



Diverse-by-Design Charter Schools

MAY 15, 2018 — BY HALLEY POTTER AND KIMBERLY QUICK

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In San Diego, a former carpentry teacher imagined a high school where students of all backgrounds and abilities would engage in project-based learning without academic tracking. In New Orleans, a group of parents concerned about the shuttering of their local school after Hurricane Katrina rallied together to create a new school that would reflect the diversity of their racially and economically mixed neighborhood. In Rhode Island, the mayor of an affluent suburb led the charge for a new regional school model that would allow children from his community of Cumberland and those from the bankrupt city of Central Falls to go to school together. These educators, parents, and policymakers all helped to open charter schools, and at the center of the creation of each of these schools was a shared vision: to use the flexibility of the charter model to incorporate diversity into the design of a school.

This report represents the first systematic effort to identify diverse-by-design charter schools and characterize the role of student diversity in school mission and design across the charter sector more generally. Based on an analysis using three different factors—racial and socioeconomic demographics of schools, school leader responses on a survey, and analysis of charter schools’ websites—this report identifies 125 intentionally diverse charter schools. Although they represent a small slice of the charter school sector,

data suggests that the number of diverse-by-design charter schools is growing. These schools offer important insights into how the charter school model can help promote school integration.

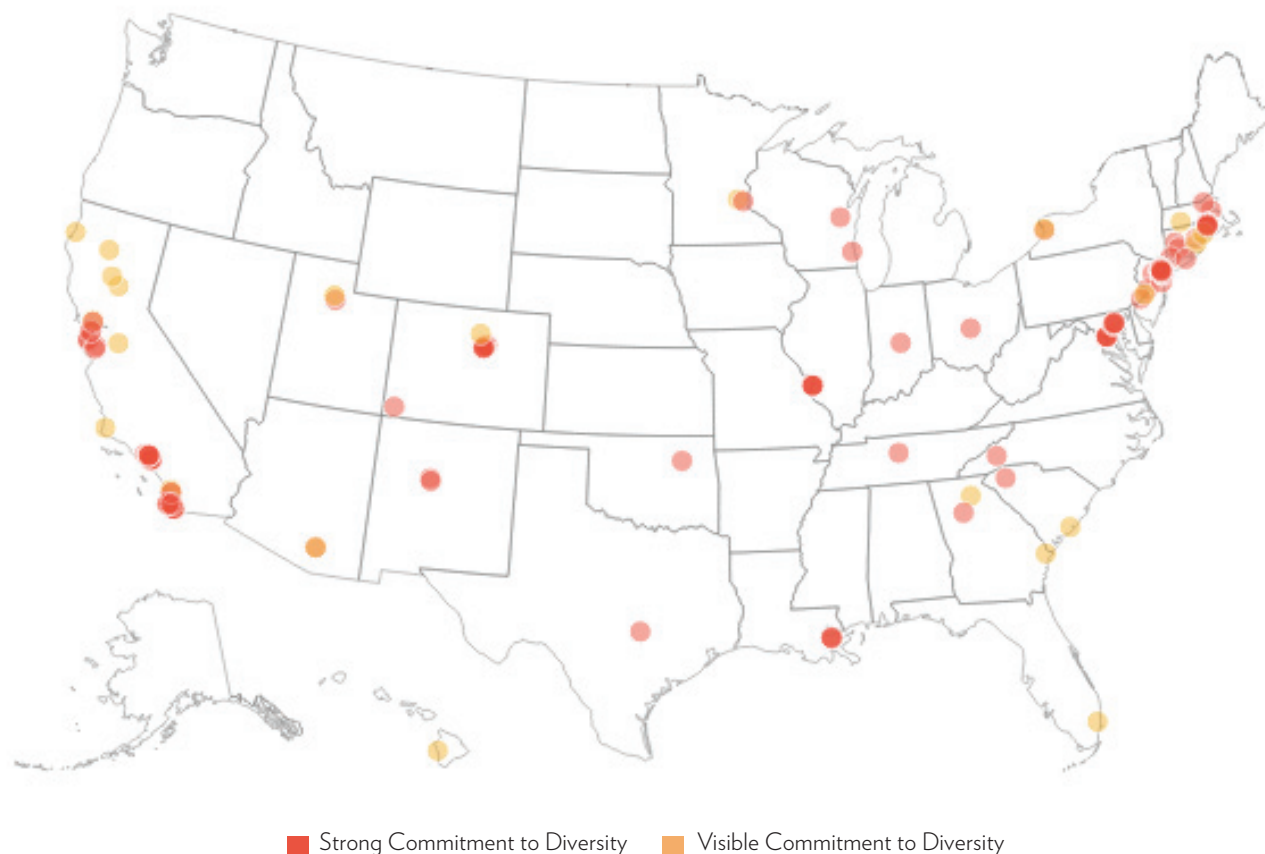
This report proceeds in four parts, beginning with a brief discussion of the research on school integration across all public schools, and specifically in the charter sector. Next, a methodology section (and accompanying appendix) details the process of collecting and analyzing data to identify diverse-by-design charter schools. Third, a section focused on these diverse-by-design schools includes the complete list of schools and summarizes some of their characteristics. Finally, a section on broader trends considers other findings about the role of diversity in charter schools’ educational models.

