



MCCCSA
Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers

2023-2024 Annual Report

**Excellence.
Choice.
Impact.**



MCCSA
Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers

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From the Chair

Dear Friends,

Thirty years in, Michigan public charter schools are a dynamic part of the state's public education system, providing access to free, quality learning opportunities regardless of a student's zip code, income, or educational ability. They reach every corner of our state, and the students they serve come from a wide range of backgrounds.

Each charter school has the ability to meet the diverse needs of its students through common elements of flexibility – specializing curriculum, facilities, and programs in order to give parents educational options that best fit their child.

We see this individualized focus working for Michigan families. A 2023 study from CREDO at Stanford University shows that a student in a Michigan charter public school is gaining additional days of learning in English and mathematics compared to their traditional public school peers.¹

This achievement is made possible by each partner working together to benefit students. Led by board members – the public officials governing these schools – the leadership role extends beyond merely approving budgets and contracts. Charter school board members are responsible for making sure their school fulfills its mission, uses public resources wisely, and sets a foundation for students to excel.

These boards partner directly with authorizers, the public bodies entrusted with approving, overseeing, and supporting charter schools. The unique role authorizers play remains vital, because quality authorizing leads to quality schools. Authorizers decide who can open a new school, set academic and operational standards, and hold schools accountable for performance.

During the 2023-24 school year, and with the Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizer's expertise and leadership, Michigan authorizers opened new schools and improved student outcomes, even in the face of lingering pandemic effects.

Our mission is to advance excellent public education, and in this report, we capture the numbers, stories, and images of this challenging and rewarding work. I hope you will read it and then join us in finding ways to reach even higher for the students of Michigan.



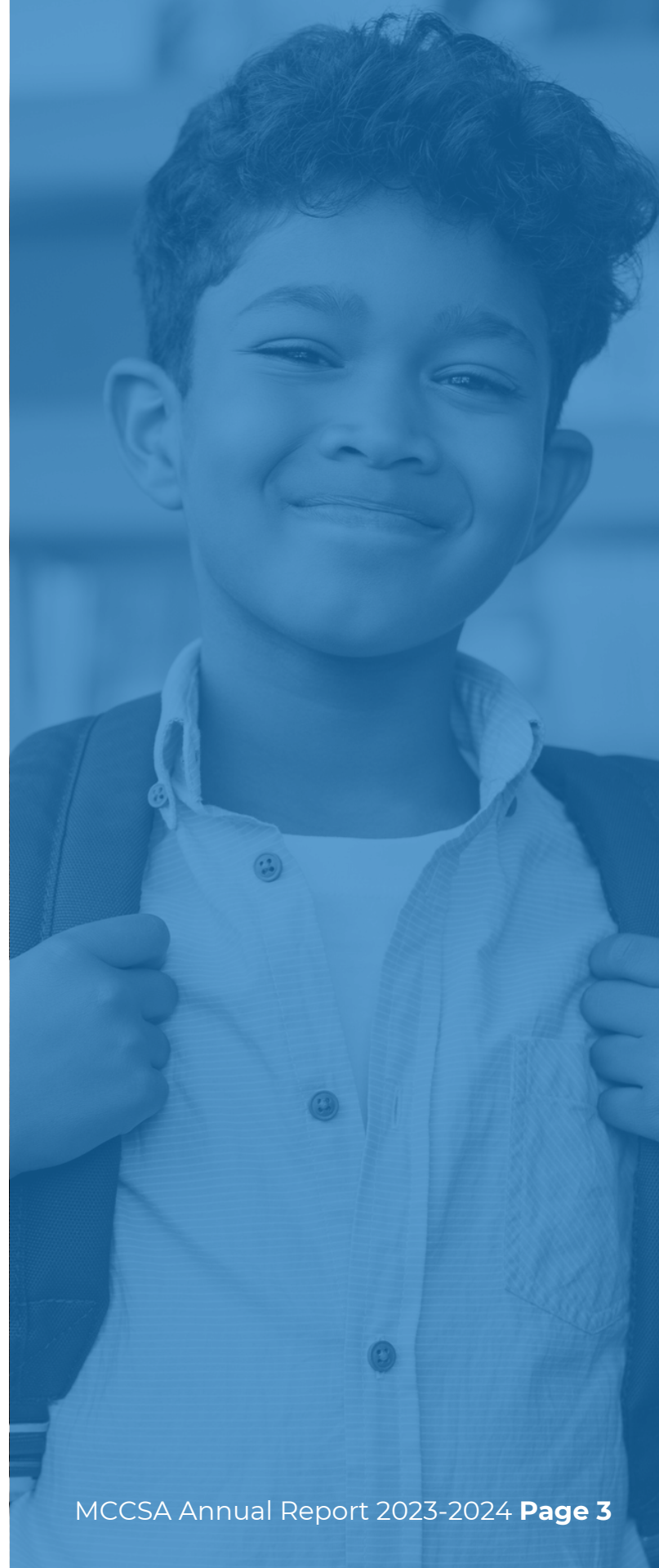
Corey Northrop

Chair, Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers
Executive Director, The Governor John Engler Center for
Charter Schools at Central Michigan University

Council Leadership

2023-2024 Board Officers

Chair Corey Northrop, Central Michigan University
Vice Chair Mariah Wanic, Bay Mills Community College
Secretary David Lewis, Saginaw Valley State University
Treasurer Judeen Bartos, Oakland University



About the Council

The Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers (“The Council”) is a collaborative, non-profit, non-partisan professional organization dedicated to providing quality public charter school oversight.

