNTY	TYRRELL COUNTY	
CASWELL COUNTY	HALIFAX COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	UNION COUNTY	
CATAWBA COUNTY	ROANOKE RAPIDS CITY	CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO	VANCE COUNTY	
HICKORY CITY	WELDON CITY	PAMLICO COUNTY	WARREN COUNTY	
NEWTON-CONOVER	HARNETT COUNTY	PASQUOTANK COUNTY	WASHINGTON COUNTY	
CHATHAM COUNTY	HAYWOOD COUNTY	PENDER COUNTY	WATAUGA COUNTY	
CHEROKEE COUNTY	HENDERSON COUNTY	PERQUIMANS COUNTY	WAYNE COUNTY	
EDENTON/CHOWAN	HERTFORD COUNTY	PERSON COUNTY	WILKES COUNTY	
CLAY COUNTY	HOKE COUNTY	PITT COUNTY	WILSON COUNTY	
CLEVELAND COUNTY	HYDE COUNTY	POLK COUNTY	YADKIN COUNTY	
KINGS MOUNTAIN	IREDELL-STATESVILLE	RANDOLPH COUNTY	YANCEY COUNTY	
SHELBY CITY	MOORESVILLE CITY	ASHEBORO CITY		

Fig. 11

**Grade 3-8 Private enrollment as a % of all 3-8 enrollment**

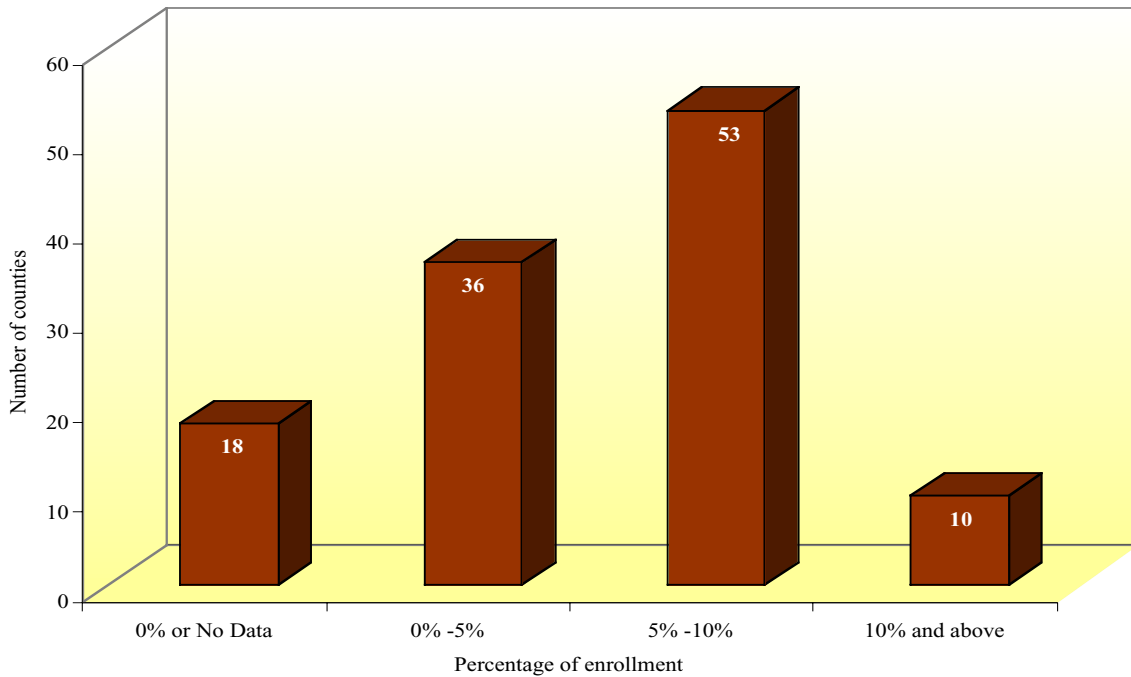


**COUNTIES AND CITIES WITH 3-8 ENROLLMENT PERCENTAGE FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

0 / No Data	0% -5%	5%-10%	10% and above
ALLEGHANY COUNTY	HOKE COUNTY	MACON COUNTY	GREENE COUNTY
ANSON COUNTY	MARTIN COUNTY	SWAIN COUNTY	NASH-ROCKY MOUNT
ASHE COUNTY	AVERY COUNTY	HAYWOOD COUNTY	CARTERET COUNTY
ASHEVILLE CITY	CASWELL COUNTY	HARNETT COUNTY	DAVIDSON COUNTY
KANNAPOLIS CITY	ALEXANDER COUNTY	CALDWELL COUNTY	COLUMBUS COUNTY
CAMDEN COUNTY	FRANKLIN COUNTY	YANCEY COUNTY	HYDE COUNTY
HICKORY CITY	CLEVELAND COUNTY	PERSON COUNTY	CUMBERLAND COUNTY
