

# NC SCHOOL CHOICE:

## BY THE NUMBERS 2025

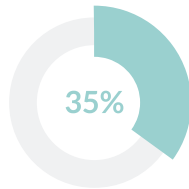
Over the past two years, North Carolina achieved several important school choice victories. In 2023, North Carolina expanded eligibility for its Opportunity Scholarship voucher program (OSP), created the Charter School Review Board, and passed a Parents' Bill of Rights. In 2024, North Carolina followed up by fully funding the waitlists for Opportunity Scholarships and the ESA+

program, an educational stipend for special-needs students, so all applicants can receive scholarships to help cover private school tuition.

**North Carolina continues to make progress on school choice, with public opinion showing strong support. A recent Carolina Journal Poll found 77% of likely voters believe parents are best suited to decide where their child attends school.**

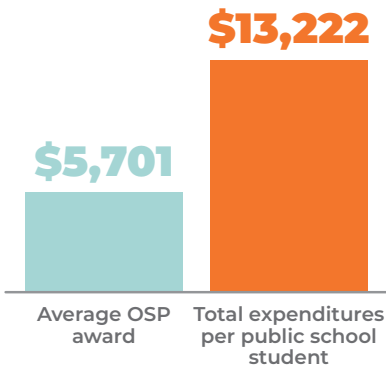
**24%** of all K-12 students in North Carolina are **enrolled in charter, private, or home schools**

Over a third of NC's private schools are **not religiously affiliated**



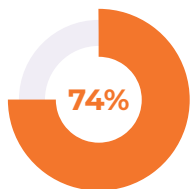
**37,143**

Number of **Opportunity Scholarship recipients** as of November 2024



In 2023-24, OSP recipients received \$5,701 on average, just **43%** of the \$13,222 spent per public school student, including federal, state, and local funds.

Number of private schools participating in the Opportunity Scholarship program in 2023-24



Percentage of likely voters in North Carolina who say they **support education savings accounts**



**432,778**

students enrolled in charter, private, and home schools during the 2023-24 school year (17% increase from 2019-20 to 2023-24)

**131,230**

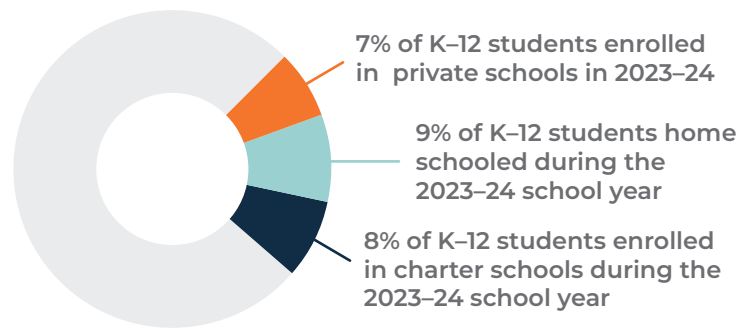
students enrolled in North Carolina's 881 private schools in 2023-24 (7% of all K-12 students)

**157,642**

home school students during the 2023-24 school year (9% of all K-12 students)

**143,906**

students enrolled in charter schools during the 2023-24 school year (8% of all K-12 students)



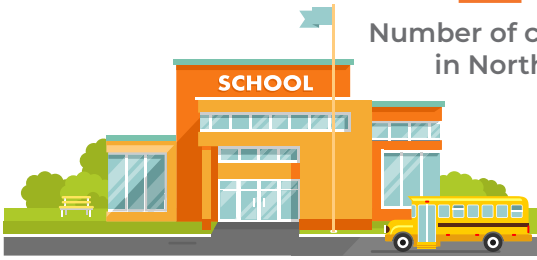
76% of K-12 students enrolled in public school

**↓3%**

**Percentage decrease in traditional public school enrollment from 2019-20 to 2023-24**

# 210

Number of charter schools in North Carolina



when North Carolina Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Opportunity Scholarships

# 13 states

including North Carolina, offer private school choice programs (vouchers or education savings accounts) that are open to all students



# 85,551

Number of students reported to be on waitlists for charter school admission for the 2023–24 school year (an 11% increase from 2022–23)



# \$6,965

Average ESA+ award in 2023–24



counties have **NO** charter school

Percentage of likely voters in North Carolina who say they would support offering more charter school options in their local area



# LAST

North Carolina's rank among the 50 states according to the strength of open enrollment laws that improve access to traditional public schools

## OSP BY THE NUMBERS

# 1.7%

Opportunity Scholarship disbursements in comparison with state spending on public schools (excluding federal & local dollars) in 2023–24