For over a decade, The Council has coalesced and supported Michigan’s public charter school authorizers, and represented the important work they do to advance educational excellence, innovation, choice, and accountability for the state’s K-12 students.

The Council’s ten members comprise its board of directors, who meet monthly to share best practices, updates, and resources, embracing a common vision based on these guiding principles:

- Choice is a necessary element in today’s system of public education.
- Quality must remain the most central focus for authorizers, school operators, and policymakers alike.
- Autonomy and innovation are essential to ensure the promise of Michigan’s public charter school movement and contribute to the success of K-12 education in general.
- Accountability is crucial. Quantifiable, data-driven results must be achieved and supported at all levels of K-12 public education.
- Public charter schools that fail to achieve adequate results pursuant to the terms of their contracts should face appropriate consequences, up to and including closure.
- Authorizers have a responsibility to provide input, advocacy, and support for public discourse on K-12 education issues.
- Policymakers and authorizers alike must ensure appropriate levels of accountability and oversight for all Michigan schools.

“Choice is a necessary element in today’s system of public education.”

How the Council Leads

Accreditation and Assurance

In 2014, The Council established the nation’s first statewide public charter school authorizing accreditation and assurance process, to demonstrate the quality commitment Michigan authorizers strive to achieve.

Partnering with nationally-recognized Cognia (formerly AdvancED), The Council moved beyond the basic practice known as “continuous improvement” to create a more rigorous definition of effective authorizing.

Today, **Michigan leads the nation with its authorizer accountability system** that not only includes the Cognia standards, but also The Council’s thirteen assurances, demonstrated compliance, and Michigan Department of Education assurance and verification visits.

The assurances are the first step: these standards adjust with changes in law, and must be met in order to begin accreditation. Accreditation functions typically, with documentation and review, to ensure an authorizer continually meets the standards. Every review includes recommendations for improvement and subsequent monitoring for implementation.

Central Michigan University, Detroit Public Schools Community District, Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, Lake Superior State University, Oakland University, and Saginaw Valley State University are fully accredited.

Special Education: School Supports and Interventions

The success of a public charter school depends on the quality of education services it provides to all children, with or without disabilities, as required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Each public charter school in Michigan provides free, appropriate, and challenging educational opportunities to children with IDEA-eligible disabilities who are enrolled in the school. On average, about eleven percent of public charter school students have special education needs.



The Council provides an online guide called, “Special Education Services in Charter Schools: What Authorizers and School Leaders Should Know.” This free resource serves as a reference manual for those involved in public charter school oversight.

Best Practice Guides

Harnessing their 25-plus years of expertise in quality public charter school authorizing, **The Council provides Recognized Best Practice Guides with online tools and resources to help existing and aspiring authorizers perfect their craft.**

Using federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant monies, The Council makes these guides available on their website for free in order to support all Michigan authorizers, regardless of Council affiliation or membership. Topics range from academic oversight to board governance, evaluation, and more. Complimentary resources include education service provider policy templates, review sheets, and other tools to support and sustain high-quality authorizing practices.

University Value-Add

University authorizers **leverage campus resources to benefit their public charter school communities** in a number of ways:

- Administrator professional development
- College credit opportunities
- College exposure
- College preparation/advising
- Educator degree awards
- Faculty-teacher partnerships
- Research
- School board professional development
- Student scholarships
- Student summer camps/outreach programs
- Teacher preparation/placement
- Teacher professional development

“The success of a public charter school depends on the quality of education services it provides to all children.”

Expertise.

Authorizer Funding & School Financial Support

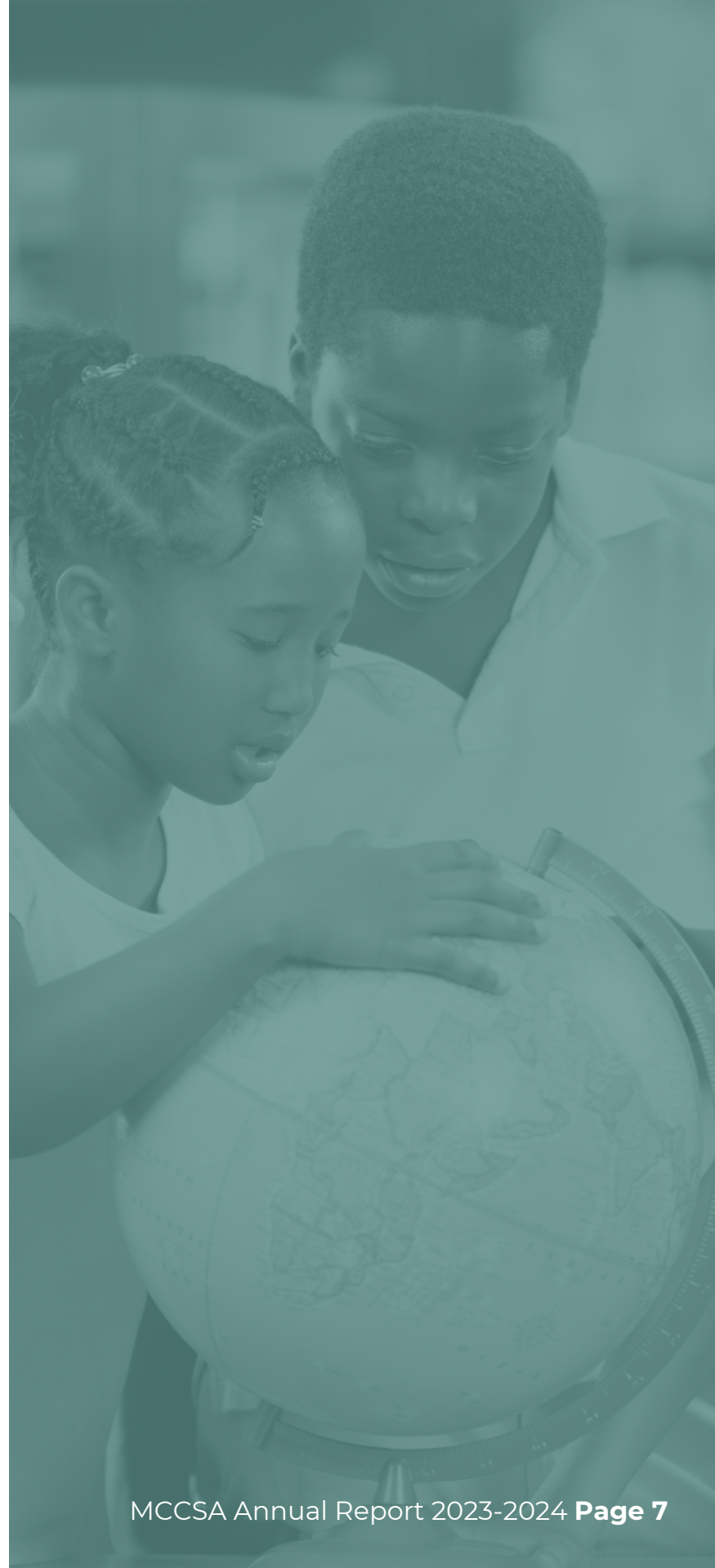
State law allows authorizers to collect up to three percent of the state funding allotted to their public charter schools. Funds collected are used for oversight and support functions, to ensure that all legal, regulatory, and performance measures are met.

