

2024 Charter School Applications

**Melanie Rackley
Education Planning and Development Consultant
Office of Charter Schools
December 9-10, 2024**

Overview

- Statutes, Rules & Policies Guiding Process
- 2024 Application Process
- December Capacity Interviews
- Questions/Closing Remarks
- 2025 Application Update

Statutes, Rules and SBE Policies

G.S. 115C-218

- as rewritten: established North Carolina Charter Schools Review Board and North Carolina Office of Charter Schools.

115C-218(b)(10) (Powers and Duties)

- Grants The Review Board power to approve or deny charter applications, renewals and revocations.
- The Review Board shall make recommendations to the State Board of Education on the adoption of rules.

G.S. 115C-218.5(a)

- The Review Board shall not consider any alleged impact on the local school administrative unit or units in the area served by a charter school when deciding whether to grant, renew, amend, or terminate a charter."

Statutes, Rules and SBE Policies

G.S. 115C-218.2

- **§ 115C-218.2. Opportunity to correct applications; opportunity to address Review Board.**
- (a) The Review Board shall provide timely notification to an applicant of any format issues or incomplete information in the initial application and provide the applicant at least five business days to correct those issues in the initial application. If the applicant submits the corrections within the five business days, equal consideration shall be given to that application.

G.S. 115C-218.9

- **§ 115C-218.9. Appeals to the State Board of Education.**
- (a) An applicant, charter school, or the State Superintendent may appeal a final decision of the Review Board to grant, renew, revoke, or amend a charter by submitting notice to the Chair of the State Board of Education within 10 days of the Review Board's decision. Copies of the notice shall be sent to the Executive Director of the Office of Charter Schools, State Superintendent, the Chair of the Review Board, and the applicant or charter school affected.

Statutes, Rules & SBE Policies

16 NCAC 06G .0508 (Rule)

- Charter Schools Application and Review Process

16 NCAC 06G .0509 (Update TBD)

Application Summary Feedback

- OCS assigned each application 3 evaluators
 - 2 external/1 OCS evaluator
- NCDPI Exceptional Children evaluation
- NCDPI Multilingual Learner evaluation

Application Summary Feedback

- Summary feedback is compiled and distributed to applicant boards ahead of capacity interview.
- Each section is rated, commentary provided with observed strengths/weaknesses.
- Highlight areas that require clarification and any outstanding questions.
- Highlight areas that may have the appearance of conflict of interest.

Duties of OCS and CSRB

Office of Charter Schools Responsibilities

- Collect Application & Fees
- Notify Applicants of Status & Next Steps
- Provide evaluators training on review specifics
- Begin application evaluation w/ external evaluators
- Provide CSRB an application review schedule
- Release evaluated applications to CSRB committee members prior to Round #1 interviews
- Provide a general overview of each application prior to interview
- Document each stage using evaluation rubric
- Notify applicants at each stage of the process

Charter School Review Board Responsibilities

- Provide an interview opportunity for each applicant with a complete application & submitted application fee
- Conduct Round #1 Interview (60 minutes)
- Make 1 of 3 Votes
 - Review Board Approval
 - Review Board Denial
 - CSRB Round #2 interview

Round One Interviews

Procedure	Time
OCS Introduction	5 minutes
Applicant Board Intro/Opening Statement	10 minutes
Full CSRB Discussion/Questions	25 minutes
Applicant Closing Statement	10 minutes
Full CSRB deliberates, motions and vote	10 minutes

Total Time = 60 mins

Round Two Interviews

Procedure	Time
OCS Introduction	5 minutes
Applicant Board Opening Statement	5 minutes
Full CSRB Discussion/Questions	25 minutes
Applicant Closing Statement	5 minutes
Full CSRB deliberates, motions and vote	10 minutes

Total Time = 50 mins

Round Two Interviews

- If second round is granted, applicants can only submit items specifically requested by a CSRB member.
- Committee Lead is responsible for generating and/or collecting 2nd round questions from fellow committee members.
- OCS will provide the line of questioning to the respective applicant boards.
- Applicants have 10 calendar days to provide requested documentation.