NEWTON-CONOVER	JONES COUNTY	WATAUGA COUNTY	HENDERSON COUNTY
CLAY COUNTY	YADKIN COUNTY	RUTHERFORD COUNTY	LEE COUNTY
KINGS MOUNTAIN	CHEROKEE COUNTY	MITCHELL COUNTY	MOORE COUNTY
SHELBY CITY	BLADEN COUNTY	JACKSON COUNTY	WAYNE COUNTY
WHITEVILLE CITY	JOHNSTON COUNTY	BRUNSWICK COUNTY	ALAMANCE-BURLINGTON
CURRITUCK COUNTY	WILKES COUNTY	DARE COUNTY	CATAWBA COUNTY
LEXINGTON CITY	TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY	ROCKINGHAM COUNTY	VANCE COUNTY
THOMASVILLE CITY	CHATHAM COUNTY	SCOTLAND COUNTY	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
GATES COUNTY	DAVIE COUNTY	STANLY COUNTY	WILSON COUNTY
GRAHAM COUNTY	BURKE COUNTY	ONSLOW COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY
ROANOKE RAPIDS CITY	PERQUIMANS COUNTY	MCDOWELL COUNTY	PITT COUNTY
WELDON CITY	DUPLIN COUNTY	RANDOLPH COUNTY	GASTON COUNTY
MOORESVILLE CITY	LINCOLN COUNTY	POLK COUNTY	NEW HANOVER COUNTY
MADISON COUNTY	SURRY COUNTY	IREDELL-STATESVILLE	GUILFORD COUNTY
CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO	MONTGOMERY COUNTY	UNION COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY
PAMLICO COUNTY	EDGECOMBE COUNTY	SAMPSON COUNTY	
PENDER COUNTY	GRANVILLE COUNTY	WARREN COUNTY	
ASHEBORO CITY	EDENTON/CHOWAN	ROWAN-SALISBURY	
CLINTON CITY	ROBESON COUNTY	BEAUFORT COUNTY	
ELKIN CITY	STOKES COUNTY	PASQUOTANK COUNTY	
MOUNT AIRY CITY	RICHMOND COUNTY	CRAVEN COUNTY	
TYRRELL COUNTY			
WASHINGTON COUNTY			

