

POSSIBILITIES & POTENTIAL FOR FLORIDA'S UNDERUTILIZED SCHOOL BUILDINGS



WHITE PAPER

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Introduction

Florida's public education landscape is undergoing a dramatic shift. Fewer students fill once-bustling hallways in school district buildings, leaving empty spaces and opening new possibilities for success.

Orlando, for example, reported an enrollment decline of 6,600 this school year—more than double the school district's previous estimate. The Orange County school board recently approved a plan to [pay consultants](#) nearly \$1,000 per student to bring lost students back to district schools. Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the fourth largest school district in the country, has lost 12,000 students in one year. In Hillsborough County last year, despite the closure of six schools, 83 schools operated at or [below 70% capacity](#) and 14 schools were half-full or less. The Broward County School Board is weighing what to do with its school buildings in response to more than [50,000 empty seats](#). This space in district buildings provides a new space for educational success.

In states like Florida, with its robust charter and choice sector, declining district school enrollment presents possibilities and potential solutions. Florida recently passed a tipping point: as of 2025, [more than half of its students](#) now attend an education option of choice—whether a charter, magnet, private, or virtual school—rather than their assigned district school.

As a result, school districts and the communities they serve across the Sunshine State must look for successful solutions for what to do with a growing list of underutilized buildings—what the real estate world calls “stranded assets.” Even if their classrooms are half-full, these facilities must still be heated, cooled, maintained, and staffed. The result? Rising costs, shrinking dollars, and facilities that feel more like liabilities than learning hubs.

The charter sector has a history of providing quality solutions. Charter schools in Florida are growing in enrollment, even as district school attendance declines. For charters, which spend a significant percentage of their funding on acquiring facilities, district schools' underutilized classrooms are a golden opportunity. Repurposing an underutilized school building is not only significantly more cost-effective than building or converting another type of facility, but it can also mean opening months, or even years, earlier. Furthermore, families and neighborhoods experience growth and continuity when an old school building reopens its doors with renewed purpose. Ultimately, repurposing half-empty—or worse—district buildings for in-demand charter schools is about leveraging public resources and potential cost savings for districts and charter schools.

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Reimagining School Spaces

This report, prepared by Susie Miller Carello, Thibaut Delloue, and Curtis Fuller of the [Florida Charter Institute at Miami Dade College](#), in partnership with Jim Griffin and Brooke Quisenberry of [Momentum Strategy & Research](#), analyzes the rates of student occupancy inside school district facilities of 20 Florida counties. It explores opportunities for distributing public resources by allowing charter schools, which are public schools, to utilize school district facilities, saving the public money and enabling charter schools to direct more funds to what matters—teaching kids.

“...enabling charter schools to direct more funds to what matters—teaching kids.”

We envision flipping the script: A shuttered elementary is reborn as a dual-language immersion charter. A half-empty middle school is revitalized as a STEM academy. Once-silent corridors buzzing again—not with ghosts of enrollment past, but with the sound of choice, innovation, and growth.

Florida's public school story isn't about decline. It's about reallocation—moving kids, dollars, and futures into schools that families actually choose. Empty buildings are no tragedy; they're an untapped resource, waiting for charter schools to write the next chapter of education success in Florida.

Key Findings

- From 2015-16 to 2024-25, traditional school **district enrollment in Florida declined by almost 59,000** while **charter school enrollment grew by over 136,000**.
- As of 2025, among the 20 Florida counties included in this analysis, **264 public school facilities** were found to be usable for the average charter school, **with an average utilization rate of 47.6%**. This means an average of **790 seats per building are going unused** and could be available for charter schools.
- If charter schools choose to locate in underutilized district facilities, the opportunity could emerge for significant savings of taxpayer money, in addition to better use of available public space.
- Based on the study's findings and using average district and charter school enrollment numbers, **school districts operate 77 surplus buildings relative to their enrollment**. Meanwhile, **charter schools require an additional 256 buildings to meet enrollment demands**. Furthermore, the average charter school spends over \$1.1 million annually on facilities.



Declining District Enrollment: National Trend

Declining enrollment in traditional district schools is a nationwide trend. Research by the Brookings Institution identifies the growing popularity of school choice options spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic and the declining school-age population as driving factors. They estimate that, if trends since 2020 continue, traditional district schools could lose as many as [8.5 million additional students](#) by 2050.

A [study by the Common Sense Institute](#) analyzing the use of public school resources in Arizona, meanwhile, showed a similar story to Florida. District public schools, the [report estimates](#), are utilizing two-thirds of their total student capacity, while charter schools fill 95% of their available capacity. "Arizona's funding models, forged in an era of expansion, tie dollars to building projects and bus routes rather than student needs," the report notes. "Districts, incentivized to spend rather than adapt, have amassed assets that no longer serve their purpose."

The economist Ben Scafidi takes this line of reasoning even further. "The conventional wisdom that districts suffer [from decreased enrollment] is wrong," Scafidi contends in a [recent EdChoice report](#). Pointing to the fact that several school funding streams aren't proportionally tied to student count, his survey of national data indicates that "districts with declining enrollment saw larger increases in per-student local, state, and federal revenues than districts with enrollment gains."

Such commentary suggests that the relationship between student enrollment and resource allocation is far from linear. In fact, it shows that traditional school districts nationwide retain more public resources than is proportional to their enrollment, particularly when compared to other schooling options, such as charter schools.





