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Public School Facilities Usage Study

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fci.fyi/25facilities

Susie Miller Carello, *Florida Charter Institute*
Thibaut Delloue, *Florida Charter Institute*
Jim Griffin, *Momentum Strategies*
Brooke Quisenberry, *Momentum Strategies*

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Space To Succeed

Possibilities & Potential For Florida's Underutilized School Buildings

Last week we released a white paper detailing what we will be reviewing today.

Find the entire report at:
flcharterinstitute.org/research/spacetosucceed

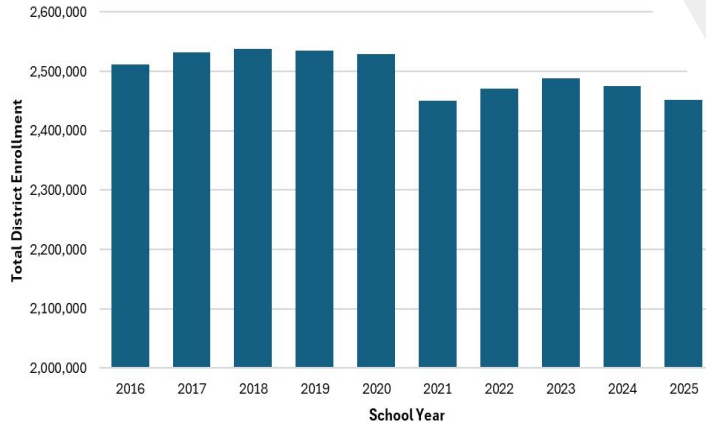


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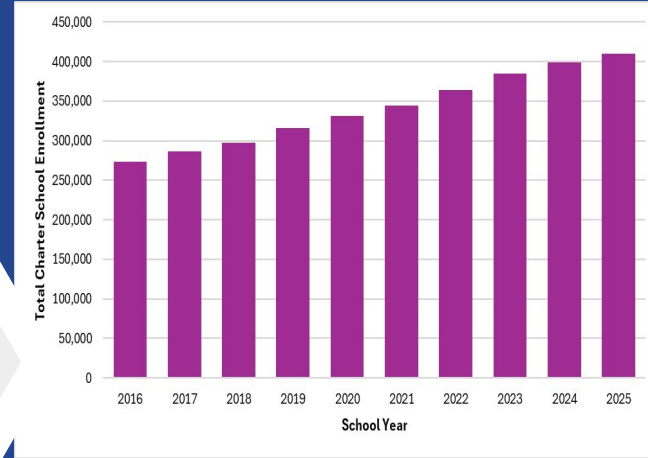
The Challenge: Declining Enrollment and Empty Spaces

Traditional District Schools Enrollment is Declining



Ultimately, repurposing half-empty—or worse—district buildings for in-demand charter schools is about leveraging public resources and potential cost savings for districts and charter schools.

Charter School Enrollment Is Increasing



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Expand Educational Opportunities



- District enrollment: ↓ 59,000 (2015-2025)
- Charter Enrollment: ↑ 136,000
- 264 district buildings with average 47.6% utilization (~790 unused seats at each)
- Average charter school enrollment: 532 students



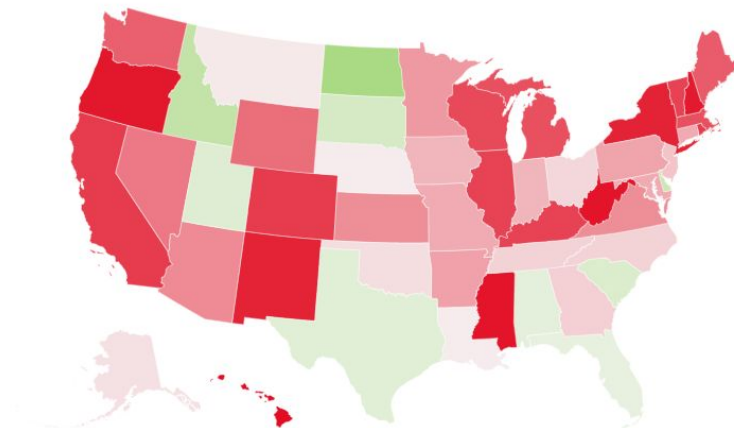
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National Context: Widespread trend

- Brookings: Districts may lose 8.5M students by 2050.
- Arizona: Districts use $\frac{2}{3}$ capacity; charters use 95%.
- Funding imbalance: districts retain more resources despite enrollment loss.