2024 CSRB

Committee Assignments

Performance	Policy
Rita Haire (Committee Chair)	John Eldridge (Committee Chair)
Alex Quigley	Stephen Gay
Hilda Parlér	Todd Godbey
Dave Machado	Eric Sanchez
Bartley Danielsen	Shelly Shope
Bruce Friend	FLOATER (CSRB Chair)
Alex Granados	FLOATER (non-voting)



December 2024 Applications

2024 Applications

County Distribution

1. Chatham – 1	7. Union – 1
2. Forsyth – 1	8. Wake – 3 2
3. Guilford – 1	9. Warren – 1
4. Iredell – 1	
5. Mecklenburg – 1	
6. Remote Statewide – 3	

Warren Young Explorers School

Proposed School Name (Q1)	Warren Young Explorers School
Proposed County (Q3)	Warren
Proposed Timeline (Q10)	Standard – SY 2026-27
Mission (Q112)	Warren YES creates a child-focused, place-based learning environment that motivates students to be purposeful, creative, ethical, and compassionate leaders, while building a healthy future for themselves, their community, and the planet.
Proposed Grade Levels/Enrollment (Q12-13)	Year 1: K-6; 204 students Year 2: K-7; 264 students Year 3: K-8; 344 students Year 4: K-9; 384 students Year 5: K-10; 424 students At Capacity: K-12; 504 students
Food Service (Q217)	Yes; NSLP; will pursue CEP when eligible
Transportation (Q216)	Yes; purchase of 2 used buses in Year 1
Weighted Lottery (Q209)	Yes
Facility (Q5; Q223-228)	Yes; Former HS in Norlina, NC in 27563 zip code
Repeat Applicant	Yes
Assistance Provided/Partnering with EMO or CMO? (Q7; Q70)	Yes; Application assistance provided by Goodall Consulting/No; EMO/CMO

Warren Young Explorers School

LEA Demographic Comparison

Comparison County

County Name (Public School...)
Warren County

Application Projections

Enter as percentage (0.##)