Growth in the Charter School Sector in Florida

Meanwhile, for nearly three decades, Florida's charter schools have grown into a successful and essential component of the state's public education landscape. Charter schools, which are legally public schools in Florida, have produced strong results in the state, with 77% of charter schools earning an "A" or "B" on the state report cards for the 2024-25 school year. Charter schools outperformed traditional districts on the latest federal National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP.

In addition, recent legislation has expanded Florida's Schools of Hope program, which incentivizes the growth of high-performing charter schools and more educational options for the state's most vulnerable communities. With the passage of Senate Bill 2510 in 2025,¹ Schools of Hope will now have the option to move into underutilized, vacant, or surplus district facilities.² For now, however, this applies to only a fraction of Florida's charter school landscape.

Connecting charter schools with underutilized district space is common practice in other states. Data on the percentage of charter schools in district facilities shows Florida at the bottom, with only four percent of the state's charters operating in district facilities. Several states with significant charter school populations have a much higher percentage of district space, including California (42%), Georgia (24%), Colorado (23%), Oklahoma (21%), Indiana (21%), and New York (20%). Nationally, an average of 18% of charter schools are located in what were once district buildings.³





Data Sources

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This report examines publicly available data from 20 Florida school districts from 2021 to 2025.

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This report examines publicly available data from 20 Florida school districts from 2021 to 2025 which include 90% of the state's charter schools and a total of 2,250 school district buildings (see details in Appendix A). It primarily relies on school districts' Five-Year Educational Work Plans.⁴ These documents, which are prepared by each district and made available by the Florida Department of Education, outline the districts' long-term strategies for maintaining, upgrading, and expanding school facilities. They are considered the authoritative source for information related to school facilities in Florida. In addition, school-level data made available by the Florida Department of Education, including its Master School Identification (MSID) database,⁵ was utilized.

For purposes of this report, conversion charter schools operating in district buildings were removed from the district school dataset. Additionally, data points that fall outside traditional schooling—such as adult general education, Career and Technical Education Centers, Department of Juvenile Justice, and Title I Migrant Non-Enrolled Students—were not included (these comprised three percent of the approximately 2,000 buildings surveyed). Finally, buildings labeled “Not Available,” which include properties such as bus depots, administrative buildings, and Head Start facilities, were not considered. The resulting dataset used in this report therefore contains 97% of the total facilities reported by school districts (see Appendix B for further detail).

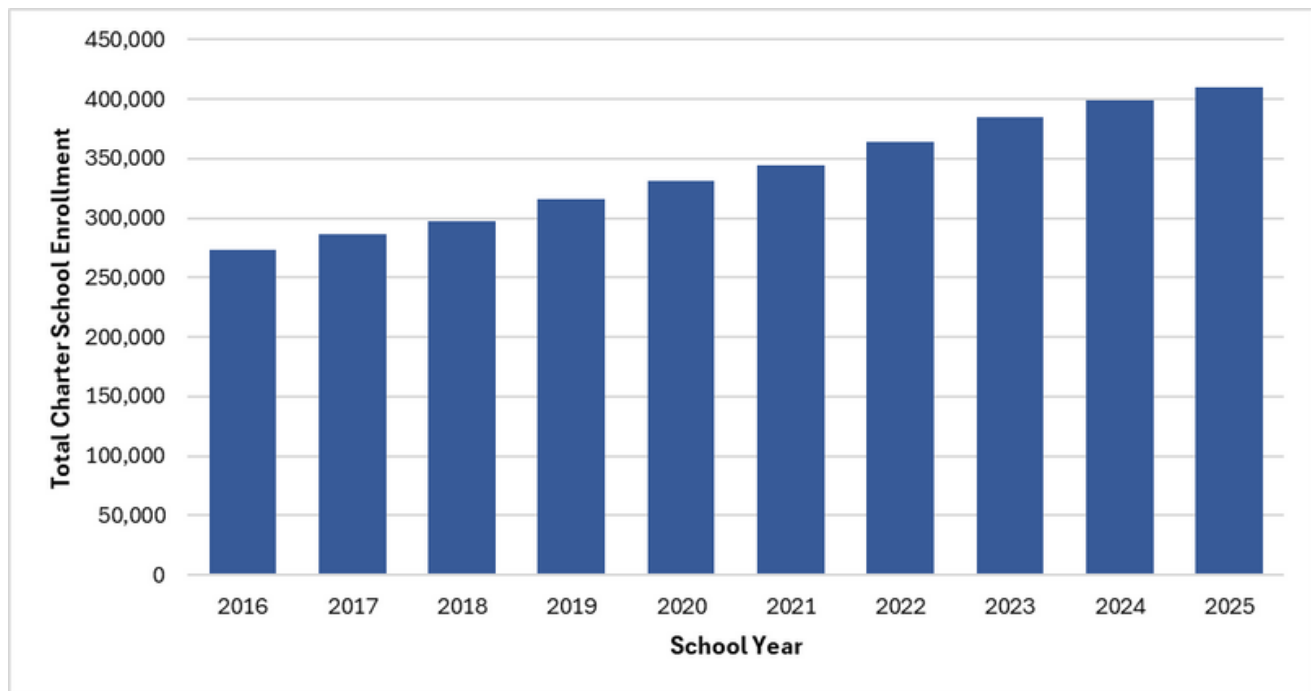
Further data was incorporated from the Florida Department of Education's home education annual reports,⁶ the private school annual reports and directories,⁷ and the Census Bureau's “American Community Survey (ACS)”.⁸



The Florida Landscape: Enrollment & Population Trends

In recent years, district schools have experienced a decline in enrollment, despite an increase in the state's school-age population. Conversely, charter schools have experienced steady growth. Since 2016, the number of charter schools has grown from 653 to 735, and the number of students has grown from 273,602 to 409,738 (see Figure 1). Charter schools are now operating in 47 counties across Florida.