Fig. 12

**Grade 3-8 Home enrollment as a % of all 3-8 enrollment**

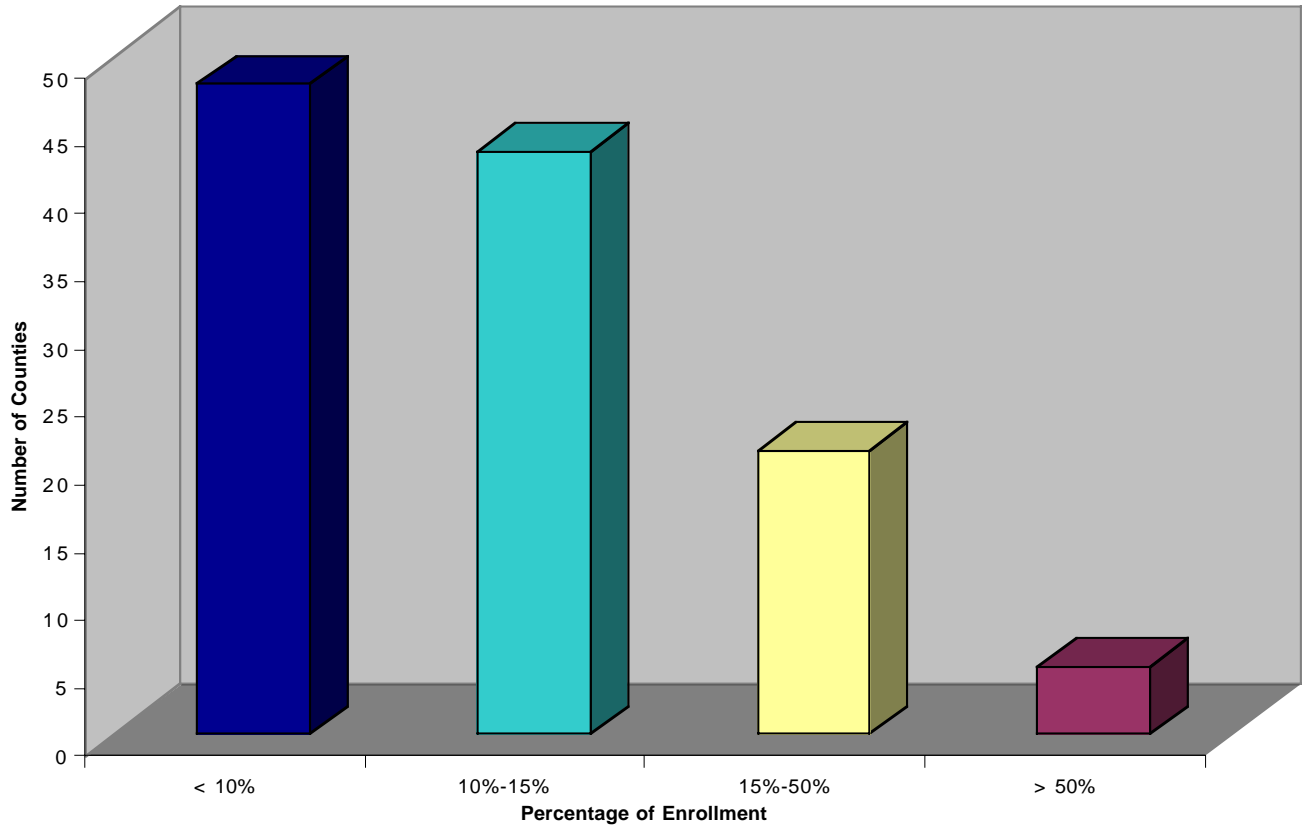


**HOME SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AS A SHARE OF ALL 3-8 ENROLLMENT**

0%	0% -5%	5% -10%	10% and above
ASHEVILLE CITY	SCOTLAND COUNTY	CHATHAM COUNTY	UNION COUNTY
KANNAPOLIS CITY	BERTIE COUNTY	ROCKINGHAM COUNTY	DAVIDSON COUNTY
HICKORY CITY	RICHMOND COUNTY	MONTGOMERY COUNTY	SURRY COUNTY
NEWTON-CONOVER	DUPLIN COUNTY	TYRRELL COUNTY	STOKES COUNTY
KINGS MOUNTAIN	ROBESON COUNTY	HOKE COUNTY	PERQUIMANS COUNTY
SHELBY CITY	WILSON COUNTY	CRAVEN COUNTY	MITCHELL COUNTY
WHITEVILLE CITY	NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	CAMDEN COUNTY	FRANKLIN COUNTY
LEXINGTON CITY	HERTFORD COUNTY	HALIFAX COUNTY	BRUNSWICK COUNTY
THOMASVILLE CITY	LENOIR COUNTY	CARTERET COUNTY	ALEXANDER COUNTY
GRAHAM COUNTY	MARTIN COUNTY	PAMLICO COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY
ROANOKE RAPIDS CITY	GREENE COUNTY	CALDWELL COUNTY	CHEROKEE COUNTY
WELDON CITY	BLADEN COUNTY	HARNETT COUNTY	ASHE COUNTY
MOORESVILLE CITY	PITT COUNTY	JOHNSTON COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY
CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO	WAYNE COUNTY	YADKIN COUNTY	JACKSON COUNTY
ASHEBORO CITY	NASH-ROCKY MOUNT	PERSON COUNTY	YANCEY COUNTY
CLINTON CITY	WASHINGTON COUNTY	LINCOLN COUNTY	HAYWOOD COUNTY
ELKIN CITY	ALLEGHANY COUNTY	NEW HANOVER COUNTY	JONES COUNTY
MOUNT AIRY CITY	SAMPSON COUNTY	GRANVILLE COUNTY	
	COLUMBUS COUNTY	IREDELL-STATESVILLE	
	BEAUFORT COUNTY	STANLY COUNTY	
	VANCE COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY	
	EDENTON/CHOWAN	ROWAN-SALISBURY	
	WARREN COUNTY	RUTHERFORD COUNTY	
