



Missouri School Choice Overview

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In this brief, we share an overview of the landscape of school choice in Missouri, with a focus on charter schools. We hope this information will inform legislative debate and ground those discussions in data. We discuss charter school spread, funding, and Missouri voters' opinions about school choice.

Charter School Overview

Charter schools are independent public schools that are free from some rules and regulations that apply to traditional public school districts. In exchange for this flexibility, charter school sponsors must hold schools accountable to their contracts. Charter schools are non-sectarian, do not discriminate in their admissions, and may not charge tuition.

Who can sponsor charter schools?

- Local school boards or Special Administrative Boards
- Four-year or two-year higher education institutions
- Missouri Charter Public School Commission (est. 2012)

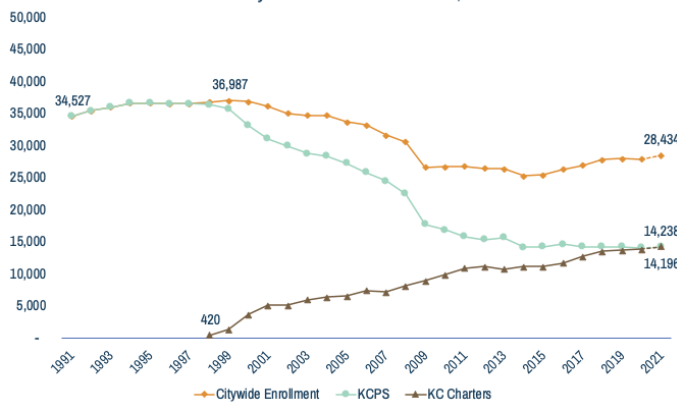
Where can charter schools open?

- St. Louis City school district
- Kansas City school district
- Unaccredited school districts
- Districts provisionally accredited for 3 consecutive years
- Accredited districts, if sponsored by local school board

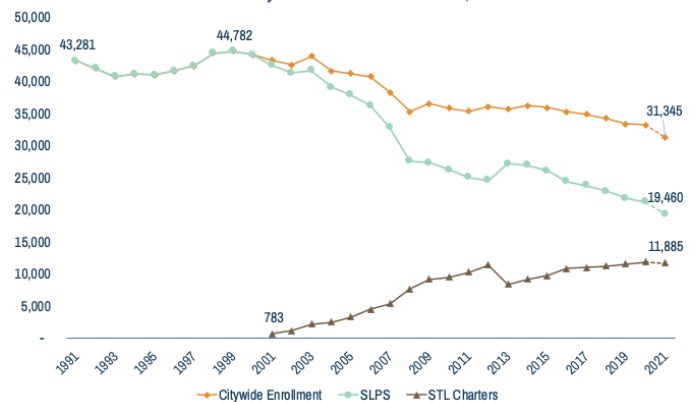
Missouri Charter Schools Are Limited to Kansas City and St. Louis

- Missouri charter schools enrolled nearly 24,000 students as of Fall 2020.
- Kansas City has 39 schools operating in 20 LEAs, and St. Louis City has 34 schools operating in 16 LEAs.

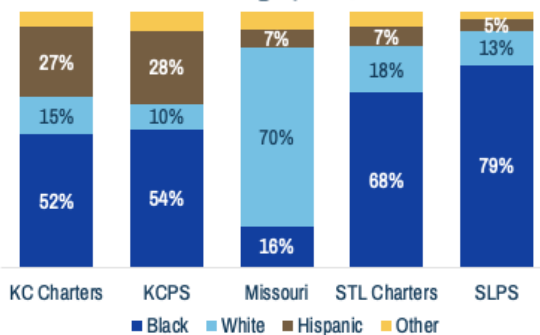
Total Kansas City Public School Enrollment, 1991-2021