Percent Change in Public School Enrollment, 2019-20 to 2023-24

-6.5 0 3.2



Source: National Center for Education Statistics
2019-20 enrollments were taken in fall 2019, prior to pandemic shutdowns

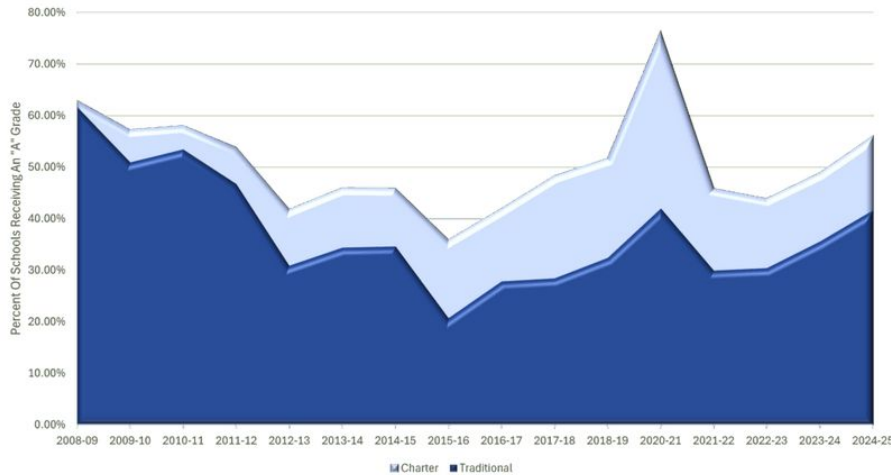
<https://www.future-ed.org/k-12-public-school-enrollment-declines-explained/>



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Florida's Charter Growth Story

Percent of schools earning an "A" Grade



Charters have proven themselves a valid option for student success.

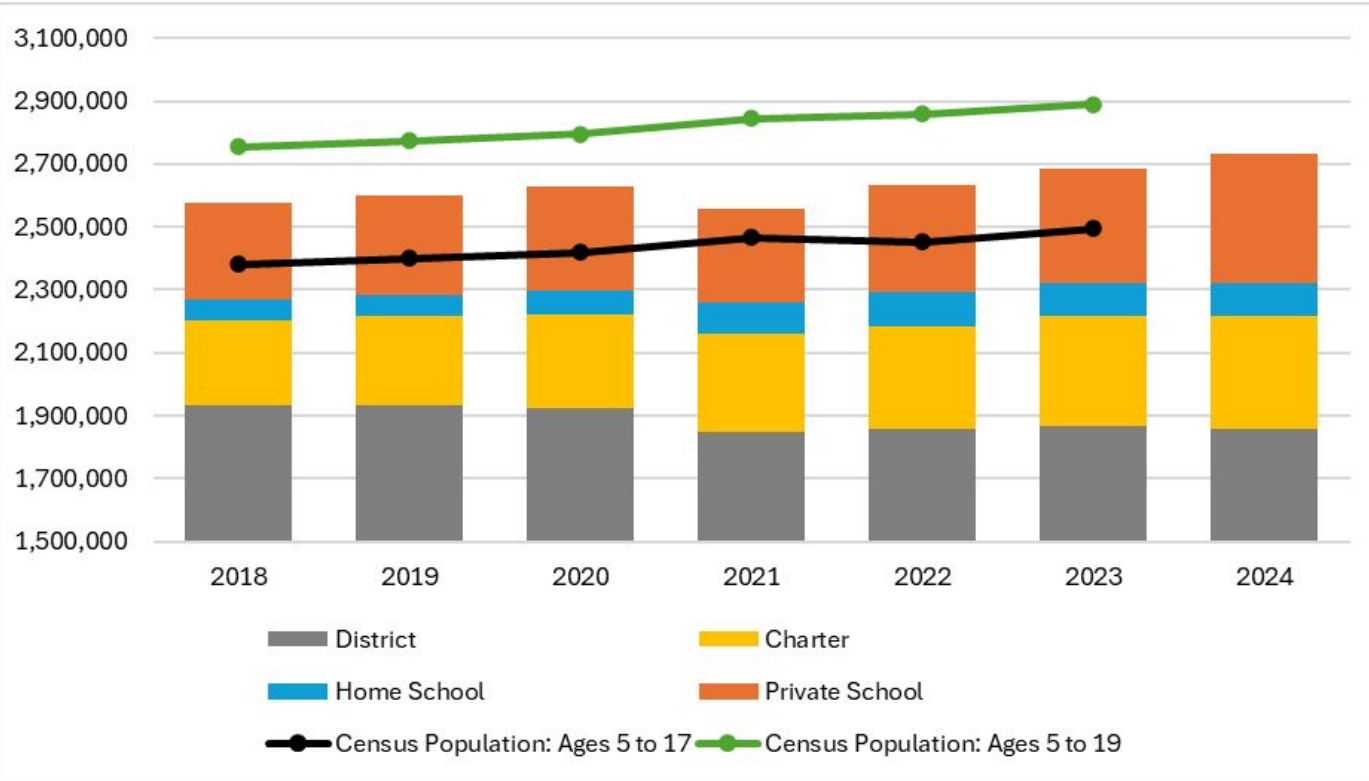
- 77% of charters earn "A" or "B."
- Only 4% of charters in district facilities vs. 18% nationally.
- Legislation (SB 2510) expands Schools of Hope access to district space.
- While S2510 only focuses on Schools of Hope, opportunities (and precedent) exist to allow traditional charters and districts to develop agreements.