Figure 1. Statewide Charter School PK-12 Enrollment from 2015-16 to 2024-25

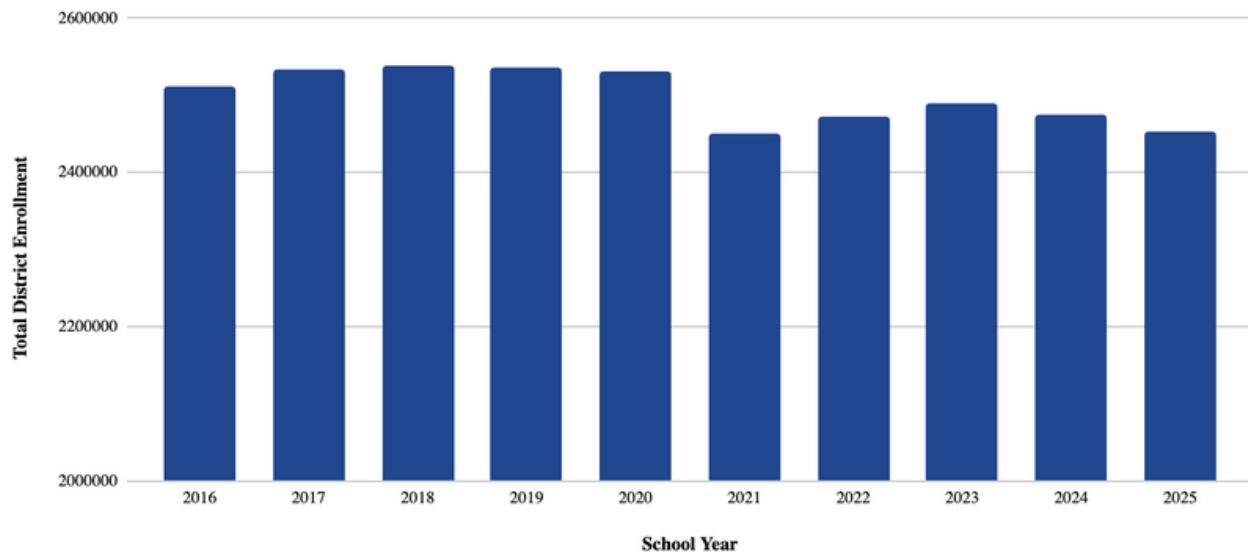




The Florida Landscape: Enrollment & Population Trends (cont.)

Over the same time span, and despite increases in the number of school-age students across Florida, enrollment in the state's county-wide school districts has decreased by approximately 59,000 students. As shown in Figure 2, district enrollment peaked in 2018, then declined over the following two years before a steep decline in 2021—where almost 80,000 students disenrolled, chose a different type of schooling, moved, or otherwise exited district schools after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2. Statewide District PK-12 Enrollment from 2015-16 to 2024-25



District school enrollment slightly recovered in 2022 and 2023, but it never regained pre-pandemic numbers. Over the two subsequent school years, enrollment again declined.

The Florida Landscape: Enrollment & Population Trends (cont.)

Since 2020, enrollment in traditional school districts has not kept pace with a rising school-age population. Between 2018 and 2024, according to census data for the 20 counties included in this analysis, the school-age population steadily increased for both age groups 5 to 17 and 5 to 19 (see Table 1).⁹ Overall student enrollment (traditional and non-traditional combined) increased by 154,895 students, as shown in this table and in Figure 3. This trend was observed in the enrollment for non-traditional schooling options—charter schools, homeschooling, and private schools. District schools, however, were the only education sector to experience a decline in enrollment during this period (see Appendix C for county-specific descriptions of enrollment and market share fluctuations).

Population trends are complex and influenced by a myriad of factors. Florida, for example, saw the highest net migration rate—more people coming into the state than leaving—of any state in the decade leading up to 2023. However, if the school-age population growth and education sector trends observed from 2018 to 2024 were to remain unchanged in these 20 counties over the next six years, school districts would lose nearly 74,000 additional students and charter schools would gain over 120,000 students by 2030.

Table 1. Enrollment by Education Sector and Census School Age Population Trends from 2017-18 to 2023-24 - 20 Counties Included in Analysis