School Integration and the Role of Charter Schools

Five decades of research suggest that racial and socioeconomic integration is one of the best design principles for creating successful schools that produce strong results for students and society.¹ Students in diverse schools have higher average test scores and graduation rates than peers of similar backgrounds attending schools

This report and inventory can be found online at: <https://tcf.org/content/report/diverse-design-charter-schools/>

FIGURE 1. MAP OF SCHOOLS INCLUDED IN INVENTORY



with concentrated poverty.² The experience of learning in integrated classrooms alongside peers with different experiences, perspectives, and abilities helps to reduce racial bias and increase creativity, motivation, deeper learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.³ Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall famously wrote, “Unless our children begin to learn together, there is little hope that our people will ever begin to live together.”⁴ Research backs this idea. According to one study, students who attend racially diverse high schools are more likely to live in diverse neighborhoods five years after graduation.⁵

Unfortunately, while the benefits of diverse schools are well documented, segregated schools nevertheless remain a reality across much of the country. By many measures, our public schools are more racially segregated now than they were in the 1970s.⁶ Nationwide, more than one-third of all black and Latinx students attend schools that are over 90 percent non-white. For white students, these statistics are reversed: more than a third attend schools that are 90–100 percent white.⁷

America’s public schools have also become more economically stratified in recent decades. A 2014 study found that economic segregation between school districts rose roughly 20 percent from 1990 to 2010, while segregation between schools within a district also grew roughly 10 percent.⁸ For low-income students of color, racial and economic isolation often collide to create a doubly segregated environment. A 2016 study from the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that the percentage of schools with high concentrations of poverty and mostly black or Hispanic enrollment increased from 9 to 16 percent between 2000–01 and 2013–14.⁹

For the 6 percent of public school students in charter schools, the chances of attending a school that is racially or socioeconomically segregated is even greater than for their peers in district schools.¹⁰ A 2017 analysis by the Associated Press found that 17 percent of charter schools have enrollment that is 99 percent nonwhite, compared to 4 percent of traditional public schools.¹¹ This analysis echoes findings from earlier studies, including a seminal 2010 study

by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA, showing that charter schools are more likely to be high-poverty or racially isolated for minorities than district schools.¹²

The causes of these demographic patterns are hotly debated. Segregation in both charter and district schools is closely tied to segregation in housing patterns as well as school district and attendance zone lines,¹³ and charter schools are more likely to be located in urban areas, where neighborhood segregation may be particularly pronounced.¹⁴ But some charter schools also intentionally target certain populations, such as at-risk students or particular immigrant groups. Furthermore, when the choice process is left open to free-market forces, word-of-mouth marketing through segregated social networks, different levels of resources and access to information, and parent preferences can all contribute to increased segregation.¹⁵

When designed with diversity in mind, however, charter schools can be a tool to help reverse these trends and give more students access to racially and socioeconomically diverse classrooms. When teacher union leader Albert Shanker proposed the idea for charter schools thirty years ago in 1988, he articulated a vision for laboratory schools that would empower teachers and bring together students of different backgrounds.¹⁶ Later that year, the Citizens League, a community policy organization in Minnesota, issued an influential report that would serve as a launch pad for the first charter school law in the country; the report also described one of charter schools' primary goals as "building additional quality through diversity."¹⁷

The same flexibility that has led some charter schools to target at-risk students can also be used to prioritize diversity. Charter schools have the freedom to choose educational approaches that will appeal to families of different backgrounds—and, in most cases, to enroll students from a broader geographic area than a typical neighborhood attendance zone. These can be effective strategies for creating integrated schools.¹⁸

Individual examples, media reports, and a small body of research demonstrate that a number of charter schools

are seizing this opportunity to bring together students of different backgrounds to create "diverse-by-design" learning environments.¹⁹ Exactly how many charter schools are taking conscious steps to be socioeconomically and racially diverse, however, has thus far been difficult to determine. The Diverse Charter Schools Coalition, which was founded in 2014 with 14 member schools and networks and now includes over 40 members, provides one indicator, but membership is self-selecting.²⁰ (One of the authors of this report, Halley Potter, is a board member of the Coalition.) The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools has analyzed the instructional focuses of charter schools based on survey results, but an intentional focus on diversity was not one of the trends analyzed.²¹ Two studies from the American Enterprise Institute examining charter schools' academic models did include "purposefully diverse" schools as one of a dozen classifications for charter school models but found very few schools in that category. The authors noted that some diverse charter schools may have been too new to appear in their data and urged caution in interpreting results.²²

Identifying Diverse Charter Schools

For this report, we defined intentionally diverse or diverse-by-design charter schools (terms which we use interchangeably) as schools that both committed to student diversity as part of the mission or design of the school and achieved a certain level of diversity within their actual enrollment.