The vast majority of authorizers, however, collect only a portion of the state aid to which they are entitled, leaving millions of dollars for their schools to use. Authorizers also typically invest a significant portion of their own operational fees in their schools, via numerous supports and services.

In 2023-2024, Council authorizers gave back over \$9.6 million. Here's where the money went:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Authorizer fee discount | \$2,722,336 |
| School grants/awards | \$2,796,744 |
| Student scholarships | \$564,789 |
| Testing support | \$551,481 |
| Compliance and accountability support | \$400,222 |
| Board development | \$460,207 |
| Educator professional development | \$1,235,025 |
| Board policy services | \$154,100 |
| Business manager career development | \$50,190 |
| Other | \$667,585 |
| Total | \$9,602,679 |

Other areas of financial support included assessment data analysis, camps, campus visits and college resource programming, educator awards, employee verification, instructional training, outreach events, scholar programs, school supplies, school support, and transition services.

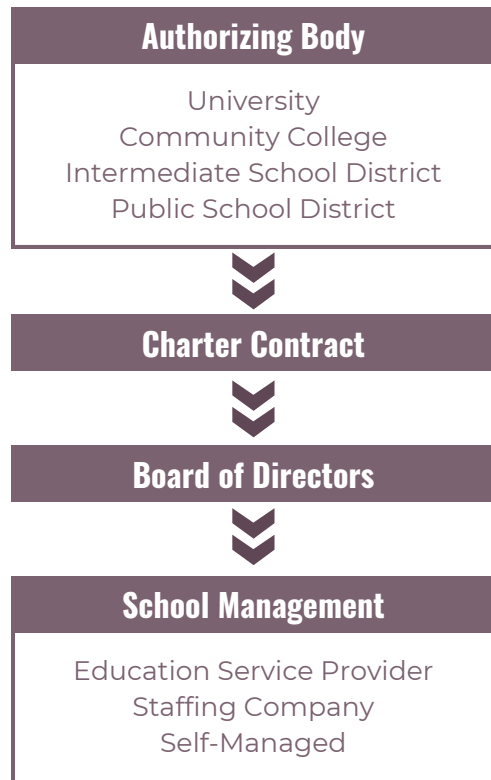


An Authorizer’s Work

Academic Performance

State law explicitly requires public charter schools to contract with their authorizers, and these legally binding agreements define and protect a school’s autonomy and governing authority, while clearly specifying performance expectations and conditions for renewal.

Academic oversight is an authorizer’s paramount focus.



In 2023-2024, Michigan public charter schools averaged 54.5 on the Michigan School Index System,² with many schools ranking in the system’s top percentiles:

- Eighteen (18) public charter schools ranked above the 90th percentile (top 10%);
- Thirty-seven (37) above the 80th percentile (top 20%); and
- Forty-one (41) above the 75th percentile (top 25%) on the state system.

Public charter schools performed at these levels despite far outpacing the statewide average for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)³ student populations:

- Public charter school FRL: 78.6%
- Statewide FRL: 53.2%
- Non-charter FRL: 50.1%

Public charter schools in Detroit, specifically, also outperformed their counterparts on the state system:

- Detroit charter average: 45.8
- Detroit average: 45.6
- Detroit non-charter average: 45.4

Fiscal Performance

The expectation for public charter schools to be fiscally solvent is spelled out in their contracts and required by law.

Council authorizers have developed rigorous processes to review quarterly and audited financial statements in order to identify financial challenges and help schools make adjustments to avoid a deficit. Authorizers also review budgets and amended budgets as part of their fiscal oversight systems. For public charter schools, a deficit likely will lead to a notice of intent to revoke the contract and a requirement that the school create a corrective action plan, which includes a deficit elimination plan required by law.