	ONSLow COUNTY	BURKE COUNTY	
	EDGEcombe COUNTY	HYDE COUNTY	
	ANSON COUNTY	CURRITUCK COUNTY	
	CUMBERLAND COUNTY	WILKES COUNTY	
	ALAMANCE-BURLINGTON	PENDER COUNTY	
	GUILFORD COUNTY	DAVIE COUNTY	
	MOORE COUNTY	CATAWBA COUNTY	
	DURHAM COUNTY	CASWELL COUNTY	
	GATES COUNTY	CLAY COUNTY	
	LEE COUNTY	MCDOWELL COUNTY	
	PASQUOTANK COUNTY	DARE COUNTY	
	MECKLENBURG COUNTY	RANDOLPH COUNTY	
	GASTON COUNTY	SWAIN COUNTY	

Fig. 13

Grade 3-8 Choice Enrollment as a % of all 3-8 enrollment



COUNTIES & CITIES WITH PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLMENT FOR CHOICE				
LESS THAN 10%		10%-15%		15-50%
GRAHAM	PENDER	WILKES	ORANGE	VANCE
MARTIN	SURRY	WAYNE	HAYWOOD	LENOIR
DUPLIN	ELKIN	Craven	CARTERET	MOUNT AIRY
ALLEGHANY	COLUMBUS	HICKORY	IREDELL	BERTIE
WASHINGTON	WHITEVILLE	BEAUFORT	YANCEY	NORTHAMPTON
BLADEN	CLAY	STOKES	CATAWBA	MADISON
ANSON	ONslow	JONES	HYDE	WATAUGA
RICHMOND	CASWELL	THOMASVILLE	PERSON	MACON
GATES	BURKE	DARE	MOORE	POLK
SCOTLAND	GRANVILLE	DAVIDSON	RUTHERFORD	HENDERSON
TYRRELL	HARNETT	McDOWELL	CABARRUS	JACKSON
CAMDEN	CALDWELL	HALIFAX	WARREN	KANNAPOLIS
HOKE	DAVIE	ROANOKE RAPIDS	HERTFORD	NEW HANOVER
ROBESON	GREENE	WELDON	ALAMANCE	BUNCOMBE
CHOWAN	ASHE	CHATHAM	NASH	EDGECOMBE
CLEVELAND	MOORESVILLE	LEE	CHAPEL HILL	CUMBERLAND
KINGS MOUNTAIN	ALEXANDER	MITCHELL	UNION	TRANSYLVANIA
SHELBY	PASQUOTANK	PITT	GASTON	GUILFORD
SAMPSON	ROCKINGHAM	CHEROKEE	NEWTON-CONOVER	LEXINGTON
CLINTON	PERQUIMANS	LINCOLN	SWAIN	PAMLICO
JOHNSTON	RANDOLPH	ROWAN	WILSON	DURHAM
MONTGOMERY	ASHEBORO	BRUNSWICK		
YADKIN	FRANKLIN			
CURRITUCK	STANLY			
				<b>MORE THAN 50%</b>
				WAKE
				MECKLENBURG
				AVERY
				ASHEVILLE
				FORSYTH