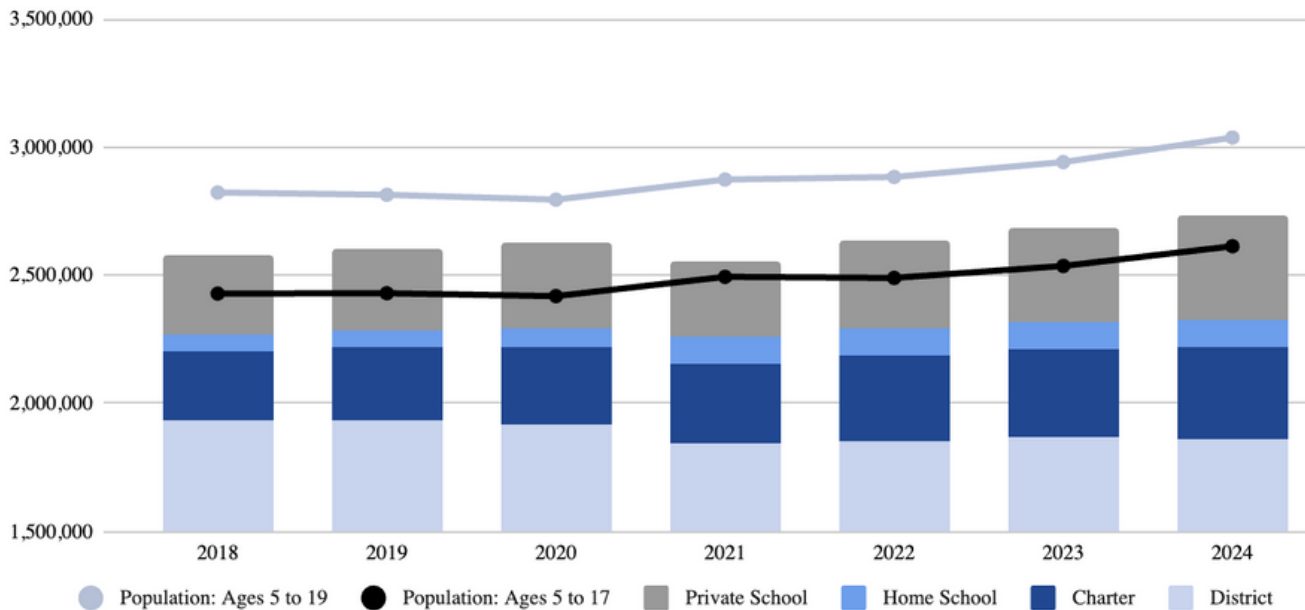
	District	Charter	Home School	Private School	Total	Population: Ages 5 to 17	Population: Ages 5 to 19
2018	1,935,412	269,437	61,924	309,746	2,576,519	2,428,958	2,822,994
2019	1,930,978	285,906	67,184	317,898	2,601,966	2,430,191	2,814,070
2020 ¹⁰	1,921,694	300,855	73,054	331,022	2,626,625	2,418,894	2,795,216
2021	1,846,553	311,651	99,065	298,646	2,555,915	2,494,196	2,873,602
2022	1,856,308	329,008	105,399	341,856	2,632,571	2,489,996	2,883,545
2023	1,868,238	346,492	104,413	363,855	2,682,998	2,536,533	2,941,679
2024	1,858,169	359,579	104,325	409,341	2,731,414	2,613,467	3,037,195
Change	-77,243	90,142	42,401	99,595	154,895	184,509	214,201
% Change	-4.00%	33.50%	68.50%	32.20%	6.00%	7.60%	7.60%

(Both 5-17 and 5-19 year-old data sets are included as the Census Bureau does not report the 5-18 numbers)



The Florida Landscape: Enrollment & Population Trends (cont.)

Figure 3. Enrollment by Education Sector and Census School Age Population Trends from 2017-18 to 2023-24 - 20 Counties Included in Analysis





The Florida Landscape: Enrollment & Population Trends (cont.)

The trends shown in the 20 counties included in this analysis are consistent statewide. Between 2018 and 2024, the school-age population increased for both age groups 5 to 17 and 5 to 19 (see Table 2). Overall student enrollment increased by 238,223 students, as shown in Figure 3. This trend was observed in the enrollment for non-traditional schooling options—charter schools, homeschooling, and private schools. District schools, while showing a smaller rate of change compared to the subset of 20 counties, were the only education sector to lose enrollment during this period.

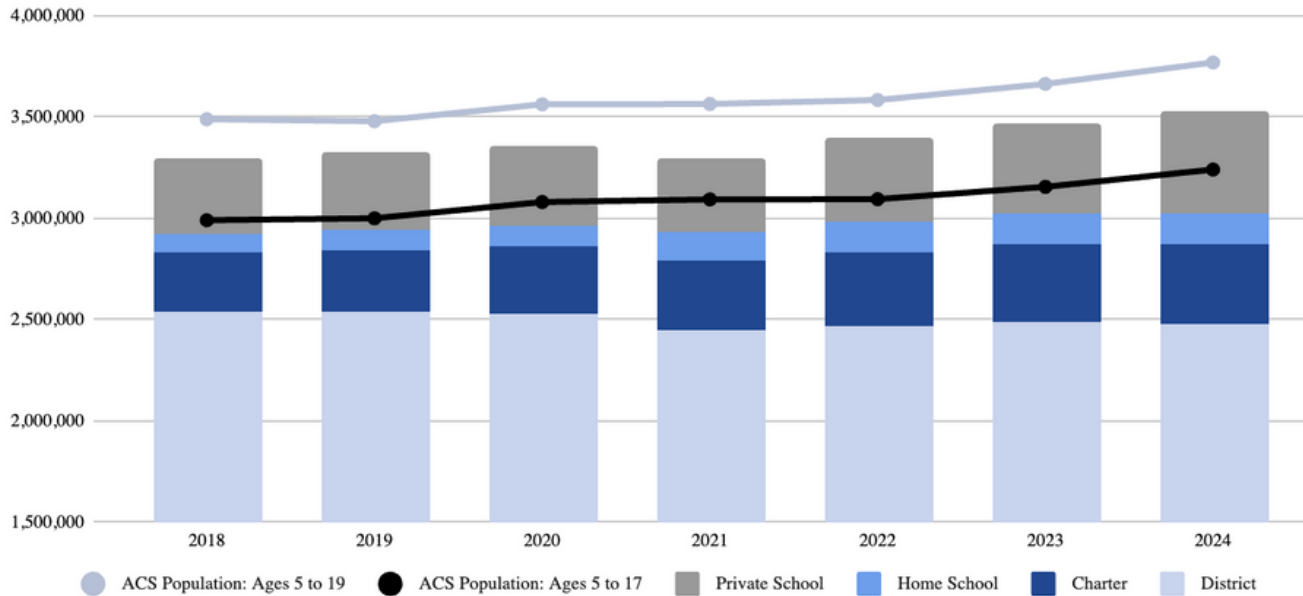
Table 2. Enrollment by Education Sector and Census School Age Population Trends from 2017-18 to 2023-24 - STATEWIDE