ETHNICITY/RACE

American Ind or AK Native
5%

Asian
0%

Black or African American
49%

Hispanic
3%

Native HI or Pacific Islander
0%

Two or More Races
4%

White
39%

EDS SUBGROUPS

Economically Disadvantaged
37%

Students with Disabilities
13%

English Learners
2%

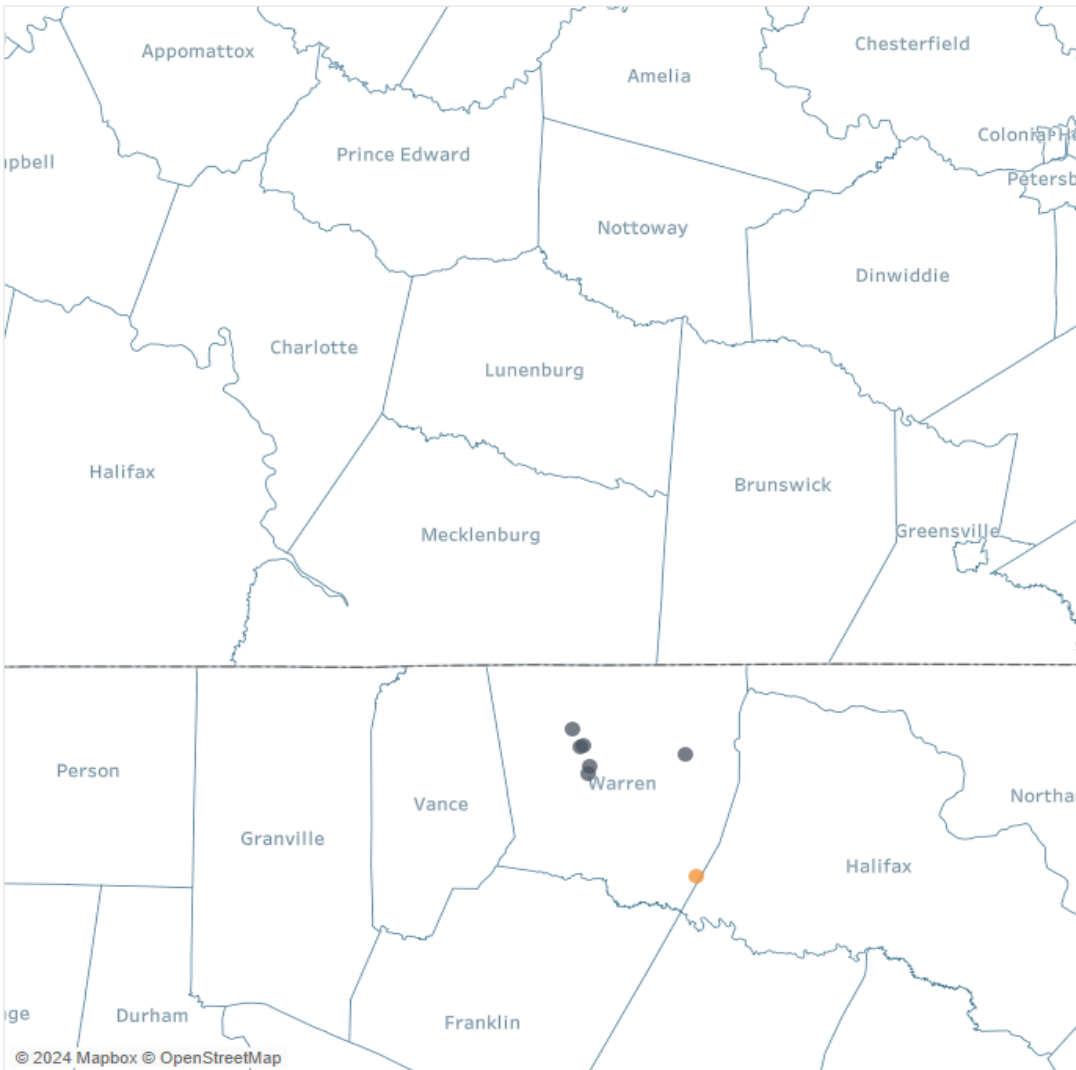
Homeless
0%

School Type Legend

Charter

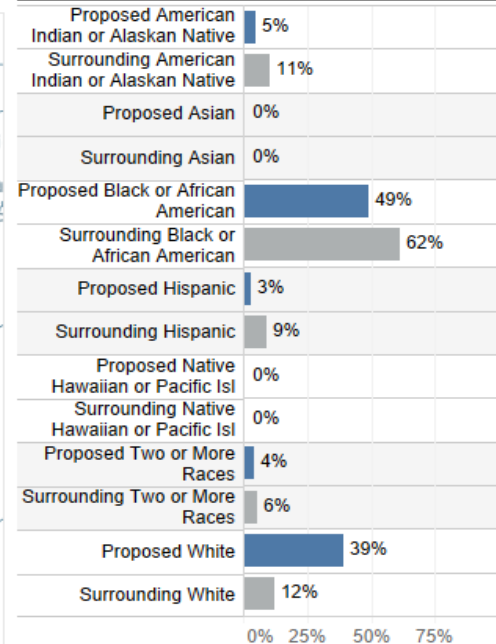
Traditional

Charter and Traditional Public Schools in Warren County

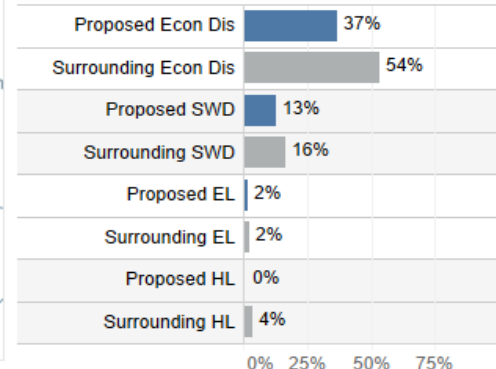


*Schools are plotted using 2020-21 data from the National Center for Education Statistics. Schools that opened after the 2020-21 school year are not included in the map.

Projected Racial Comparisons



Projected Subgroup Comparisons



Virtual Horizons Charter School of North Carolina

Proposed School Name (Q1)	Virtual Horizons Charter School of North Carolina
Proposed County (Q3)	Statewide Remote
Proposed Timeline (Q10)	Standard – SY 2026-27
Mission (Q112)	The mission of VHCS is to unlock the potential of every student and create limitless possibilities for career and college through immersive virtual reality education.
Proposed Grade Levels/Enrollment (Q12-13)	Year 1: Grades 4-8; 350 students Year 2: Grades 4-9; 450 students Year 3: Grades 4-10; 600 students Year 4: Grades 4-11; 750 students Year 5: Grades 4-12; 900 students At Capacity: Year 5
Food Service (Q217)	No
Transportation (Q216)	No
Weighted Lottery (Q209)	No
Facility (Q5; Q223-228)	No; school will lease small office space
Repeat Applicant	No
Assistance Provided/Partnering with EMO or CMO? (Q7; Q70)	No/No