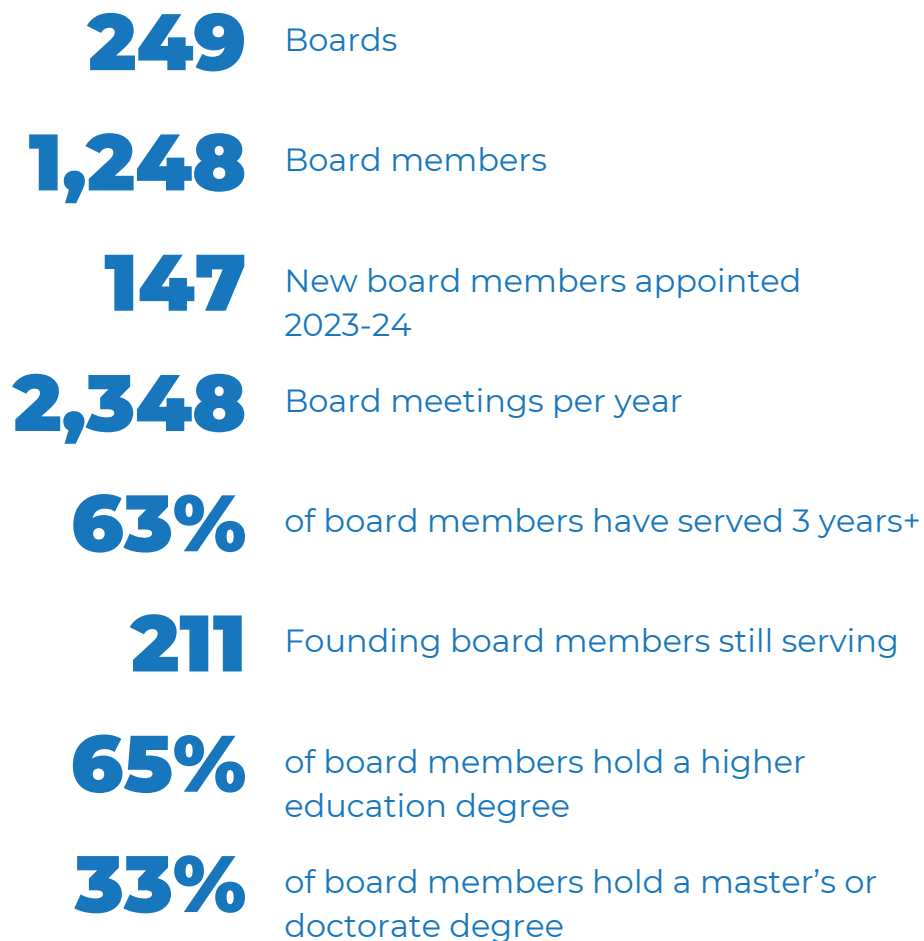
Reporting Compliance and Oversight

During the 2023-24 school year, Council authorizers processed a total of 23,801 compliance items related to school operations and support.⁴ Examples include transparency reporting, measures of academic progress, teacher certification, special education reviews, quarterly financial statements, audited financial statements, student counts, school schedules, board meeting schedules, budgets, and more.

Law/Policy Implementation

Authorizers ensure the schools in their portfolios properly implement new laws or policies enacted at the state and federal levels. In this regard, public charter schools are subjected to an extra layer of accountability, compared to their conventional school counterparts, due to the legally binding performance contracts that authorizers administer.

“Public charter schools are subjected to an extra layer of accountability compared to their conventional school counterparts.”



Council School Boards

Board Member Appointment Process

Quality governance is one of the foundations of high performing schools, and **authorizers have established rigorous processes for making qualified public charter school board appointments.** Prospective candidates must be nominated by a school board, complete an application for board service, undergo extensive vetting, and pass a criminal history background check. If appointed by the authorizer, they must swear an Oath of Public Office at the first meeting following their appointment. The Oath must be administered in the presence of a Notary Public and filed with the authorizing office.

Board Member Professional Development

Council authorizers provide regular enrichment opportunities for school board members, and many require participation in new member orientations and ongoing professional development. **Training sessions on academics, fiscal oversight, good governance, and a host of other topics equip board members to fulfill their oaths of office and lead their schools effectively.** A number of Council authorizers pool their resources to provide professional development webinars to board members located across the state, and others maintain timely and pertinent online resources to educate members on topics that affect their boards.

School Management

Michigan’s public charter schools utilize a variety of management structures to ensure well-run operations in their school buildings.

Education Service Providers (ESP) & Charter Management Organizations (CMO)

In most instances, public charter school boards contract with an ESP or CMO to supply some or all of the necessary educational, financial, and personnel services. The board holds the ESP/CMO accountable to the terms of a contract, and does not provide human resource functions. Typically, the ESP/CMO handles daily managerial decisions.