	District	Charter	Home School	Private School	Total	Population: Ages 5 to 17	Population: Ages 5 to 19
2018	2,537,535	295,155	89,817	370,166	3,292,673	2,991,268	3,490,045
2019	2,534,797	312,418	97,261	380,295	3,324,771	3,000,763	3,480,326
2020	2,529,602	328,923	106,115	397,970	3,362,610	3,081,054	3,563,601
2021	2,450,095	341,223	143,431	364,420	3,299,169	3,094,034	3,565,172
2022	2,471,284	361,534	152,109	416,084	3,401,011	3,095,178	3,584,891
2023	2,488,083	382,043	154,289	445,067	3,469,482	3,156,101	3,664,318
2024	2,474,643	397,329	155,532	503,392	3,530,896	3,241,365	3,770,311
Change	-62,892	102,174	65,715	133,226	238,223	250,097	280,266
% Change	-2.50%	34.60%	73.20%	36.00%	7.20%	8.40%	8.00%



The Florida Landscape: Enrollment & Population Trends (cont.)

Figure 4. Enrollment by Education Sector and Census School Age Population Trends from 2017-18 to 2023-24 - STATEWIDE





Emptying Classrooms: Current Utilization Rates of School District Facilities

The enrollment decreases in Florida school districts have inevitably resulted in lower utilization¹¹ of existing district facilities. Table 3 paints a striking picture of the potential space available in school buildings across Florida. Since 2021, the total percentage of district buildings experiencing low utilization, or 1- 50% utilized (also significantly underutilized), grew from 8% to 13%. In other words, 109 more buildings became significantly underutilized over the last five school years. In the same period, the number of buildings experiencing high utilization, or 51-100% utilized, has decreased by 21, and the number of buildings reported as overcapacity (101% or more) fell by 58.

Notably, during this period, despite a decline in utilization rates, the 20 school districts analyzed gained 32 buildings. In other words, enrollment declines and lower school utilization rates across Florida have resulted not in fewer buildings,¹² but more.

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Table 3. Number and Percentage of Buildings in Each Utilization Rate Category

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

Emptying Classrooms: Current Utilization Rates of School District Facilities (cont.)

Table 4 shows average utilization rates across the 20 school districts analyzed in this study. Most significantly, the average utilization rate for all buildings decreased from 75% to 70%. Meanwhile, the average number of seats available¹³ in underutilized district buildings increased from 268 to 303 (for more details regarding seat availability and class sizes by primary service type and school level, see Appendix D). In fact, every year for the last five years, districts have reported an average of over 500 empty seats per building in buildings half-full or less (see the 1-50% category in Table 3). Even in buildings with high utilization, between 51-100%, an average of over 200 seats was available per building.

Table 4. Average Building Utilization Rates and Average Seats Available per Building in Each Utilization Rate Category, from 2021 to 2025*

Utilization Rate Category	Average Utilization Rates					Average Seats Available if Underutilized				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
0%	-	-	-	-	-	299	465	207	280	272
1-50%	35%	37%	37%	37%	37%	551	518	536	524	552
51-100%	78%	74%	75%	75%	75%	239	276	267	264	264
101% +	109%	109%	109%	110%	113%	-	-	-	-	-
Total	75%	70%	70%	71%	70%	268	309	302	299	303

*building count for each category is in Table 3



Emptying Classrooms: Current Utilization Rates of School District Facilities (cont.)

Table 5 provides a more detailed view of facility utilization rates across the 20 districts included in this study, from completely vacant (0%) to highly overcapacity (120% or more). The last column in this table shows how the number of buildings changed in each utilization category. Most interestingly, the number of buildings decreased in the six highest utilization categories (71-80% to 120%+), while the number of buildings increased in the lower utilization categories (61-70% and lower). Along with Table 3, which shows a clear increase in buildings with utilization rates under 50% and a decrease in buildings with utilization rates over 50%, these figures reveal a clear pattern of underutilization of school district facilities across the state of Florida. Simply put, Florida's school district buildings have been emptying at a constant rate since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5. Number and Percentage of Buildings in Each Utilization Rate Category