Admittedly, this definition is only part of what it takes for schools to be truly integrated learning environments as well as positive levers for promoting integration across a public school landscape. The framework for school integration developed by the student-led advocacy group IntegrateNYC, for example, calls for the "5 Rs of Real Integration": not just achieving diverse racial demographics in enrollment, but also ensuring fair resource allocations among and within schools, building strong relationships among students and staff within a school, reforming school discipline through a lens of restorative justice, and hiring teachers and staff that represent the diversity of the study body.²³ To delve further into these questions, The Century

Foundation is publishing several case studies looking closely at the inner workings of diverse-by-design charter schools.

In order to identify diverse-by-design schools for this inventory, we collected and analyzed data for each charter school to assess commitment and enrollment. We accessed identifying information and enrollment data for all charter schools in the U.S. Department of Education's 2014–15 Common Core of Data (the latest year of full data available at the time of research), which included 7,299 charter schools nationwide. We reviewed the websites for each charter school, administered a survey to a subset of charter schools, and analyzed school demographics.

After removing schools for which we could not complete a website review or that lacked demographic enrollment data, we applied our final analysis to 5,692 schools.

Commitment to Diversity

To measure commitment to diversity, we used charter schools' websites as evidence of their educational philosophy and design.²⁴ Websites are important marketing and communication tools for charter schools, providing a platform to communicate their mission and values with the public and prospective families. A school's website necessarily provides an incomplete picture of the design and philosophy of a school: there may be important aspects of a school that are not on its website but that are communicated with families and the public in printed materials, on social media, or in person during tours or meetings; still other elements of a school's approach may be kept internal to school leaders, staff, or charter school authorizers and not shared widely. Nevertheless, of the different possible sources for obtaining information about a school's design philosophy (such as charter applications, site visits, surveys, or interviews) websites have the advantage of being readily accessible for most charter schools and usually updated with some frequency.

We searched schools' websites for their mission statements and did a keyword search for any other mention of diversity. We reviewed the search results and coded for any evidence

of the school considering diversity of the student body in the mission, design, or operation of the school. We coded for four different types of commitment:

Diversity in the Mission: States that enrolling a diverse student body is part of the mission, design, or goals of the school

Strategies for Diverse Enrollment: Mentions using recruitment or admissions practices aimed at attracting and enrolling a diverse student body

Benefits of Diversity: Describes the benefits that a diverse learning environment has for students and communities

Valuing Diversity: Expresses an appreciation for diversity within the school community.

We were able to complete website review for 6,281 schools. We did not complete the review for roughly 1,000 charter schools with no website to be found, that had closed, that appeared to be online/virtual schools, or that provided a specialized setting for which traditional recruitment and enrollment considerations did not apply (for example, schools serving incarcerated students or homeschoolers).

Based on this website review and an initial screening for demographic diversity in the school, we also identified 1,101 schools to receive a follow-up survey about their school's diversity goals and practices. We were able to find contact information and send this survey to 971 schools, offering schools a small monetary reward for answering the survey. We received 86 responses.

Finally, we also looked at the membership of the Diverse Charter Schools Coalition (DCSC) and used membership in the coalition as an indication of commitment to diversity.

Using these three different sources of information, we gave each school's commitment to diversity one of three ratings:

Strong: Clear signs from the school's website, survey response, and/or membership in the DCSC that diversity is part of the mission or design of the school.

Visible. Some signs that diversity is a consideration in the mission or design of the school.

Not Evident: No/few signs that diversity is considered in the mission or design of the school.

Additional details on the definitions for these ratings is available in the appendix.

Diversity in Enrollment

In addition to analyzing a school's stated commitment to enrolling a diverse student body, we looked at demographic data to measure the level of diversity in the school's actual enrollment. While we recognize that a robust definition of diversity in school enrollment requires considering a variety of factors including language, culture, and ability, our analysis focused on racial and socioeconomic diversity, since these are the two factors most directly addressed in the research on school segregation.

Social science research on racial representation in education has pointed to 70 percent as a possible threshold for creating a diverse learning environment. Research shows that when a single group dominates more than 70 percent of the student body, students in the minority feel increased isolation and alienation, and cross-racial friendships are less likely to develop.²⁵ Guided by this measure, we considered schools to be racially diverse if the largest racial or ethnic group in the school comprised no more than 70 percent of the student body, and, similarly, socioeconomically diverse if 30–70 percent of students were low-income (eligible for free or reduced-price lunch).²⁶

We also compared the school's socioeconomic and racial demographics to those of the district in which it is located, using federal enrollment data combined with data provided by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools to match schools with districts. We considered schools to be representative of district demographics if the percentage of low-income students at the school fell within 15 percentage points above or below the district average, and if the largest racial or ethnic group in the district was represented at the

school in a proportion within 15 percentage points above or below the district representation. For example, a charter school located within the boundaries of Denver Public Schools, in which 70 percent of students are low-income and 57 percent of students are Hispanic, would be considered representative of district demographics if 55–85 percent of students at the school are low-income and 42–72 percent of students are Hispanic.