# \$5,701

The average Opportunity Scholarship award in 2023–24

# \$2,194

Amount the state saves on average per student who uses an Opportunity Scholarship

# NC SCHOOL CHOICE:

## BY THE NUMBERS 2025 SOURCES

- **77%:** Percentage of likely voters in North Carolina who said that a child's parents or guardians are best suited to determine where the child should attend school
- 24% of all K–12 students in North Carolina are enrolled in charter, private, or home schools<sup>1</sup>
- **35%:** Percentage of North Carolina private schools that are not religiously affiliated
- **37,143:** Number of Opportunity Scholarship recipients as of November 2024
- **\$5,701:** The average Opportunity Scholarship award in 2023–24<sup>2,3</sup>
- **592:** Number of private schools participating in the Opportunity Scholarship program in 2023–24
- **432,778:** Number of students enrolled in charter, private, and home schools during the 2023–24 school year (a 17% increase from 2019–20 to 2023–24)<sup>4</sup>
- **131,230:** Number of students enrolled in North Carolina's 881 private schools in 2023–24 (7% of all K–12 students)<sup>5</sup>
- **157,642:** Estimated number of home school students during the 2023–24 school year (9% of all K–12 students)<sup>6</sup>
- **143,906:** Number of students enrolled in charter schools during the 2023–24 school year<sup>7</sup> (8% of all K–12 students)<sup>8</sup>
- 3%: Percentage decrease in traditional public school enrollment from 2019–20 to 2023–24<sup>9</sup>
- **210:** Number of charter schools in North Carolina
- **85,551:** Number of students reported to be on waitlists for charter school admission for the 2023–24 school year<sup>10</sup> (an 11% increase from 2022–23)<sup>11</sup>
- **Approximately 4 in 10 counties** in North Carolina have no charter schools
- **59%:** Percentage of likely voters in North Carolina who say they would support offering more charter school options in their local area
- 2015: The year in which the North Carolina Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Opportunity Scholarships
  - The court ruled in *Hart v. State* that the legislature could fund alternative educational opportunities outside the public school system without conflicting with its constitutional responsibilities
- **13:** Number of states, including North Carolina, that offer private school choice programs (vouchers or education savings accounts) that are open to all students
- **\$6,965:** Average ESA+ award in 2023–24<sup>12</sup>
- **Last:** North Carolina's rank among the 50 states according to the strength of open enrollment laws that improve access to traditional public schools
- 1.7%: Opportunity Scholarship disbursements in comparison with state spending on public schools (excluding federal and local dollars) in 2023–24<sup>13</sup>
- **\$2,194:** Amount the state saves on average per student who uses an Opportunity Scholarship
  - In 2023–24, the average cost to the state to educate a student in public schools was \$7,895, and the average Opportunity Scholarship award was \$5,701<sup>14</sup>
- **74%:** Percentage of likely voters in North Carolina who say they support education savings accounts

1 In 2023–24, traditional public school enrollment (ADM) was 1,362,784, charter school enrollment (ADM) was 143,906, private school enrollment was 131,230, and home school enrollment was 157,642.

2 Average OSP award based on a total disbursement of \$185,554,831 among 32,549 recipients.

3 The average OSP award for 2023–24 was \$5,701 (see above), while the average amount spent per public school student in 2023–24 (state spending only) was \$7,895. If federal and local funds are taken into account, OSP recipients receive 43 percent of what would be spent on them were they to attend traditional public schools (for 2023–24, total expenditures per public school student (federal, state, and local) were \$13,222).

4 See note 1. Enrollment in schools of choice (public, private, and charter) was 369,333 in 2019–20 and 432,778 in 2023–24.

5 See note 1.

6 See note 1.

7 Note: Enrollment data (ADM) also includes North Carolina's one regional school.

8 See note 1.

9 Public school enrollment (ADM) was 1,409,280 in 2019–20 and 1,362,784 in 2023–24.

10 Note: The data may include duplicate counts if students are on waitlists at more than one charter school.

11 The number of students reported to be on charter school waitlists in 2023–24 was 77,000.

12 According to data provided by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA). The total amount of money disbursed to parent accounts or to schools on behalf of ESA+ recipients in 2023–24 was \$24,838,017, and the number of ESA+ recipients was 3,566.

13 State expenditures for public schools in 2023–24 (excluding federal and local dollars) were \$10,771,614,793, and OSP disbursements for 2023–24 totaled \$185,554,831.

14 See note 3.