## Choice in Education 2003 — Data and Rank By NC School District

School District	Total 3-8 Enrollment	Public 3-8 Enrollment	# In Open Enrollment	# In Magnets	# In Charters	# in Private	# Home Schooled	% in a School of Choice	Rank
Alamance	11,948	10,295	0	0	350	767	536	13.8%	34
Alexander	2,921	2,656	0	0	0	10	255	9.1%	77
Alleghany	745	715	0	0	0	0	30	4.0%	113
Anson	2,328	2,224	0	0	0	0	104	4.5%	110
Ashe	1,666	1,516	0	0	0	0	150	9.0%	78
Avery	1,363	1,158	1,158	0	57	4	144	100.0%	1
Beaufort	3,927	3,521	0	0	51	190	165	10.3%	64
Bertie	1,914	1,615	0	0	0	258	41	15.6%	23
Bladen	2,901	2,782	0	0	0	20	99	4.1%	112
Brunswick	5,986	5,287	0	0	0	177	522	11.7%	48
Buncombe	14,659	11,811	0	0	67	1,239	1,542	19.4%	13
Asheville	2,502	1,737	1,737	815	356	182	227	100.0%	1
Burke	7,760	7,136	0	0	0	93	531	8.0%	85
Cabarrus	11,390	10,013	0	104	0	745	633	13.0%	37
Kannapolis	2,359	2,074	151	0	0	154	131	18.5%	15
Caldwell	6,731	6,170	0	0	0	174	387	8.3%	82
Camden	703	665	0	0	0	0	38	5.4%	105
Carteret	4,424	3,888	0	0	59	231	246	12.1%	45
Caswell	1,818	1,677	0	0	0	6	135	7.8%	86
Catawba	8,855	7,950	0	0	0	425	686	12.5%	42
Hickory	2,327	2,089	0	0	0	112	126	10.2%	66
Newton-Con	1,528	1,305	0	0	74	70	79	14.6%	29
Chatham	3,917	3,481	0	0	194	46	197	11.2%	58
Cherokee	1,910	1,690	0	0	36	13	171	11.5%	50
Chowan	1,234	1,158	0	0	0	24	53	6.2%	100
Clay	640	592	0	0	0	0	48	7.5%	88
Cleveland	5,060	4,748	0	0	0	13	299	6.2%	101
Kings Mountain	2,502	2,348	0	0	0	6	148	6.2%	101
Shelby	1,608	1,509	0	0	0	4	95	6.2%	101
Columbus	3,579	3,314	0	0	0	154	112	7.4%	89
Whiteville	1,330	1,231	0	0	0	57	41	7.4%	89
Craven	7,621	6,846	0	0	0	370	405	10.2%	67
Cumberland	27,007	24,157	2,415	0	46	1,600	1,205	19.5%	12
Currituck	1,784	1,659	0	0	0	0	125	7.0%	94
Dare	2,586	2,308	0	0	0	78	200	10.8%	62
Davidson	10,457	9,325	0	0	0	455	677	10.8%	60
Lexington	2,094	1,591	310	0	0	78	116	24.0%	8
Thomasville	1,333	1,189	0	0	0	58	86	10.8%	60
Davie	3,169	2,899	0	0	0	37	233	8.5%	81
Duplin	4,308	4,145	0	0	0	59	104	3.8%	115
Durham	18,045	14,538	0	1,897	846	1,920	741	29.9%	6
Edgecombe	3,886	3,688	0	561	0	52	146	19.5%	11
Forsyth	27,115	22,051	22,051	20,781	1,036	2,759	1,269	100.0%	1
Franklin	4,288	3,875	0	6	33	17	363	9.8%	70
Gaston	17,494	14,958	0	0	205	1,466	866	14.5%	30
Gates	1,011	964	0	0	0	0	47	4.6%	109
Graham	578	578	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	117
Granville	4,684	4,300	0	0	0	83	302	8.2%	83
Greene	1,672	1,529	0	0	0	86	57	8.6%	80
Guilford	36,381	30,718	0	2,503	932	3,191	1,541	22.4%	9
Halifax	3,131	2,780	0	0	0	246	105	11.2%	55
Roanoke Rapids	1,671	1,484	0	0	0	131	56	11.2%	55
Weldon	619	550	0	0	0	49	21	11.2%	55
Harnett	8,759	8,040	0	0	0	206	513	8.2%	84
Haywood	4,275	3,761	0	0	0	93	422	12.0%	46
Henderson	6,825	5,621	0	0	102	405	698	17.7%	17
Hertford	2,030	1,753	0	0	0	218	59	13.6%	35
Hoke	3,240	3,067	0	0	0	4	170	5.4%	106