Utilization Rate Category	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Change 2021 to 2025
0%	50 (2.3%)	41 (1.9%)	37 (1.7%)	42 (1.9%)	52 (2.3%)	2
1-10%	12 (0.5%)	18 (0.8%)	15 (0.7%)	18 (0.8%)	13 (0.6%)	1
11-20%	15 (0.7%)	20 (0.9%)	19 (0.9%)	19 (0.9%)	24 (1.1%)	9
21-30%	24 (1.1%)	33 (1.5%)	39 (1.8%)	32 (1.4%)	30 (1.3%)	6
31-40%	42 (1.9%)	49 (2.2%)	64 (2.9%)	59 (2.7%)	66 (3%)	24
41-50%	88 (4%)	138 (6.3%)	143 (6.5%)	149 (6.7%)	157 (7%)	69
51-60%	178 (8.1%)	282 (12.8%)	272 (12.3%)	262 (11.8%)	284 (12.7%)	106
61-70%	351 (15.9%)	432 (19.6%)	406 (18.4%)	403 (18.1%)	400 (17.9%)	49
71-80%	482 (21.9%)	526 (23.8%)	484 (21.9%)	466 (21%)	468 (20.9%)	-14
81-90%	527 (23.9%)	426 (19.3%)	442 (20%)	454 (20.4%)	414 (18.5%)	-113
91-100%	275 (12.5%)	163 (7.4%)	198 (9%)	219 (9.9%)	226 (10.1%)	-49
101-110%	115 (5.2%)	56 (2.5%)	62 (2.8%)	63 (2.8%)	68 (3%)	-47
111-120%	29 (1.3%)	14 (0.6%)	23 (1%)	25 (1.1%)	25 (1.1%)	-4
120%+	16 (0.7%)	9 (0.4%)	8 (0.4%)	12 (0.5%)	9 (0.4%)	-7
Average Utilization Rate	75%	70%	70%	71%	70%	-5
Total	2,204	2,207	2,212	2,223	2,236	32



Emptying Classrooms: Current Utilization Rates of School District Facilities (cont.)

Facilities remain one of the most prominent challenges facing Florida's charter schools. According to an analysis of charter school financial audits conducted by the Florida Charter Schools Institute, new charter schools spend nearly one-quarter of their budget on facilities in their early years.¹⁴ Even after many years in operation, established charter schools allocate at least 15% of their budget to facilities. Facilities are difficult to finance for new schools, and significantly divert resources that could be spent on instruction. As one charter school leader noted in a recent survey of charter leaders regarding facilities needs conducted by Momentum Strategy & Research and the Florida Charter Institute: "Facility issues are the #1 issue facing our ability to maintain or expand. We are in our first year and have over 200 students on our waiting list. At this point, we are unsure if our current facility will be open to another year of leasing (allowing us to maintain our current enrollment), and we do not have other options for expansion."

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New charter schools spend nearly one-quarter of their budget on facilities in their early years, compared to 15% for established schools.

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Emptying Classrooms: Current Utilization Rates of School District Facilities (cont.)

The number of available seats is growing steadily inside district school buildings. Using current enrollment trends, we estimate districts require 77 fewer buildings in terms of seat capacity, while charter schools need the equivalent of 256 additional buildings. In the 2024-25 school year, over 645,000 seats were available in underutilized district buildings. Based on the average charter school enrollment in Florida, between 2021 and 2025, which was 532 students, the school districts' current capacity to house charter students was estimated. Table 6 shows that 12% of all district buildings, or 264 out of 2,129, have the capacity to house the average-sized charter school. Additional details about usable buildings can be found in Appendix E.¹⁵

Table 6. Number of Buildings With Capacity for the Average Charter School and Total Seats Available

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



A Chance for Charters: Maximizing Public Education Resources

Charter schools currently receive specialized funding, called "capital outlay," that is designated primarily for facilities construction and renovation and is drawn from both state general appropriations and property tax revenue, the primary local contribution to school funding. However, most Florida charter schools continue to pay more for their facilities than is provided through these public funds (see Table 7). According to data available from charter school financial audits, Florida charter schools spent an average of \$2,077 per student on facilities in 2023 and received an average of \$530 per student in capital outlay funding.^{16 17}