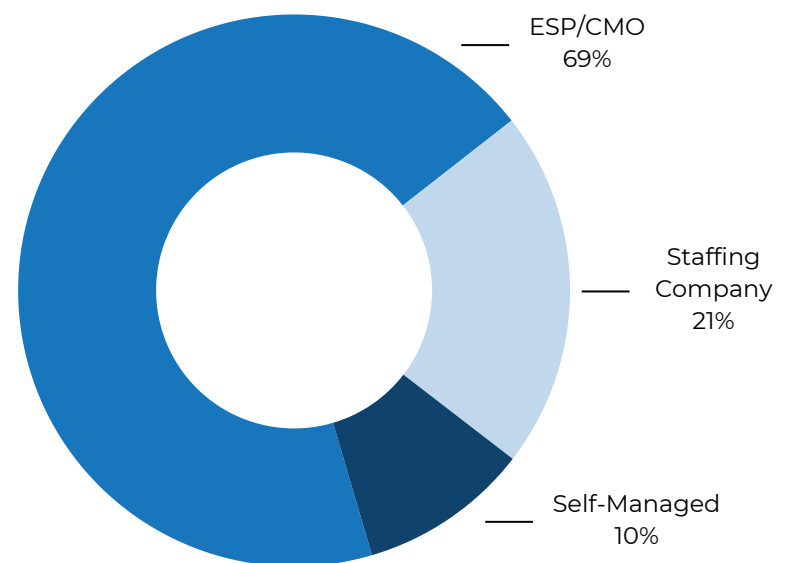
Staffing Companies

These providers contract with a public charter school board to supply staffing and some limited managerial services. The board does not provide human resource tasks, but oversees a contract with the provider who employs the staff. The board typically works in partnership with the provider on daily managerial issues.

Self-Managed Schools

Under this management structure, a public charter school board relies on administration and employees they hire directly, and the school operates similarly to a conventional district in terms of human resources and managerial decisions.

Council Schools’ Management



School Opening GEE Compass Academy

Statewide/Cyber
Authorized by Grand Valley State University

School Mission

“To promote lifelong learning by nurturing academic excellence, positive character traits, and an appreciation of cultures.”

K-12 Grades Offered

140 Students Enrolled

95% Economically Disadvantaged

56% English Learners



The GEE Compass Academy is a comprehensive and innovative online school educating K-12 grade students across Michigan. The academy provides flexible, personalized learning using advanced technology and interactive teaching methods to foster academic excellence and promote student success.

Authorized by Grand Valley State University, the academy is managed by Global Educational Excellence (GEE), an Ann Arbor-based company with over 25 years of experience.

The GEE Compass Academy model combines an online curriculum with in-person, on-demand instruction and support from mentors and certified teachers, creating a blended learning environment in which students can access interactive lessons, assessments, and multimedia resources to progress at their own pace. The online platform offers a wide range of courses across various subjects, including math, science, English, social studies, and many elective options.

GEE teachers and mentors play a crucial role in facilitating student learning by monitoring progress, analyzing data, providing feedback, and offering additional support as needed. The academic team also customizes the curriculum to align with individual student needs and learning goals.

The academy offers comprehensive support services for students with special education needs, English learners, those requiring remediation, and those on the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Each student has an individualized Student Learning Pathway, and the school provides flexibility, individualization, and data-driven insights to enhance student engagement and academic achievement.



**COMPASS
ACADEMY**

School Opening Gerald Dawkins Academy

Grand Rapids, MI
Authorized by Grand Valley State University

School Mission

“To ensure a dynamic and equitable learning community where students, families, and teachers will learn, lead, aspire, and achieve optimal intellectual growth.”

K-3 Grades Offered (expanding to K-5)

66 Students Enrolled

89% Economically Disadvantaged

15% Special Education



The Gerald Dawkins Academy is an urban, neighborhood K-3 grade school specializing in intensive literacy instruction, strong parental involvement, and community partner engagement.

Authorized by Grand Valley State University, the academy is managed by the Center for Sound Literacy, a Grand Rapids-based organization providing fruitful literacy supports to schools in the city for nearly a decade.

The academy is named for Grand Rapids native, Dr. Gerald Dawkins, a decorated combat Marine whose distinguished career included work as a school teacher, counselor, and superintendent in Michigan and Louisiana. Dr. Dawkins focused his life's work on ensuring students received a strong education, regardless of where they lived.

At the Gerald Dawkins Academy, teachers and support staff are highly trained in effective literacy instruction, and are prepared to adjust instruction based on individual student needs, while integrating reading and writing into all subject areas to ensure a well-rounded academic experience.

The academy educates students in every subject area while providing robust learning opportunities where they can participate in hands-on curriculum, STEM activities, intensive literacy instruction, and individualized supports. With small class sizes, 1:1 technology, and SMART classrooms, students at Gerald Dawkins Academy receive a very personalized learning experience.



Who Authorizes in Michigan?

Universities

Central Michigan University
 Eastern Michigan University
 Ferris State University
 Grand Valley State University
 Lake Superior State University
 Northern Michigan University
 Oakland University
 Saginaw Valley State University

Intermediate School Districts

Allegan Area Educational Service Agency
 Bay-Arenac ISD
 C.O.O.R. ISD
 Eaton RESA
 Hillsdale ISD
 Iosco RESA
 Kalamazoo RESA
 Macomb ISD
 Manistee ISD
 Midland County Educational Service Agency
 St. Clair County RESA
 Washtenaw ISD
 Wayne RESA
 West Shore Educational Service District