NOTES: Private & home school enrollments pro-rated by district enrollment for the purposes of this Appendix. Some rankings are ties.



School District	Total 3-8 Enrollment	Public 3-8 Enrollment	# In Open Enrollment	# In Magnets	# In Charters	# in Private	# Home Schooled	% in a School of Choice	Rank
Hyde	391	341	0	0	0	23	27	12.8%	40
Iredell	10,195	8,959	0	0	351	330	554	12.1%	44
Mooreville	2,249	2,047	0	0	0	76	127	9.0%	79
Jackson	2,063	1,693	0	0	112	61	197	17.9%	16
Johnston	12,320	11,489	0	0	0	106	725	6.7%	95
Jones	815	729	0	0	0	5	81	10.6%	63
Lee	4,849	4,303	0	0	28	290	228	11.3%	54
Lenoir	5,790	4,900	0	0	63	653	174	15.4%	25
Lincoln	5,947	5,266	0	0	234	84	363	11.5%	51
Macon	2,315	1,934	0	0	0	49	332	16.5%	18
Madison	1,438	1,210	0	0	0	0	228	15.9%	21
Martin	2,341	2,261	0	0	0	5	75	3.4%	116
McDowell	3,618	3,218	0	0	0	124	276	11.1%	59
Mecklenburg	65,067	52,263	39,197	3,664	1,254	8,632	2,918	79.9%	4
Mitchell	1,231	1,092	0	0	0	34	105	11.3%	53
Montgomery	2,321	2,166	0	0	0	36	119	6.7%	96
Moore	6,264	5,458	0	0	137	384	285	12.9%	39
Nash	9,991	8,595	0	0	496	516	384	14.0%	33
New Hanover	12,230	10,185	0	287	188	1,116	741	19.1%	14
Northampton	1,973	1,662	0	0	118	137	56	15.8%	22
Onslow	10,917	10,081	0	0	0	359	477	7.7%	87
Orange	3,508	3,095	0	0	0	264	149	11.8%	47
Chapel Hill	5,775	4,943	0	0	173	422	237	14.4%	32
Pamlico	1,049	738	0	0	252	0	59	29.6%	7
Pasquotank	3,130	2,829	0	0	0	152	149	9.6%	75
Pender	3,608	3,345	0	0	0	0	263	7.3%	93
Perquimans	887	801	0	0	0	11	75	9.7%	72
Person	3,325	2,900	0	0	134	88	203	12.8%	41
Pitt	11,374	10,080	0	0	0	895	399	11.4%	52
Polk	1,392	1,163	0	0	0	53	176	16.5%	19
Randolph	9,760	8,814	0	0	0	297	649	9.7%	73
Asheboro	2,367	2,138	0	0	0	72	157	9.7%	73
Richmond	4,314	4,122	0	0	0	88	104	4.5%	111
Robeson	12,145	11,481	0	0	108	238	318	5.5%	104
Rockingham	7,801	7,053	0	0	116	240	392	9.6%	76
Rowan	11,248	9,943	0	0	36	525	744	11.6%	49
Rutherford	5,531	4,817	0	0	192	154	368	12.9%	38
Sampson	4,184	3,906	0	0	0	145	133	6.6%	98
Clinton	1,365	1,274	0	0	0	47	44	6.6%	98
Scotland	3,516	3,334	0	0	16	109	57	5.2%	107
Stanly	5,351	4,829	0	0	0	171	351	9.8%	71
Stokes	3,905	3,503	0	0	0	78	324	10.3%	65
Surry	4,394	4,073	0	0	0	48	273	7.3%	91
Elkin	598	554	0	0	0	7	37	7.3%	91
Mount Airy	1,068	904	0	0	93	11	61	15.4%	24
Swain	983	837	0	0	45	21	80	14.9%	28
Transylvania	2,202	1,760	0	0	123	25	294	20.1%	10
Tyrrell	349	331	0	0	0	0	18	5.2%	108
Union	14,142	12,104	0	0	255	634	1,149	14.4%	31
Vance	4,818	4,094	0	0	192	329	203	15.0%	26
Wake	61,321	49,718	0	20,197	1,609	6,379	3,615	51.9%	5
Warren	1,783	1,548	0	0	77	81	77	13.2%	36
Washington	1,126	1,081	0	0	0	0	45	4.0%	114
Watauga	2,609	2,189	0	0	0	70	350	16.1%	20
Wayne	10,099	9,077	0	0	17	639	366	10.1%	68
Wilkes	5,307	4,773	0	0	100	59	375	10.1%	69
Wilson	6,820	5,807	0	0	332	490	191	14.9%	27
Yadkin	3,049	2,846	0	0	0	20	183	6.7%	97
Yancey	1,375	1,205	0	0	0	36	134	12.4%	43
State Totals	720,407	624,590	67,019	50,815	11,295	44,750	39,772	26.1%	