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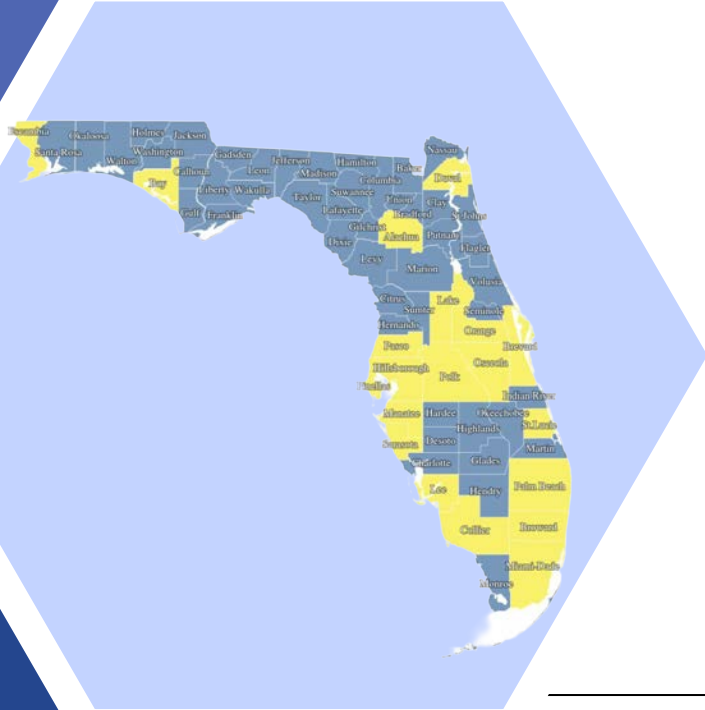
Enrollment & Population Trends

Student Population is up, district enrollment is down.



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Data Foundation



- 20 districts were analyzed representing 90% of FL charters.
 - All districts with 8 or more charter schools operating.
- 2,250 district buildings assessed via DOE's Five-Year Work Plans.



Data Sources

- We used the “Five Year Educational Work Plan Data”, available from the Florida Department of Education from 2021 to 2024.
- Did not include nontraditional options like adult education, Career and Technical Education Centers, or Department of Juvenile Justice.
- Florida Department of Education enrollment data, home education annual reports, private school annual reports and directories, as well as the American Community Survey (ACS) Age and Sex population 5-Year estimates.



Important Definitions

Our study uses the term “**Utilization Rate**”: These are a district/state calculated metric in the Five-Year Educational Work Plans as the prior year COFTE divided by the capacity of the building.

COFTE = Capital Outlay Full-Time Equivalent (project model used for facilities planning and funding for Florida’s public schools).



Emptying Classrooms: Utilization Trends

- Low-utilization (50%) buildings are up from 8% to 13% (109 more).
- Average utilization is down from 75% to 70%.
- 500+ empty seats per half-full building.

Utilization Rate Category	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Change 2021 to 2025
Vacant (0%)	50 (2%)	42 (2%)	38 (2%)	43 (2%)	52 (2%)	2
Low (1-50%)	181 (8%)	258 (12%)	280 (13%)	276 (12%)	290 (13%)	109
High (51-100%)	1,813 (82%)	1,828 (83%)	1,801 (81%)	1,804 (81%)	1,792 (80%)	-21
Overcapacity (101%+)	160 (7%)	79 (4%)	93 (4%)	100 (4%)	102 (5%)	-58
Total	2,204	2,207	2,212	2,223	2,236	32

Charter Facility Challenge

Facility costs are a major barrier for charter expansion.

- New charters: 25% of budget on facilities
- Established charters: 15%

"Facility issues are the #1 issue facing our ability to maintain or expand."



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Quantifying the Opportunity

- 264 district buildings could host an average charter (532 students)
- 645,000 available seats
- 77 surplus district buildings vs. 256 charter facility needs.