Virtual Horizons Charter School of North Carolina

Comparison County

Charter and Traditional Public Schools in All

County Name (Public School)
All

Application Projections
Enter as percentage (0-100)

ETHNICITY/RACE

American Ind or AK Native
1%

Asian
13%

Black or African American
21%

Hispanic
19%

Native HI or Pacific Islander
1%

Two or More Races
11%

White
34%

EDS SUBGROUPS

Economically Disadvantaged
76%

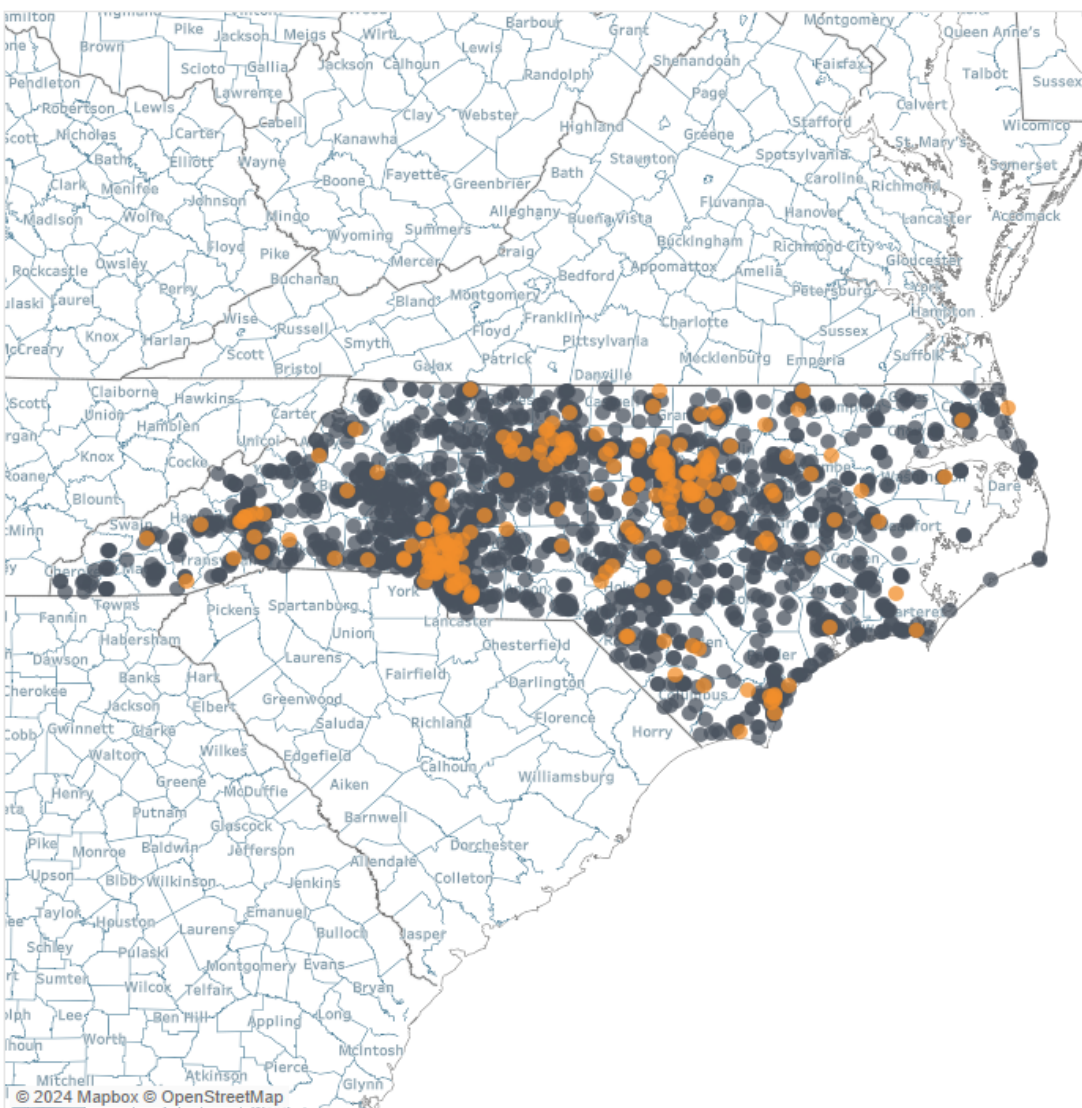
Students with Disabilities
7%

English Learners
10%

Homeless
7%

School Type Legend

Charter
Traditional



*Schools are plotted using 2020-21 data from the National Center for Education Statistics. Schools that opened after the 2020-21 school year are not included in the map.