Community Colleges

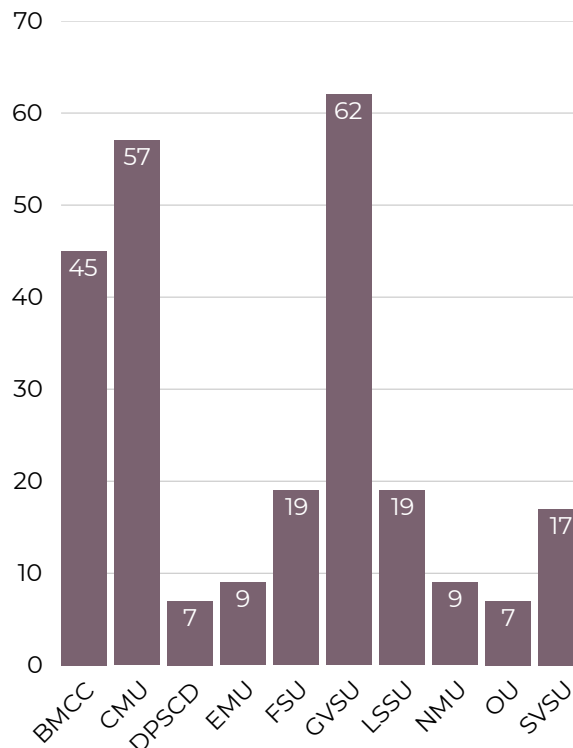
Bay Mills Community College
 Jackson College
 Washtenaw Community College

Local School Districts

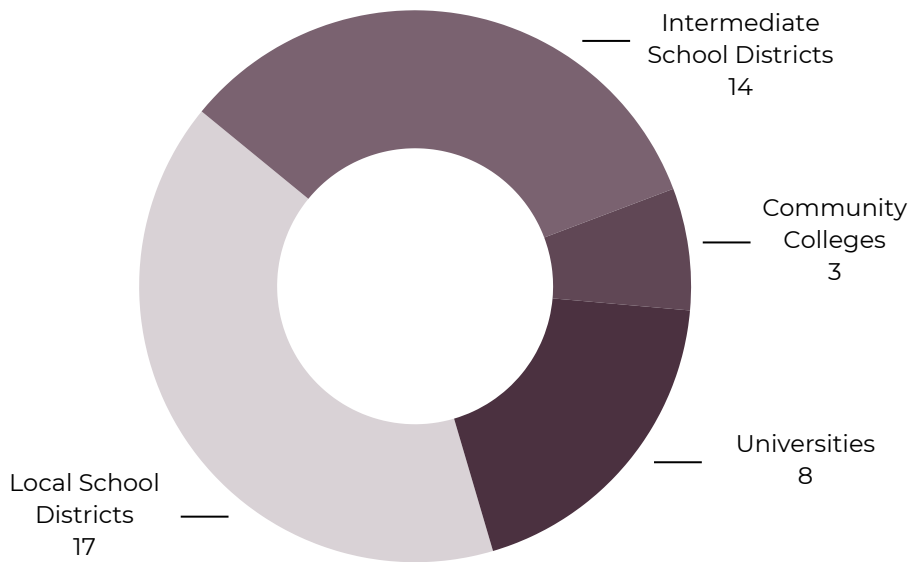
Center Line Public Schools
 Detroit Public Schools Community District
 Eaton Rapids Public Schools
 Gobles Public School District
 Grand Rapids Public Schools
 Hazel Park School District
 Highland Park City Schools
 Madison District Public Schools
 Manistee Area Public Schools
 Mesick Consolidated Schools
 Muskegon Heights School District
 Ovid-Elsie Area Schools
 Oxford Community Schools
 Port Huron Area School District
 Stephenson Area Public Schools
 Vestaburg Community Schools
 Whitmore Lake Public School District