Number of Seats Available

Average Utilization Rate and Average Seats Available for Underutilized Buildings by Utilization Rate Category

Utilization Rate	Average Utilization Rates					Average Seats Available if underutilized				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	299	465	297	280	272
1-50%	35%	37%	37%	37%	37%	551	518	536	524	552
51-100%	78%	74%	75%	75%	75%	239	276	267	264	264
101%+	109%	109%	109%	110%	113%	-	-	-	-	-
Total	75%	70%	70%	71%	70%	268	309	302	299	303



Number of Seats Available

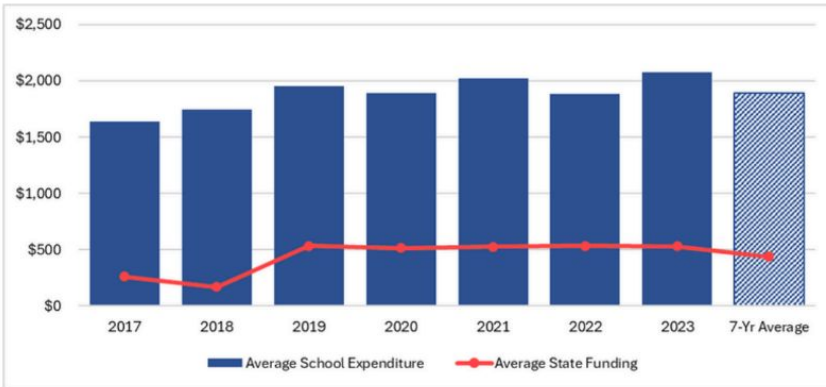
Number of Buildings Usable for the Average Charter School and Total Seats Available

Utilization Rate	Building Count					Total Seats Available (if Underutilized)				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Overall	200	249	245	240	264	163,161	203,752	197,652	194,164	208,615
0%	15	12	7	11	14	12,320	16,192	4,953	9,241	11,188
1-50%	72	94	102	99	119	63,649	76,720	87,982	83,600	102,007
51-100%	113	143	136	130	131	87,192	110,840	104,717	101,323	95,420



Fiscal Case for Collaboration

Average per pupil expenditures and state funding for charter schools



Repurposing facilities = better use of taxpayer dollars.

- Charter spends: \$2,077/student
- State funding: \$530/student
- Local funding: \$393/student
- Typical charter: \$1.1M/year on facilities
- 100 schools relocating = \$110.5M redirected to instruction



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Space To Succeed!



- Empty buildings need not symbolize decline.
- Charters provide cost-effective, community-based reuse.
- Align public assets with family choice.
- Promote collaboration, not competition.
- Florida can lead nationally.



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Your Feedback Helps

Our facilities survey is still open to learn more about the facilities needs of Florida's charters. Please take a moment to respond:

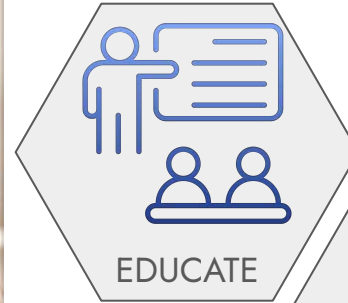


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FCI "At a glance"



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Nov 3, 2025 - Teach Like A Champion Opportunities

A full-day of research-based workshops designed to equip educators with proven, classroom-ready strategies grounded in cognitive science. Select the workshop that best aligns with your instructional focus.

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The Science of
READING

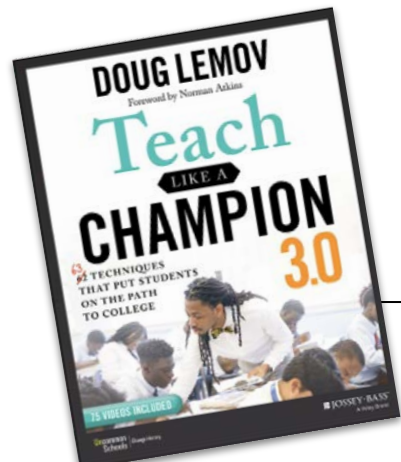


The Science of
MATH



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Miami Dade College - Wolfson Campus Chapman Center.
Breakfast and lunch provided. Business casual.
Registration is limited, reserve your spot ASAP.
\$250 per participant.



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FCI FINANCIAL FELLOWSHIP

A PREMIER PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL FINANCE LEADERSHIP

STRONG SCHOOLS START WITH STRONG FINANCE

HIGHLIGHTS:

- ✓ MENTORSHIP FROM FINANCE LEADERS & NATIONAL EXPERTS
- ✓ PEER COLLABORATION
- ✓ IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL TRAINING SESSIONS



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- Special Announcements



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We are Florida's premier hub for charter excellence and insight by providing research-based best practices, resources, and support. If there is anything we can do to help, please contact us:



(786) 384-8100



info@flcharterinstitute.org



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