Projected Racial Comparisons

Proposed American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%		
Surrounding American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%		
Proposed Asian	13%		
Surrounding Asian	4%		
Proposed Black or African American	21%		
Surrounding Black or African American	25%		
Proposed Hispanic	19%		
Surrounding Hispanic	21%		
Proposed Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%		
Surrounding Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%		
Proposed Two or More Races	11%		
Surrounding Two or More Races	6%		
Proposed White	34%		
Surrounding White	44%		

0% 25% 50% 75%

Projected Subgroup Comparisons

Proposed Econ Dis	76%		
Surrounding Econ Dis	39%		
Proposed SWD	7%		
Surrounding SWD	13%		
Proposed EL	10%		
Surrounding EL	9%		
Proposed HL	7%		
Surrounding HL	2%		

0% 25% 50% 75%

Census Data – Zebulon, NC

Fact

Zebulon town, North Carolina

Population estimates, July 1, 2023, (V2023)	9,401
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2023)	6,913
Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2023, (V2023)	36.00%
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	6,903
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	4,433
Persons under 5 years, percent	6.00%
Persons under 18 years, percent	24.90%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	15.20%
Female persons, percent	59.60%
White alone, percent	43.50%
Black or African American alone, percent	35.00%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	0.00%
Asian alone, percent	0.40%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	0.00%
Two or More Races, percent	11.00%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	19.90%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	41.60%

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/zebulontownnorthcarolina,wakecountynorthcarolina,US/PST045223>

Bettis Academy

Proposed School Name (Q1)	Bettis Academy
Proposed County (Q3)	Wake
Proposed Timeline (Q10)	Standard – SY 2026-27
Mission (Q112)	The mission of Bettis Academy is to educate underserved students in east Wake County by providing a small learning community, an innovative and academically rigorous curriculum, and hands-on, real-life experiences throughout their academic careers.
Proposed Grade Levels/Enrollment (Q12-13)	Year 1: K-6; 420 students Year 2: K-7; 480 students Year 3: K-8; 540 students Year 4: K-9; 600 students Year 5: K-10; 660 students At Capacity: K-12; 780 students
Food Service (Q217)	Yes; NSLP and SBP
Transportation (Q216)	Yes; purchase of 5 buses w/ up to four cluster stops; 1 bus designated for students w/ disabilities
Weighted Lottery (Q209)	No
Facility (Q5; Q223-228)	No; applicant has identified a parcel of land for new build that spans across Wake and Franklin County lines
Repeat Applicant	No
Assistance Provided/Partnering with EMO or CMO? (Q6; Q70)	No/No details