However, it is worth noting the limitations of this comparison. In some situations, school district enrollment may not be the most appropriate definition of the community served by a charter school. The geographic areas that charter schools are designed to serve vary widely: some schools may enroll students from multiple school districts, while others focus on a single neighborhood. Furthermore, in some areas, the school-age population looks very different from district school enrollment because many families—usually those that are middle-class or affluent—opt out of their district schools, choosing private schools or transferring out of the district instead. In this scenario, a charter school could be out of line with district demographics but actually be more representative of the community than the school district. Nevertheless, using district enrollment as a benchmark for an individual school's diversity is a useful measure that can be applied to all charter schools and usually provides a rough approximation of diversity in the community served by a school.

Based on both the school-level demographics and the comparison with the district, we assigned each school one of three ratings for diversity in enrollment:

High. A school was rated as having a high level of diversity in enrollment if it was diverse in terms of both socioeconomic status (30–70 percent low-income) and race/ethnicity (largest racial/ethnic group no more than 70 percent), and the school was also representative of district socioeconomic and racial/ethnic demographics.

Medium. A school was rated as having a medium level of diversity in enrollment if it fell short of the criteria for high diversity but met one of the following criteria instead:

- School-level enrollment is diverse in terms of both socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity, but the school does not meet one or both of the thresholds for representation compared to district socioeconomic or racial/ethnic demographics (or demographic data for the district is missing).
- School-level enrollment is diverse in either socioeconomic status or race/ethnicity (but not both), and the school passes both the socioeconomic and racial tests for comparison with district demographics. In addition, the largest racial/ethnic group in the school does not exceed 90 percent, and low-income students make up 10–90 percent of the student body.

Low. A school was rated as having a low level of diversity in enrollment if it failed to meet the criteria for either high or medium diversity.

Combining Commitment and Enrollment

We considered a charter school to be intentionally diverse if it met a combination of criteria for commitment to diversity and diversity in enrollment. A school was considered intentionally diverse if it had strong commitment to diversity and a high level of diversity in enrollment, strong commitment and medium diversity in enrollment, or visible commitment and high diversity in enrollment. Table 1 summarizes this

classification system and the number of schools that were identified in each category. Out of the 5,692 charter schools that we reviewed, 125 met our definition of intentionally diverse (by landing in the three cells in the upper left hand corner of Table 1).

Eighty-nine schools with strong commitment, including some members of DCSC, did not meet our definition of intentionally diverse. While these schools did not fit our definition, they may still have valuable lessons to offer about enrolling and serving diverse groups of students. For example, Community Roots Charter School in Brooklyn, New York, which showed strong commitment but did not meet our definition of medium or high diversity in enrollment because its low-income enrollment was only 20 percent, has developed a number of strategies for inclusion and integration in diverse schools, from an anti-bias curriculum to programs for family engagement. Conversely, 291 schools with high diversity in enrollment were not included because they showed no evident commitment to diversity. Some of these schools may consider diversity to be part of their mission but do not have this information on their website. Furthermore, the locations, enrollment methods, and educational models of schools that are unintentionally diverse could also provide useful information about structural and design factors that incidentally encourage diversity in charter schools.

TABLE 1. IS A CHARTER SCHOOL CONSIDERED INTENTIONALLY DIVERSE?²⁷

	High Diversity in Enrollment	Medium Diversity in Enrollment	Low Diversity in Enrollment	Total Number of Schools
Strong Commitment	Yes 29 schools	Yes 73 schools	No 89 schools	191
Visible Commitment	Yes 23 schools	No 178 schools	No 634 schools	835
Commitment Not Evident	No 291 schools	No 883 schools	No 3,492 schools	4,666
Total Number of Schools	343	1,134	4,215	5,692

Data for the 5,692 charter schools reviewed as part of this report can be viewed and downloaded at tcf.org.

Intentionally Diverse Charter Schools

The 125 intentionally diverse charter schools identified in this report represent a variety of different approaches to diverse enrollment. Table 2 provides detailed information about each of these schools, and the sections that follow summarize some of the characteristics of the group.

Commitment to Diversity

The schools on our list exhibited a variety of approaches to demonstrating commitment to diversity. A representative quote or description of each of the 125 diverse-by-design schools' approaches is listed in Table 2, and additional information can be found by looking up a school in the full data for all charter schools that we reviewed, which is available [here](#).