NOTES: Private & home school enrollments pro-rated by district enrollment for the purposes of this Appendix. Some rankings are ties.

## Glossary of School Choice Terms

**Open Enrollment:** The state has a voluntary open enrollment law, which allows districts to choose whether to allow students to transfer to the school of their choice. Open enrollment in an *ex ante* sense determines what percentage of families have the opportunity to apply for a public school of choice. When we calculate students actually enrolled in choice schools, we use the district's statement about the percentage of successful applicants to those schools. The number we report is the *ex post* result.

**Charter Schools:** For accountability purposes, each charter school is a separate district, according to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Because they are physically located within counties that have regular public school enrollments, we added the student enrollment in charter schools to the non-charter public school enrollment in each county. This allowed us to obtain the countywide public school enrollment in grades 3 to 8.

**Magnet Schools/ Programs:** These public schools, and programs within public schools, have specialized offerings that are not part of the usual 3rd to 8th grade curriculum. Data were not available separately for the number of students enrolled in magnet programs located within a school. Therefore, all schools with magnet programs are magnet schools, for purposes of our enrollment counts in this report.

A problem of double-counting arises due to the inclusion of magnet students in regular district enrollment figures. To avoid double-counting, known 3rd to 8th grade enrollment in magnets was deducted from overall 3rd to 8th grade public enrollment in counties that offer magnet schools. This allowed us to obtain reasonable separation of the magnet enrollment and the regular public school enrollment in counties and across the state.

**Choice Vs No Choice:** Charter and magnet schools are the two types of specialized choice schools we measured. Students who are assigned to schools constitute the 'no-choice/assigned' enrollment in our report. For 'choice' enrollment, we looked at the number of students who succeeded in getting one of their choice schools, if they were offered an opportunity to choose before any assignments took place. Exceptions occurred if counties made it exceptionally easy to transfer, and if they tracked the percentage of students who took advantage of that option.