Schools Authorized by Council Members

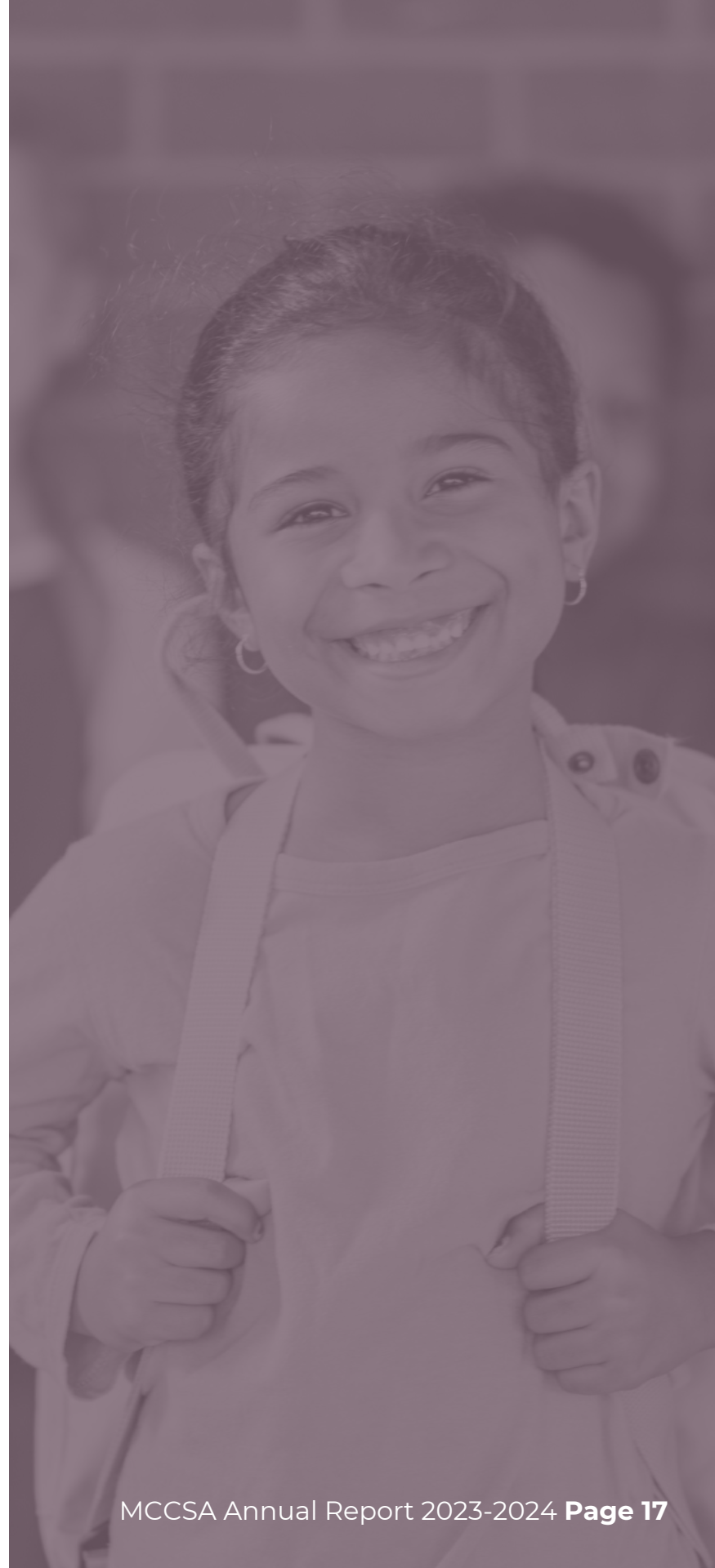
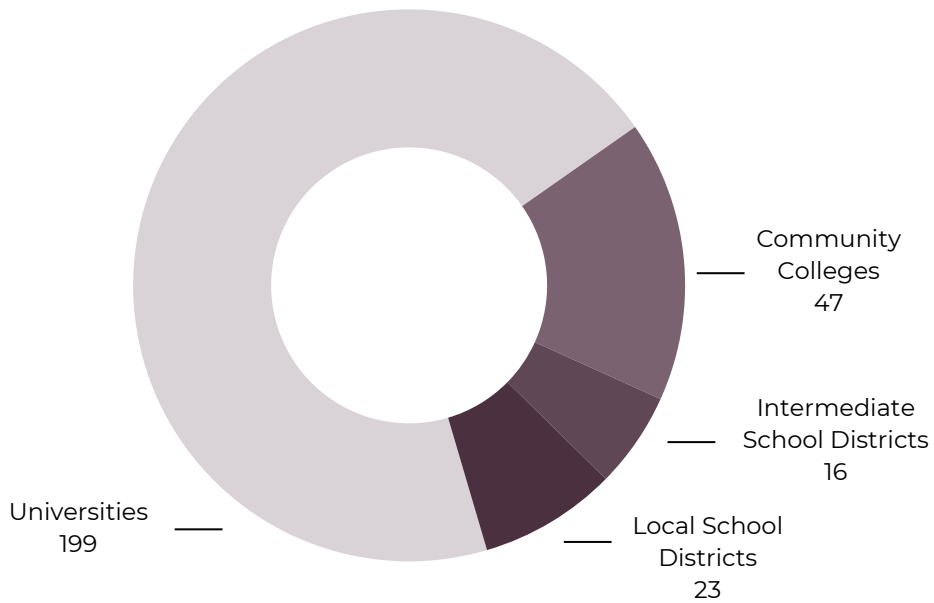
251 Total



Authorizer Types



Schools by Authorizer Type



About Michigan Charter Schools

What is a public charter school?

Public charter schools are free, independently operated schools that have the flexibility and autonomy to meet their students' needs. They have existed in Michigan since 1994, and they operate under legally binding charter contracts issued by public authorizing bodies (universities, community colleges, school districts, or intermediate school districts).

Public charter schools may not charge tuition, and must accept all students who apply, up to their enrollment capacity. This means they are prohibited from screening students based on race, religion, sex, or educational ability, and must randomly select students for admission if the number of applicants exceeds available space. They may not be religiously affiliated.⁵

Michigan law requires all public charter school educators to be certified, and all students to be assessed annually.⁶

Charter School Funding

Public charter schools receive state funding through a per-pupil allowance. Michigan law stipulates this amount cannot exceed that received by the local school district where the public charter school is geographically located.⁷

Unlike their traditional counterparts, public charter schools receive no state funding for facilities and cannot leverage local bond and millage funding for their buildings. On average, Michigan public charter schools are 32% more cost-effective than the average conventional public school in the same city.⁸

Specialty Schools and Curriculum

A World in Motion STEM
Advanced Learning
African-Centered
Arabic Language and
ESL Aviation
Business & Technology
Classical Education

College Preparatory
Credit Recovery
Early/Middle College
Environmental Science
Fine & Performing Arts
Finnish Model
Food, Agriculture,
Renewable Resources,
and Environment
Gifted & Talented

Homeless Students
International Baccalaureat
Language Immersion
Leadership Emphasis
Math and Science
Media Arts
Montessori
Moral Focus
Native American
Language & Culture

Pregnant/Parenting Teens
Project-Based
Public Safety
Self-Paced
Special Education
STEM/STEAM
Strict Discipline
Trades and Career &
Technical Education
Virtual/Cyber

By the Numbers

285 Public Charter School Districts (363 Buildings)

2 School Openings Fall 2023

150 Buildings with High School Grades (9-12)

41% of Buildings are High Schools, compared to 32% for non-charter⁹

11,781 Teachers (sector wide)

28,938 Staff (includes teachers)