Some of the clearest examples of commitment came from schools that made diversity part of their mission and also articulated some of the strategies used to enroll a diverse student body. For example, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, a network of elementary, middle, and high schools in Rhode Island, states:

*Apart from academics, we believe that preparing scholars for the world beyond also means experiencing the diversity of the world we live in today. By design, our network is intentionally diverse. We accept students from four unique sending districts, two from the traditionally higher-income communities of Cumberland and Lincoln and two from the predominantly lower-income communities of Pawtucket and Central Falls.*²⁸

High Tech High, a San Diego-based network that also serves students from kindergarten through twelfth grade, likewise describes an intentional commitment to diversity and the weighted lottery that helps achieve this goal:

High Tech High is an equity project. Teachers work to address inequities and help students reach their full potential. Our schools are intentionally diverse and integrated, enrolling

*students through a zip code-based lottery aimed at creating schools that are reflective of the communities we serve. Teachers recognize the value of having students from different backgrounds working together, and employ a variety of approaches to accommodate diverse learners without academic tracking. High Tech High has an acute focus on college entrance and college completion for all students.*²⁹

Growth

As the first inventory of its kind, this report will serve as a baseline for measuring the growth of diverse charter schools moving forward. Our research did not track the point at which charter schools incorporated a commitment to diversity into their models or when they achieved racially and socioeconomically diverse enrollment. Some schools, such as Morris Jeff Community School in New Orleans, have been diverse-by-design from their opening, whereas others, like Boston Collegiate Charter School in Massachusetts, introduced efforts to diversify their enrollment after already operating for a number of years.³⁰

Nevertheless, looking at the years that schools opened provides a rough estimate of the growth of intentionally diverse charter schools over time. Based on this measure, diverse charter schools have been growing as a percentage of the charter school sector. Eighteen schools on the list were opened in 2000 or earlier, representing less than 1 percent of the total number of charter schools that existed at the time. Fifty-three schools opened between 2001 and 2009, bringing the total to 71 schools, or 1.4 percent of all charter schools. An additional 54 schools opened in 2010 or later—meaning that over 40 percent of schools on the list were less than five years old at the time of the data. The 125 schools on the list represented 1.8 percent of all charter schools in 2014, the year of the data.

Geography

The diverse-by-design charter schools that we identified are located in twenty-seven different states. Twenty-three of those states have five or fewer schools from the list, while

TABLE 2. 125 DIVERSE-BY-DESIGN CHARTER SCHOOLS

The full detail of this inventory can be found at <https://tcf.org/content/report/diverse-design-charter-schools/>.

School Name	State	Year Opened	Commitment to Diversity	Diversity in Enrollment
City High School	AZ	2004	Strong	Medium
Albert Einstein Academy Charter Middle	CA	2006	Visible	High
Aspire Vanguard College Preparatory Academy	CA	2009	Visible	High
Bayshore Preparatory Charter	CA	2005	Visible	High
Citizens Of The World Charter School - Hollywood	CA	2010	Strong	Medium
Citizens Of The World Charter School - Silver Lake	CA	2012	Strong	Medium
City Language Immersion Charter	CA	2013	Strong	Medium
Community School for Creative Education	CA	2011	Strong	Medium
Enadia Technology Enriched Charter	CA	2012	Strong	High
Fuente Nueva Charter	CA	2005	Visible	High
Guajome Park Academy Charter	CA	1994	Visible	High
High Tech High: High Tech Elementary	CA	2015	Strong	High*
High Tech High: High Tech Elementary Chula Vista	CA	2007	Strong	High
High Tech High: High Tech Elementary North County	CA	2013	Strong	High
High Tech High: High Tech High	CA	2000	Strong	Medium
High Tech High: High Tech High Chula Vista	CA	2007	Strong	Medium
High Tech High: High Tech High International	CA	2004	Strong	Medium
High Tech High: High Tech High Media Arts	CA	2005	Strong	High
High Tech High: High Tech Middle	CA	2003	Strong	Medium
High Tech High: High Tech Middle Chula Vista	CA	2011	Strong	Medium
High Tech High: High Tech Middle Media Arts	CA	2005	Strong	High
High Tech High: High Tech Middle North County	CA	2009	Strong	High
High Tech Los Angeles	CA	2004	Strong	Medium
Ipakanni Early College Charter School	CA	2010	Visible	High
Larchmont Charter School	CA	2005	Strong	Medium
Lashon Academy	CA	2014	Strong	Medium
Manzanita Public Charter School	CA	2008	Visible	High
Mare Island Technology Academy	CA	1999	Visible	High
Nord Country School	CA	2005	Visible	High
Rocky Point Charter School	CA	2007	Visible	High
Summit Public Schools: Everest	CA	2009	Strong	High
Summit Public Schools: Summit K2	CA	2014	Strong	Medium
Summit Public Schools: Summit Prep	CA	2007	Strong	High
Summit Public Schools: Summit Rainier	CA	2011	Strong	High
Summit Public Schools: Summit Tahoma	CA	2011	Strong	High
Thrive Public	CA	2014	Strong	High
Urban Montessori Charter School	CA	2012	Strong	Medium
Vallejo Charter School	CA	2007	Strong	Medium
Valley Charter Middle School	CA	2011	Strong	Medium
DSST Public Schools: Byers Middle School	CO	2013	Strong	Medium
DSST Public Schools: Cole High School	CO	2014	Strong	Medium
DSST Public Schools: Cole Middle School	CO	2011	Strong	Medium
DSST Public Schools: Conservatory Green Middle School	CO	2014	Strong	Medium
DSST Public Schools: Green Valley Ranch High School	CO	2010	Strong	High
DSST Public Schools: Green Valley Ranch Middle School	CO	2010	Strong	Medium
DSST Public Schools: Stapleton High School	CO	2008	Strong	Medium
DSST Public Schools: Stapleton Middle School	CO	2004	Strong	Medium
Highline Academy Charter School Northeast	CO	2014	Strong	Medium
Highline Academy Charter School Southeast	CO	2004	Strong	Medium