Total St. Louis City Public School Enrollment, 1991-2021



District Demographics, 2019-20



Source: DESE District Demographic Data Report

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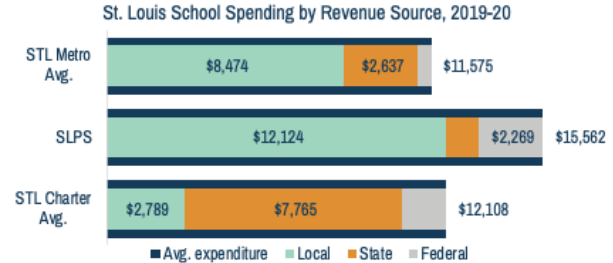
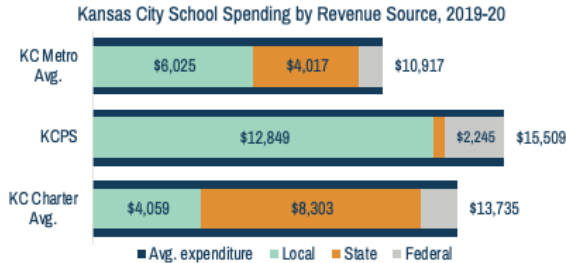
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Charter School Funding

Charters are public schools - although two-thirds of likely Missouri voters incorrectly classify them as private schools. Charter schools in St. Louis and Kansas City receive funding using the same funding formula used in the local districts. Enrollment changes in Kansas City Public Schools and Kansas City charter schools may soon reach a point that leaves the state without a mechanism to pay Kansas City charter schools their share of local revenue. Traditional public school districts may bring tax levy and bond proposals to voters of the district to support facilities; charter schools do not have that authority.



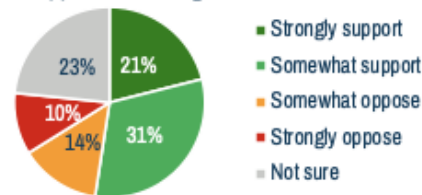
Sources: Expenditure from DESE Per Pupil District & Building Level Expenditures Report; Revenue from DESE School Finance Report. STL Metro includes St. Louis and St. Charles Counties. KC Metro includes Clay and Jackson Counties. Averages are weighted by district enrollment.

Missouri Voters Split on Support for Charter School Expansion

52% Voters Support Charter Schools

According to the 2020 SLU Poll, about half (52%) of likely Missouri voters support forming charter schools, 24% oppose, and 23% are not sure.

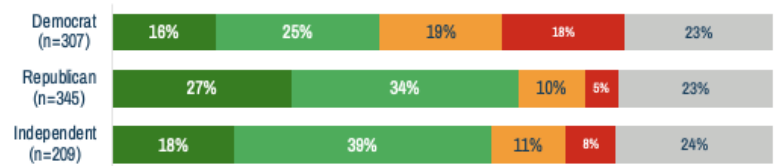
Support for forming charter schools



Views Vary by Political Party

Charter school views vary by political party, with 41% of Democrats and 61% of Republicans supporting charter schools forming. More Democrats (18%) than Republicans (5%) strongly oppose charter school formation.

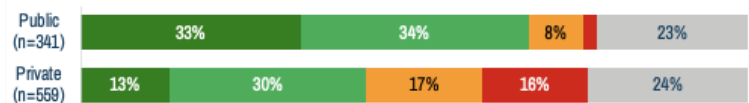
Support for forming charter schools, by party



... by Charter School Description

Views also vary between those who correctly identify charters as public (67% support) and those who incorrectly identify them as private (43% support).

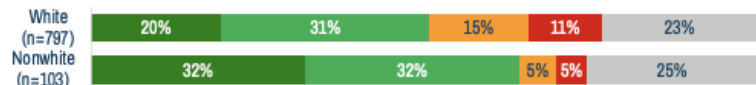
Support for forming charter schools, by charter school description



... and by Race

Finally, views vary by race, with nonwhite voters more likely to support the formation of charter schools.

Support for forming charter schools, by race



Voucher Support Also Split

Just under half (46%) of voters support tax-funded private school scholarships. More voters strongly oppose (29%) tax-funded scholarships when asked if they can be used at religious schools.

Support for tax-funded scholarships for private schools