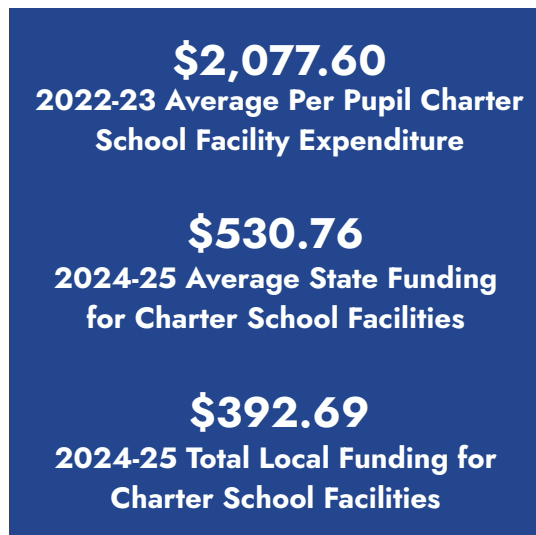


Table 7. State and Local Funding for Facilities for Charter Schools

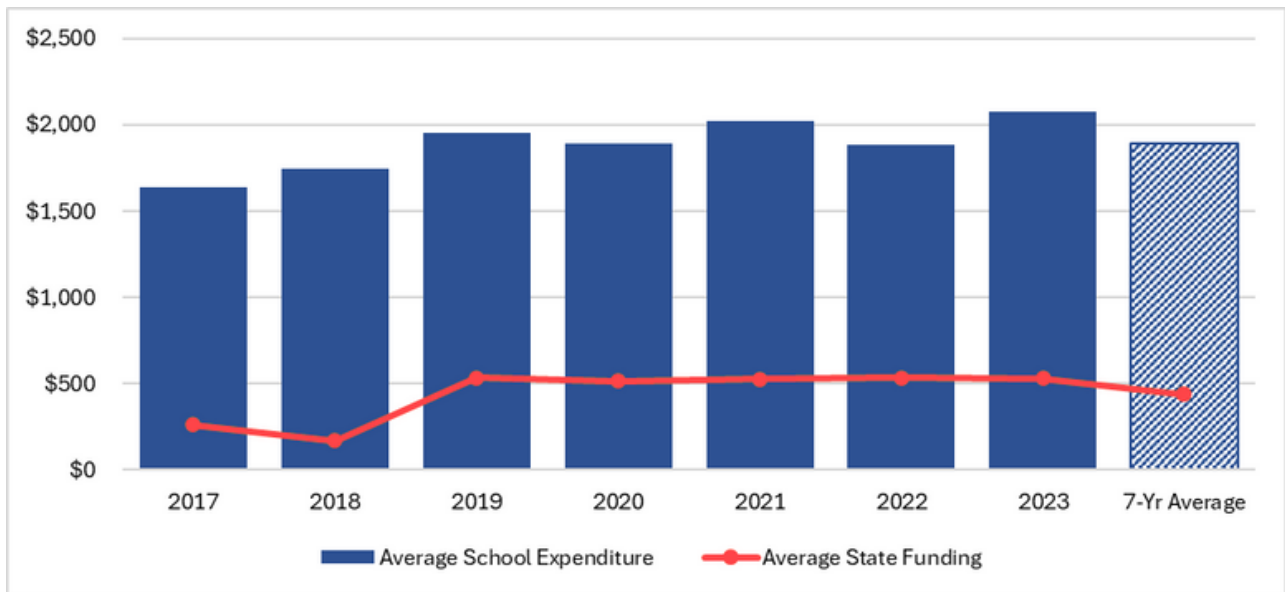
Year	State - Total Amount	State - Charter Average Per Pupil	Local - Total Amount	Local - Charter Average Per Pupil	Average School Per Pupil Facilities Expenditure	Difference Between Expenditure and State Funding
2016-17	\$75,000,000	\$264			\$1,640.48	\$1,376.14
2017-18	\$49,995,310	\$169			\$1,748.50	\$1,579.11
2018-19	\$167,003,983	\$535			\$1,953.10	\$1,418.55
2019-20	\$169,716,684	\$516			\$1,892.55	\$1,376.57
2020-21	\$179,868,530	\$527			\$2,022.61	\$1,495.48
2021-22	\$193,903,723	\$536			\$1,884.41	\$1,348.07
2022-23	\$202,773,415	\$531			\$2,077.60	\$1,546.84
2023-24	\$289,223,416	\$728	\$59,107,603	\$164.16		
2024-25	\$251,024,082	\$617	\$139,729,592	\$392.69		



A Chance for Charters: Maximizing Public Education Resources (cont.)

Figure 5 further illustrates the average amount that charter schools spend per student on facilities, compared to the average amount per pupil that charter schools receive from the state to cover facility costs.

Table 5. Average Per Pupil Facilities Expenditures and State Funding for Charter Schools



In a survey of Florida charter school leaders as part of this report, 51% of respondents indicated they were “exploring or planning to grow beyond their current facility’s capacity,” while an additional 22% answered as unsure. Of these respondents, 28% indicated there exists a nearby underutilized district facility, while an additional 41% were unsure if there was a nearby underutilized district facility.

As noted above, charter schools spend 15% to 24% of their total funding on facilities-related expenses, depending on the age of the school. Based on the average charter school enrollment of 532 students and the average per-pupil facilities expenditure of \$2,077, the typical Florida charter school spends over \$1.1 million annually for its current facility. If schools had the option to occupy underutilized district facilities, they could reallocate funds to instruction-related needs like teacher salaries. In fact, if 100 average-sized charter schools chose to locate in underutilized district facilities, an estimated annual amount of \$110.5 million could be more efficiently allocated to teach Florida’s students.

Florida’s shifting PK–12 enrollment landscape creates an opportunity to both optimize the use of existing public facilities and generate significant fiscal savings across charter schools, districts, and the state. With 264 district facilities able to accommodate the average-sized charter school, Florida indeed has the space to succeed.



Conclusion: Space to Succeed

Florida public education is changing. Declining enrollment in district schools has left behind a growing list of underutilized facilities—spaces that drain resources as their classrooms steadily empty of students. At the same time, Florida's charter sector continues to search for space to succeed, serving more families each year and demonstrating strong academic results.

Charter schools represent an opportunity, a practical, cost-effective solution to the problem of stranded public assets. Repurposing underutilized school buildings for charter schools' use not only saves taxpayer dollars otherwise spent on new construction, but also allows schools to channel more resources into Florida's students and teachers.

Florida is not alone in facing these demographic and enrollment shifts, but it is once again uniquely positioned to lead the way. With more than half of its students now educated in schools of choice, the state has already demonstrated the public's appetite for alternatives. The next step is to ensure that public facilities are allocated in ways that match this reality.

Empty buildings need not symbolize decline. With deliberate policy choices and stronger collaboration between districts and charters, they can instead become symbols of renewal and success—evidence that Florida is committed to reimagining public education so that every student, in every community, has access to a school that families actively choose and that taxpayers can proudly support.