Southwest Open Charter School	CO	1999	Strong	High
Twin Peaks Charter Academy	CO	1997	Visible	High
Brass City Charter School	CT	2013	Strong	High
Common Ground High School	CT	1997	Strong	High
Integrated Day Charter School	CT	1997	Strong	Medium
Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication	CT	1997	Visible	High
Side by Side Charter School	CT	1997	Strong	High
Capital City Public Charter School - Lower School	DC	2000	Strong	Medium
E.L. Haynes Public Charter School: Kansas Avenue Elementary School	DC	2011	Strong	Medium
E.L. Haynes Public Charter School: Kansas Avenue High School	DC	2010	Strong	Medium
Elsie Whitlow Stokes Communtiy Freedom Public Charter School	DC	1998	Strong	Medium
International School of Broward	FL	2007	Visible	High
Chestatee Academy	GA	2010	Visible	High
Coastal Empire Montessori Charter School	GA	2008	Visible	High
International Community School	GA	2002	Strong	Medium
Kona Pacific Public Charter School	HI	2008	Visible	High
Herron High School	IN	2006	Strong	Medium
International High School of New Orleans	LA	2010	Strong	Medium
International School of Louisiana	LA	2000	Strong	Medium
Morris Jeff Community School	LA	2010	Strong	Medium*
Boston Collegiate Charter School	MA	1998	Strong	Medium
Hampden Charter School of Science	MA	2009	Visible	High
Lowell Community Charter Public School	MA	2000	Strong	Medium
Baltimore Montessori Public Charter Middle School	MD	2012	Strong	Medium
Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School	MD	2008	Strong	Medium
City Neighbors Charter School	MD	2005	Strong	Medium
City Neighbors Hamilton	MD	2009	Strong	Medium
Bright Water Elementary	MN	2008	Visible	High
Cornerstone Montessori Elementary	MN	2011	Strong	Medium
City Garden Montessori School	MO	2008	Strong	Medium
St. Louis Language Immersion School: The Chinese School	MO	2012	Strong	Medium
St. Louis Language Immersion School: The French School	MO	2009	Strong	Medium
St. Louis Language Immersion School: The Spanish School	MO	2009	Strong	Medium
Francine Delany New School	NC	1997	Strong	High
Foundation Academy Charter School	NJ	2007	Strong	Medium
Red Bank Charter School	NJ	1998	Strong	High
Albuquerque Sign Language Academy	NM	2010	Strong	High
International School at Mesa del Sol	NM	2009	Strong	Medium
Brooklyn Prospect Charter School	NY	2009	Strong	Medium
Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School	NY	2013	Strong	High
Citizens of the World Charter School - Williamsburg	NY	2013	Strong	Medium
Compass Charter School	NY	2014	Strong	Medium
East Harlem Scholars Academy Charter School	NY	2011	Strong	Medium
East Harlem Scholars Academy Charter School II	NY	2013	Strong	Medium
Elmwood Village Charter School	NY	2006	Strong	Medium
Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School	NY	2013	Strong	High
Hebrew Language Academy Charter School	NY	2009	Strong	High
Hellenic Classical Charter School	NY	2005	Strong	High
New York French-American Charter School	NY	2010	Strong	Medium
Renaissance Charter School, The	NY	2000	Strong	Medium
Riverhead Charter School	NY	2001	Strong	Medium
Success Academy: Cobble Hill	NY	2012	Strong	High