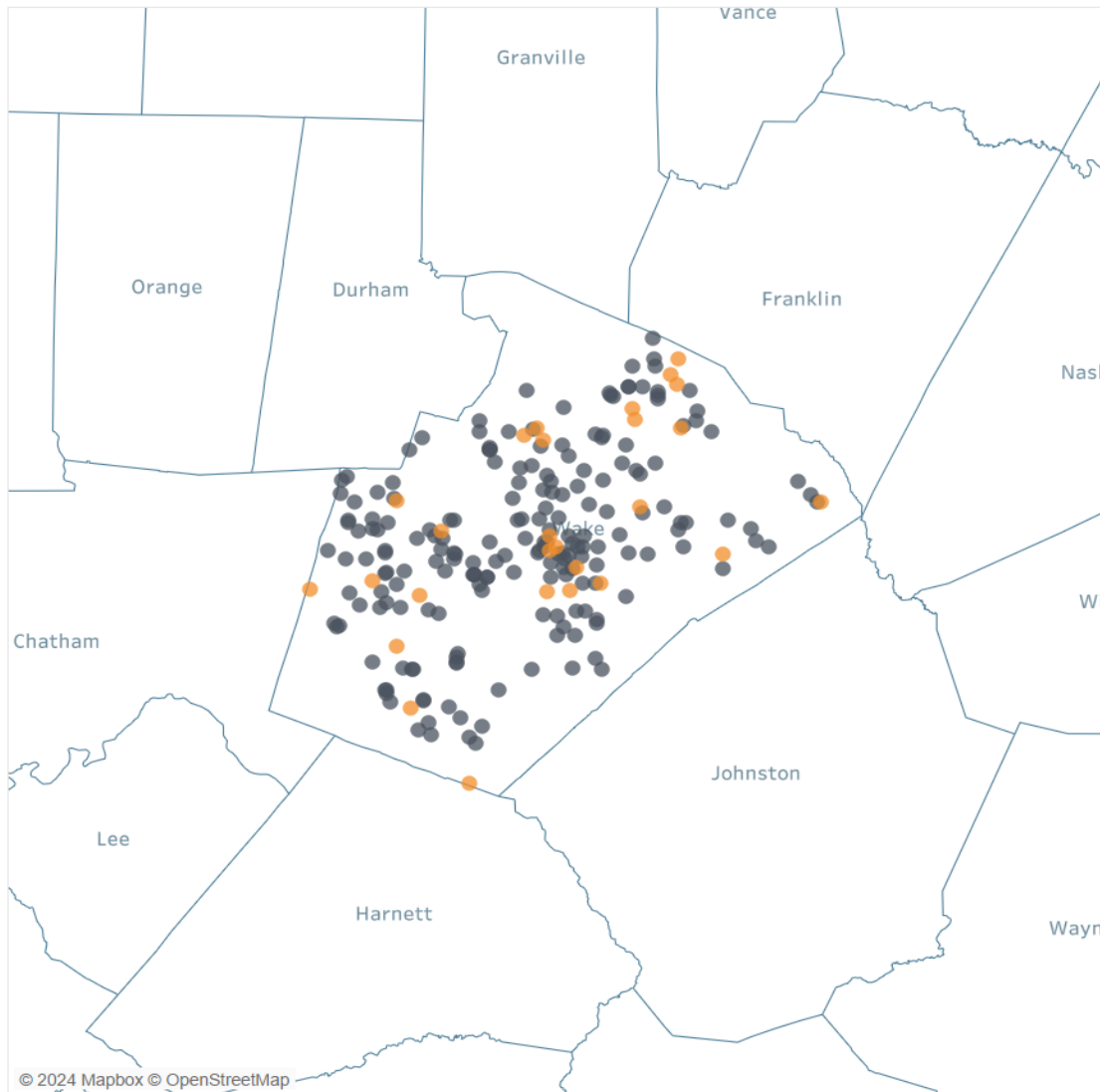
Bettis Academy

LEA Demographic Comparison

Comparison County

County Name (Public School)
Wake County

Charter and Traditional Public Schools in Wake County



*Schools are plotted using 2020-21 data from the National Center for Education Statistics. Schools that opened after the 2020-21 school year are not included in the map.

Projected Racial Comparisons

Proposed American Indian or Alaskan Native	0%			
Surrounding American Indian or Alaskan Native	0%			
Proposed Asian	2%			
Surrounding Asian	11%			
Proposed Black or African American	33%			
Surrounding Black or African American	22%			
Proposed Hispanic	29%			
Surrounding Hispanic	19%			
Proposed Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%			
Surrounding Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%			
Proposed Two or More Races	6%			
Surrounding Two or More Races	4%			
Proposed White	30%			
Surrounding White	43%			

0% 25% 50% 75%

Projected Subgroup Comparisons

Proposed Econ Dis	54%			
Surrounding Econ Dis	28%			
Proposed SWD	20%			
Surrounding SWD	12%			
Proposed EL	24%			
Surrounding EL	10%			
Proposed HL	1%			
Surrounding HL	2%			

0% 25% 50% 75%

School Type Legend

Charter

Traditional

Connections Education LLC

- For-profit management organization based out of Baltimore, MD with 38 schools across 31 states.
 - Website lists 'In Development' status for any US state for which a school does not currently exist
- Connections Education LLC also dba Pearson Virtual Schools USA
- Annual SEC report for year ending December 31, 2021, has been provided along with consolidated financial statements.
- Provided 2023 annual report that included strategic, governance, financial audit committee and shareholder reporting.
- Provided details of key events beyond the balance sheet date to including total acquisition of share capital in Credly, Inc.