The choice count, then, is an *ex post* measure. This makes it consistent with the other choice measures in our study, which look at what happened with choice, rather than what families hoped would happen. Where magnets were part of the choice possibilities, the student numbers reflect the percentage who enrolled in their choice of regular school, plus magnet and charter enrollment, if applicable.

**Private Schools:** The Department of Non-Public Education tracks data on private school enrollment by grade or by county. We estimated 3rd to 8th grade private enrollment in each county. To obtain an estimate, we took the percentage of K-12 students in grades 3-8 in public schools in each county, and multiplied it by the countywide private school enrollment. The

multiplier for 3rd to 8th grade enrolment ranged from .43 to .53 of K-12 students, depending on the district.

**Home Schools:** The Department of Non-Public Instruction tracks home school enrollment. DNPE counts registered home school families, and then multiplies by an estimate of the number of home schooled children per family. The DNPE estimate is 2 children per family. The official count is available by county, but not by grade. The North Carolina Education Alliance estimates that about 75 percent of total home school enrollment is in grades 3 to 8.

We also note that DNPE excludes families schooling children under seven years old from the home school family count. The DNPE school enrollment numbers therefore omit at least kindergarten and first grades. National statistics advise a + or – 10 percent margin of error in enrollment counts<sup>3</sup> for home schooled children.

## Notes

1. The growth of charter school enrollment at this time depends mainly upon the expansion in size of existing schools, or the replacement of existing schools with ones that have larger enrollment capacity. Creation of additional charter schools requires state legislative action. See summary of North Carolina's choice option in: Krista Kafer. *School Choice 2003: How States Are Providing Greater Opportunity in Education*. (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation) pp. 169-172, 2003.
2. See Holmes, DeSimone, and Rupp. "Does School Choice Increase School Quality?" working paper provided by authors, March 2003. Also Zimmer, et. al. "Charter School Operations And Performance: Evidence From California," (Sacramento: Rand Education Corporation) 2003.
3. National Home Education Research Institute website at [www.NHERI.org](http://www.NHERI.org).

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## About the Author

Dr. Palasek joined the Locke Foundation and North Carolina Education Alliance in September of 2002. She holds a Ph.D. in economics from George Mason University, an M.A. in economics from the University of Connecticut, and a Bachelor of Music Education from the Hartt School of Music. She has held full time faculty positions in economics at Towson State University, the University of Hartford, and Tuskegee University, and part time positions at Johns Hopkins University, N.C. State, Campbell University, and Peace College. Dr. Palasek is a member of the NC Economic Policy Board and was an adjunct scholar of the Locke Foundation before joining the staff full time.

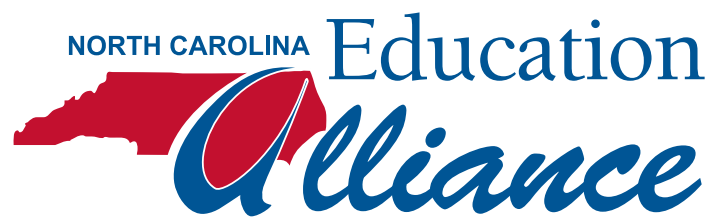
For nine years before joining the Locke Foundation, Karen's primary job was home schooling her daughter Stephanie. She also coordinated the statewide talent presentation at the North Carolinians for Home Education annual convention in 2000 and 2001.

Dr. Palasek has written a number of articles and book reviews related to education and home schooling for *Ideas on Liberty*, the magazine of the Foundation for Economic Education, as well as for *The Entrepreneur* and the *Cato Journal*. Her responsibilities with the North Carolina Education Alliance and Locke Foundation include, among other things, writing on K-12 education for *Carolina Journal*.



*“I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resource most to be relied on for ameliorating the condition, promoting the virtue, and advancing the happiness of man.”*

*Thomas Jefferson, 1822*



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