Success Academy: Hell's Kitchen	NY	2013	Strong	Medium
Success Academy: Union Square	NY	2013	Strong	Medium
Success Academy: Upper West	NY	2011	Strong	Medium
Success Academy: Williamsburg	NY	2012	Strong	High
Tapestry Charter School	NY	2001	Visible	High*
Charles School at Ohio Dominican University	OH	2008	Strong	Medium
Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences	OK	2001	Strong	Medium
Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School	PA	2007	Strong	Medium
School Lane Charter School	PA	1998	Visible	High
Blackstone Valley Prep: Elementary School 1	RI	2009	Strong	Medium
Blackstone Valley Prep: Elementary School 2	RI	2011	Strong	Medium
Blackstone Valley Prep: High School	RI	2014	Strong	Medium
Blackstone Valley Prep: Middle School 1	RI	2010	Strong	Medium
Greene School, The	RI	2010	Visible	High
International Charter School	RI	2001	Strong	High
Paul Cuffee Charter School	RI	2001	Strong	Medium
Carolina Voyager Charter School	SC	2014	Visible	High
Lead Academy	SC	2010	Strong	Medium
Valor Collegiate Academy	TN	2014	Strong	Medium
Magnolia Montessori for All	TX	2014	Strong	Medium
Academy for Math Engineering & Science (AMES)	UT	2003	Strong	High
Salt Lake Center for Science Education	UT	2008	Visible	High
Stephen Foster Elementary Charter	WI	2006	Strong	High
Woodlands School East	WI	2013	Strong	Medium
The full detail of this inventory can be found at https://tcf.org/content/report/diverse-design-charter-schools/ .				

half of the schools on the list are located in just four states: California (38 schools), New York (19 schools), Colorado (12 schools), and Rhode Island (7 schools). Each of these states is home to one or more intentionally diverse charter school networks, with as many as eleven schools from a single network (in the case of High Tech High) on the list; this partly explains why the number of diverse-by-design schools there is so high.

It is not surprising that California contains the most diverse charter schools—a full 30 percent of the diverse-by-design schools on the list—because it is first in the nation in terms of charter school enrollment: as of 2016–17, 18 percent of all charter schools in the U.S. were located in California.³¹ The overrepresentation of diverse-by-design charter schools in California may also be connected to a provision in the state's charter school law which requires schools to address “The

means by which the charter school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the school district to which the charter petition is submitted.”³² Analysis of the types of policies that encourage or limit the creation of diverse-by-design charter schools merits further research.³³

The vast majority of schools on the list are located in cities or suburbs. More than two-thirds (69 percent) of the diverse-by-design charter schools are located in cities, and most of these are located in large cities. About a fifth (21 percent) are located in suburbs; again, most of these are located in large suburbs. The concentration of schools in cities and suburbs is likely explained by the fact that these areas are more likely to have diverse populations, to have housing patterns or a transportation infrastructure that makes integrating students

of different backgrounds logistically possible, and to have more charter schools of all kinds.

About 10 percent of the schools, however, are located in towns or rural areas, demonstrating that diverse-by-design models can be adapted to these locales as well. For example, Southwest Open Charter School in Montezuma County, Colorado, a rural county in which three quarters of the land is federal or tribal, uses an expeditionary and experiential learning model to attract a diverse group of high schoolers from four different school districts.³⁴ As of 2014–15, the student population was 68 percent low-income and 48 percent white, 33 percent American Indian or Alaska native, 17 percent Hispanic, and 2 percent two or more races.

Enrollment and Demographics

Together, these 125 schools—a mix of elementary, secondary, and combined grade levels—enroll nearly 45,000 students. They range in size from just 39 students at Ipakanni Early College Charter in Oroville, California, to 1,362 students at Larchmont Charter School, a K–12 school spread across multiple campuses in Los Angeles, California. Like charter schools more generally, the diverse-by-design charter schools are on average smaller than other public schools, with a mean size of 359 students, compared to 482 students for all public elementary schools and 698 students for all public secondary schools.³⁵

Almost half of schools on the list are part of charter networks. While some of these networks have only one of their schools represented, a number of networks have multiple schools that meet our diverse-by-design definition. The networks with the most schools included on the list are High Tech High in San Diego, California, with 11 elementary, middle, and high schools included in our list, and DSST Public Schools in Denver, Colorado, with 8 schools on our list.

Low-income enrollment across the schools range from 31 percent to 89 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, with a median of 53 percent. Eleven diverse-by-design charter schools have low-income enrollment greater than 70 percent, which falls outside our

definition for school-level socioeconomic diversity; however, these schools are included because they are all schools that are racially diverse and representative of their districts in terms of both socioeconomic status and race.

All but two of the diverse-by-design schools have no racial or ethnic group that makes up more than 70 percent of their student body. Moreover, half of the schools have no racial or ethnic majority. Hispanic students comprise the largest racial or ethnic group in a plurality of schools (56 out of 125), but as a whole diverse-by-design charter schools are more likely to have white students as the largest racial or ethnic group than the districts in which they reside. Forty-three schools on the list have white students as the largest racial/ethnic group in the school, compared to just 23 of their surrounding districts.