152,048 Students (approximately 11% of total statewide public K-12 enrollment)¹⁰

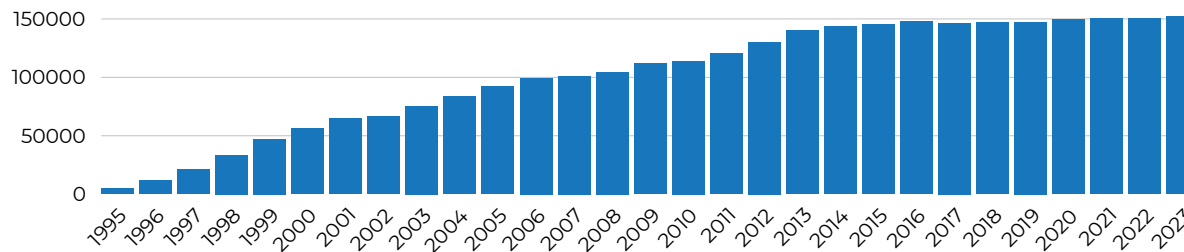
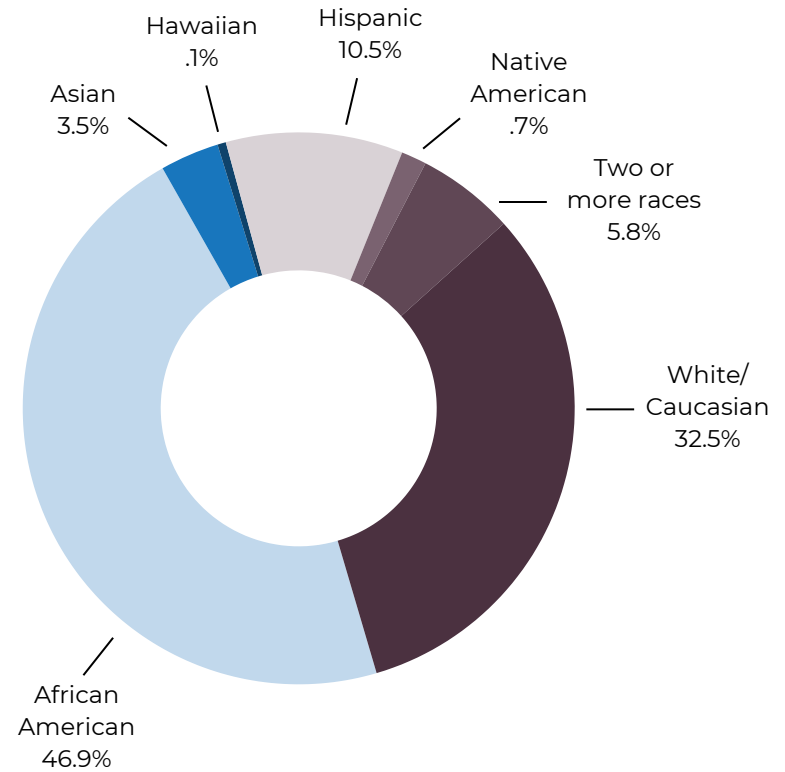
79% Free and Reduced Lunch,¹¹ compared to statewide 54% and non-charter 50%

11% English Language Learners,¹² compared to statewide 7% and non-charter 7%

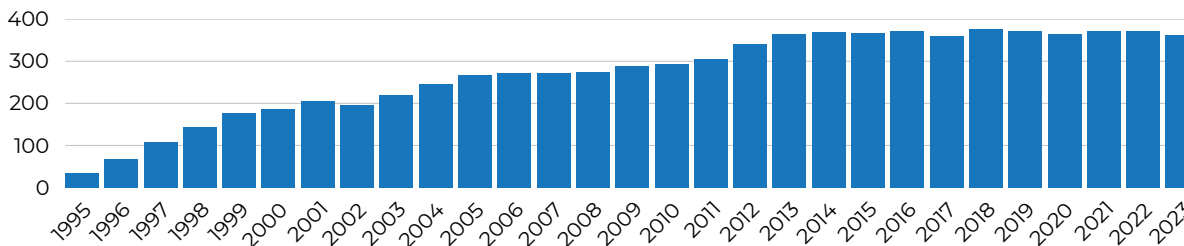
11.5% Special Education,¹³ compared to statewide 14% and non-charter 14%

1% Enrollment increase from previous year (1,531 additional students)

Student Race/Ethnicity¹⁴



Enrollment History



Public Charter School Growth

Citations

- 1 Center for Research on Education Outcomes, Stanford University. "As a Matter of Fact: The National Charter School Study III." 2023.
- 2 Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data, School Index System.
- 3 Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data, School Enrollment Counts, Economically Disadvantaged.
- 4 National Charter Schools Institute, Epicenter Reports.
- 5 Michigan Department of Education, "Michigan Charter Schools - Questions and Answers." November, 2017.
- 6 Michigan Department of Education, "Michigan Charter Schools - Questions and Answers." November, 2017.
- 7 1979 PA 94, as amended, Article 2 §388.1620(6).
- 8 DeAngelis, Corey and Ben DeGrow, "Doing More with Less: The Charter School Advantage in Michigan." Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 2018.
- 9 Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, Educational Entity Master for 2023-24.
- 10 Michigan Department of Education Bulletin 1014.
- 11 Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data, School Enrollment Counts, Economically Disadvantaged.
- 12 Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data, School Enrollment Counts, English Learners.
- 13 Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data, School Enrollment Counts, Students with Disabilities
- 14 Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data, School Enrollment Counts, Race/Ethnicity.



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www.michiganauthorizers.com