Connections Education LLC

Typical Due Diligence for a charter board include:

- Knowledge of EMO owner(s), directors and officers
- Primary banking institution of the management organization
- Legal counsel for the EMO (name, address, phone, POC)
- Accounting or auditing firm for the EMO (name, address, phone, POC).
- Maintenance of independent legal counsel to review and negotiate the EMO agreement for an arm's length, negotiated agreement.
- Budget adequate resources to fulfill EMO contract requirements and reliable oversight of the contract agreement

Connections Education LLC

Typical Due Diligence for a charter board include:

- Implementation of fiscal policies that will propel the charter towards attainment any stated budget reserves.
- Knowledge of contractual agreement terms to allow the charter school to operate as an independent, self-governing body
- Articulation of service provisions and associated costs for any additional services provided by the EMO.
- Require, where applicable, the EMO to provide monthly financial statements that include a balance sheet, detailed statement of revenues, expenditures, changes in fund balances with budget-to-actual and explanation of variances.

Connections Academy Headlines In The News

- [New Indiana virtual charter school report shows \\$60M in funding for 2022-23](#)
- [Johnson County Schools \(TN\) targeted by scam](#)
- [Montana Board of Public Ed takes up new charter schools, including one with for-profit company](#)
- [Nevada Connections Academy settles with state, will keep online high school open](#)
- [As one door closes in Pa., another opens for cyber charter company](#)
- [Massachusetts' virtual schools have 'poor academic outcomes' but state's education commissioner still recommends renewing certificates](#)
- [TECCA working with DESE to create new metrics to examine virtual schools that show 'truer story'](#)
- [NC virtual charter school can stay open. But it will face more state scrutiny.](#)

NC Connections Academy

Proposed School Name (Q1)	North Carolina Connections Academy
Proposed County (Q3)	Statewide Remote
Proposed Timeline (Q10)	Standard– SY 2026-27
Mission (Q112)	NC Connections' mission is to help students meet performance standards and maximize their potential through an individualized learning program. The school's tailored approach prepares students of all abilities to succeed in school and life.
Proposed Grade Levels/Enrollment (Q12-13)	Year 1: K-12; 750 students Year 2: K-12; 1,250 students Year 3: K-12; 2,000 students Year 4: K-12; 2,750 students Year 5: K-12; 3,500 students At Capacity: Year 5
Food Service (Q217)	No
Transportation (Q216)	No
Weighted Lottery (Q209)	No
Facility (Q5; Q223-228)	No; school plans to lease administrative bldg in Raleigh-Durham under 3,500 sq ft
Repeat Applicant	No
Assistance Provided/Partnering with EMO or CMO? (Q7; Q70)	Yes; application assistance provided by partnering <u>EMO Connections Education LLC</u> dba Pearson Virtual Schools (USA)