Educational Models

The diverse-by-design charter schools that we identified use a wide variety of educational models. Pedagogy ranges from progressive to traditional, and a number of schools have content specialties as well, with STEM being the most popular specialty. Success Academy Charter Schools, a New York City network with more than 40 schools known for its focus on test prep alongside chess instruction and daily science classes, has five schools that are members of the Diverse Charter Schools Coalition and which are included on our list. The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy in New Mexico, which serves a deliberate mix of deaf and hard of hearing students as well as hearing students, also made the list, as did the Community School for Creative Education, a Waldorf-inspired school in Oakland, California.

A few of the most common educational approaches seen among the diverse-by-design charter schools were an international or dual-language theme (17 schools), project-based or expeditionary learning (16 schools), and Montessori education (8 schools).

While intentional diversity is often associated with progressive pedagogy—and indeed, that focus is well-represented in this list of schools—the variety of other educational approaches suggests that there multiple models that can work for diverse schools.

Diversity Trends across the Charter Sector

Beyond the 125 schools that met our criteria, our analysis also revealed broader trends related to diversity in the charter school sector. Based on our definitions, about 60 percent of the schools we analyzed showed no evidence of commitment to diversity and had low diversity in enrollment. This finding is consistent with research showing that school integration has not been a priority for the charter school sector at large.

However, one in five charter schools that we analyzed (1,026 schools) met our threshold for visible or strong commitment to diversity as determined by their website, survey responses, or membership in the DCSC. This segment of the charter school sector likely includes schools that could relatively easily strengthen their commitment to diversity and implement strategies to increase the diversity of their student bodies.

Likewise, one in four charter schools (1,477) met our criteria for medium or high diversity in enrollment. Although most of these schools did not combine diverse enrollment with an evident commitment to diversity, the factors that led to their diversity could be informative in shaping charter school policy; additionally, some of these schools may be open to becoming more intentional about a focus on diversity.

Conclusion

The schools highlighted in the report show how the flexibility of the charter school model can be leveraged to promote diversity. Though a small fraction of the charter school sector, the number of diverse-by-design charter schools is growing. These schools provide a variety of models and strategies for integration that could help other schools—charter, district, or magnet—seeking to enroll and serve diverse groups of students.

Achieving school-level diversity is only one part of what is needed to move from the segregated status quo to a more integrated public school landscape. If charter schools are to become strong players in the fight against school segregation, they must think both outside and inside the schoolhouse doors. Integration within a school requires examining not just school enrollment but classroom demographics, instructional practices, and school culture, working toward schools in which all students have strong academic and social supports. Additionally, integration across public education requires that schools coordinate so that a diverse environment for one set of students is not created at the expense of others.

From developing creative solutions for differentiating instruction without tracking to ensuring that families of all backgrounds are welcomed and heard in the school community, a number of diverse charter schools are already excelling at promoting integration within their schools. The challenge of considering integration across a system of schools, however, is one that most diverse charter schools have yet to tackle.

Additionally, research on the effects that charter schools have on segregation in surrounding district schools is varied and depends heavily on the local context. While causal links are difficult to establish, multiple studies have shown that the proliferation of charter schools tends to be associated with rising segregation in district schools.³⁶ Moreover, even those studies that have not found charter schools to be likely factors in increasing segregation in public schools have acknowledged the great deal of segregation that exists across all types of schools.³⁷

In order to help move the needle on school integration, charter schools will have to move beyond diverse-by-design school models to diverse-by-design systems. Additionally, they will need to cooperate with local districts to develop enrollment practices that work for all schools and join with outside stakeholders and leaders to push for school integration across regions. The diverse-by-design schools identified in this report could help to lead the way.

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Appendix: Methodology for Assigning Ratings for Commitment to Diversity

We used the following definitions in order to assign each school a rating for commitment to diversity.

Strong. A school's commitment to diversity was rated as strong if it met one of the following criteria:

- The school's website received a high score for commitment.³⁸ In addition, the school's survey response (if applicable) showed baseline commitment, rating student diversity and school integration as "important" or "very important" to its institutional mission.
- The school's survey response demonstrated a high level of commitment, indicating that they use enrollment and recruitment strategies specifically in order to maintain a racially or economically diverse student body and that diversity and school integration are "important" or "very important." In addition, the school's website received at least a medium score for commitment.³⁹

- The school is a member of the Diverse Charter Schools Coalition.

Visible. A school's commitment to diversity was rated as visible if it fell short of the criteria for strong commitment but met one of the following criteria instead:

- The school's website received a medium score for commitment. In addition, the school's survey response (if applicable) showed baseline commitment (as defined above).
- The school's survey response demonstrated a high level of commitment (as defined above), but the website did not receive a medium score or higher.

Not Evident. A school's commitment to diversity was rated as not evident if it failed to meet the criteria for either strong or visible commitment.

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