NC Connections Academy

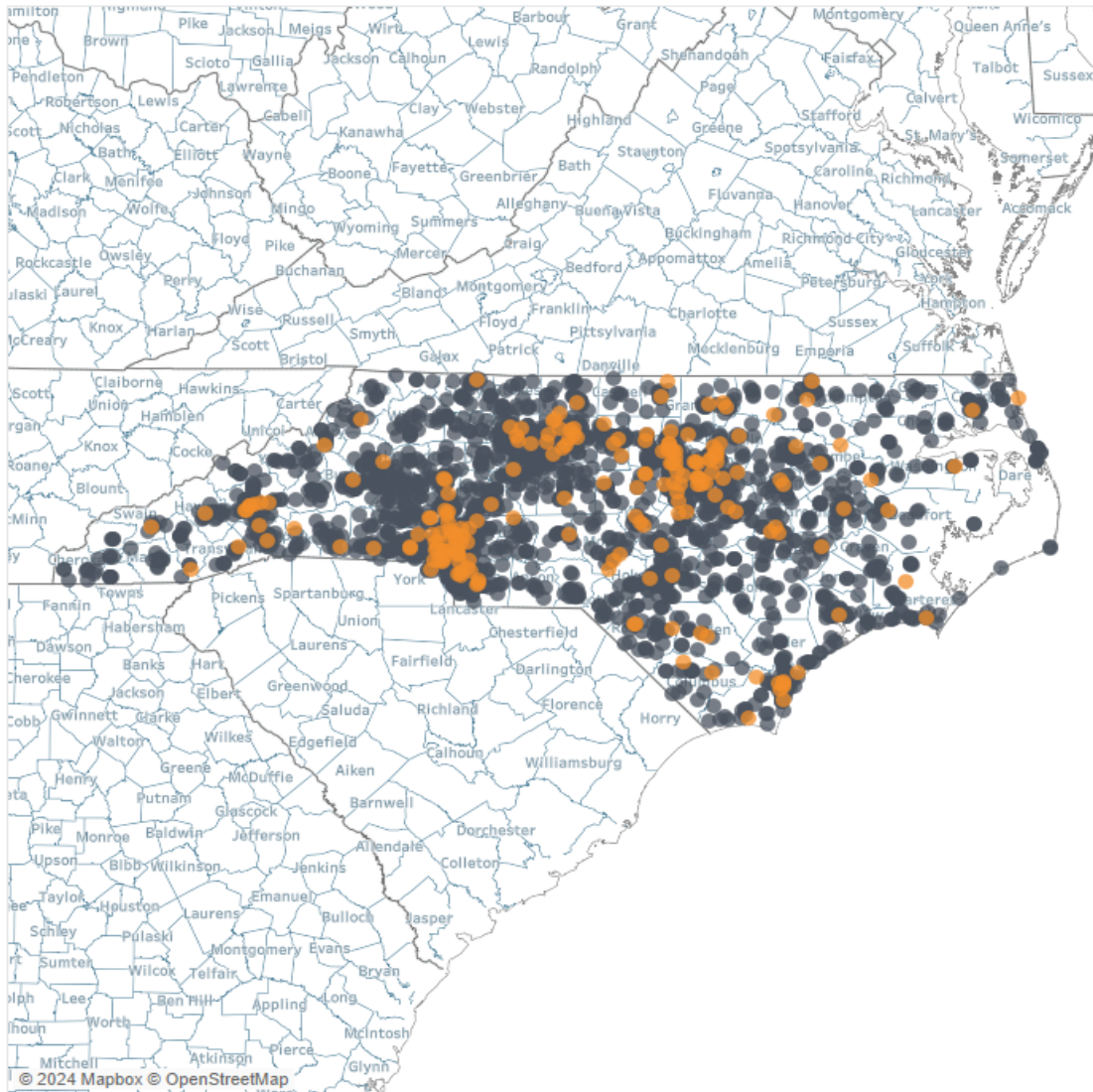
LEA Demographic Comparison

Comparison County

Charter and Traditional Public Schools in All

Projected Racial Comparisons

County Name (Public School...
All



© 2024 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

*Schools are plotted using 2020-21 data from the National Center for Education Statistics. Schools that opened after the 2020-21 school year are not included in the map.

Application Projections

Enter as percentage (0.##)

ETHNICITY/RACE

American Ind or AK Native
1%

Asian
4%

Black or African American
25%

Hispanic
21%

Native HI or Pacific Islander
0%

Two or More Races
5%

White
44%

EDS SUBGROUPS

Economically Disadvantaged
52%

Students with Disabilities
13%

English Learners
3%

Homeless
2%

School Type Legend

Charter

Traditional

Proposed American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%		
Surrounding American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%		
Proposed Asian	4%		
Surrounding Asian	4%		
Proposed Black or African American	25%		
Surrounding Black or African American	25%		
Proposed Hispanic	21%		
Surrounding Hispanic	21%		
Proposed Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%		
Surrounding Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%		
Proposed Two or More Races	5%		
Surrounding Two or More Races	6%		
Proposed White	44%		
Surrounding White	44%		

0% 25% 50% 75%

Projected Subgroup Comparisons

Proposed Econ Dis	52%		
Surrounding Econ Dis	39%		
Proposed SWD	13%		
Surrounding SWD	13%		
Proposed EL	3%		
Surrounding EL	9%		
Proposed HL	2%		
Surrounding HL	2%		

0% 25% 50% 75%

2025 Application Update

- Application will go live January 31, 2025, through April 25, 2025.
- OCS will hold regular office hours for applicants throughout the application window

2025 Application Update

- Reduction of required attachment files
- General updates to document templates
- Revision and streamline of enrollment projections
- Allowance of additional applicant narrative
- Remote charter academy clarifications
 - required testing logistics
 - transportation provisions
 - storage of student records and testing materials
- EMO Financial History language revision
 - Bank letter of good standing is insufficient to meet requirement