About The Florida Charter Institute & Momentum Strategy & Research



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FCI was established in 2022 to further the remarkable success of charter schools and assist families in seeking quality education choices. FCI works closely with the Florida Department of Education and state and national charter and authorizing organizations to implement best practices in educational standards and offer vital resources to charter schools, and authorizers. FCI serves as Florida's premier hub for charter innovation, with a team of experts committed to elevating student success by advancing academic and operational excellence at Florida's charter schools. To learn more, visit <https://flcharterinstitute.org>



Momentum Strategy & Research is a policy-focused research organization with a deep background in charter school policy, including facilities funding, financing, and allocation. Momentum leaders - through their work with the Colorado League of Charter Schools—were behind nearly two decades of facility policy development, including per pupil funding, tax-exempt financing, credit enhancement, access to local district tax funding, and pioneered the use of charter school facility surveys to shape public policy. Momentum now provides research support to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, documenting facility policies and related outcome data across the nation. To learn more, visit <https://momentum-sr.org/>.



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Appendices

Appendix A: List of Florida Counties, the Number of Charter Schools, and Whether the County Was Included in the Report

	County	Charter Schools	Included in Analysis		County	Charter Schools	Included in Analysis
1	Miami-Dade County	159	Yes	25	Marion County	5	No
2	Broward County	90	Yes	26	Indian River County	5	No
3	Hillsborough County	56	Yes	27	Okaloosa County	4	No
4	Palm Beach County	47	Yes	28	Martin County	4	No
5	Duval County	47	Yes	29	St. Johns County	3	No
6	Orange County	45	Yes	30	Clay County	3	No
7	Polk County	35	Yes	31	Hernando County	3	No
8	Osceola County	23	Yes	32	Madison County	3	No
9	Lee County	21	Yes	33	Charlotte County	2	No
10	Pinellas County	17	Yes	34	Walton County	2	No
11	Alachua County	16	Yes	35	Putnam County	2	No
12	Pasco County	15	Yes	36	Levy County	2	No
13	Manatee County	14	Yes	37	Santa Rosa County	1	No
14	Sarasota County	14	Yes	38	Citrus County	1	No
15	Brevard County	13	Yes	39	Columbia County	1	No
16	Bay County	13	Yes	40	Gadsden County	1	No
17	Lake County	12	Yes	41	Wakulla County	1	No
18	Collier County	11	Yes	42	Flagler County	1	No
19	Escambia County	8	Yes	43	Sumter County	1	No
20	St. Lucie County	8	Yes	44	Bradford County	1	No
21	Leon County	7	No	45	Dixie County	1	No
22	Monroe County	7	No	46	Glades County	1	No
23	Volusia County	6	No	47	Franklin County	1	No
24	Seminole County	6	No	48	Maricopa County	1	No
Total Charters Included						664 out of 740	89.7%



Appendix B: Number of Buildings by School Function/Setting, by Year

School Function	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Adult General Education	12	13	13	14	13
Career and Technical Education Center	27	27	28	30	32
Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)	1	1	1	1	1
General Education	2,204	2,207	2,212	2,223	2,237
Not Available	23	24	25	27	25
Title I Migrant Non-Enrolled Students				1	1
Total Buildings	2,267	2,272	2,279	2,296	2,309
Percent of Buildings NOT General Education (Removed from Analysis)	2.80%	2.90%	2.90%	3.20%	3.10%



Appendix C: County Level Enrollment and Market Share Changes:

- Census Population: Ages 5 to 17: Population from 2018 to 2023 increased in every county except for Miami-Dade and Pinellas
- Census Population: Ages 5 to 19: Population from 2018 to 2023 increased in every county except for Bay, Collier, Miami-Dade, and Pinellas
- Total Enrollment: Increased from 2018 to 2024 in every county except for Broward and Pinellas
- District Enrollment: Increased in 8 of the 20 counties (Lake, Lee, Manatee, Osceola, Pasco, Polk, Sarasota, and St. Lucie)
- District Market Share: Decreased in every county
- Charter Enrollment: Increased in every county
- Charter Market Share: Increased in every county except for Lee and Sarasota
- Home School Enrollment and Market Share: Increased in both across all counties
- Private School Enrollment and Market Share: Increased in both across all counties

APPENDIX D: Percentage of Buildings, Average Class Size, and Average Seats Available by Utilization Category, Primary Service Type, and School Level

	Percent of Total Buildings					Average Class Size					Average Seats Available if Underutilized				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Buildings	2,204	2,207	2,212	2,223	2,236	14.7	13.8	14.0	14.0	13.9	268	309	302	299	303
Utilization Rate Category															
1-50%	8%	12%	13%	12%	13%	6.8	7.1	7.1	7.2	7.3	551	518	536	524	552
51-100%	82%	83%	81%	81%	80%	15.3	14.7	14.9	15.0	14.9	239	276	267	264	264
101%+	7%	4%	4%	4%	5%	21.8	22.7	21.8	21.8	22.5	-	-	-	-	-
Primary Service Type															
K-12 General Education	95%	96%	96%	95%	95%	15.2	14.2	14.4	14.4	14.3	267	309	301	297	302
Alternative Education	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	6.0	5.3	5.3	5.6	5.6	353	384	387	409	404
Special Education	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	5.2	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.5	178	194	208	206	203
School Level															
Combination	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	11.8	10.9	11.1	11.3	11.2	280	334	317	316	309
Elementary	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	14.1	13.0	13.2	13.3	13.3	203	241	235	236	236
Middle/Jr. High	17%	17%	17%	17%	17%	16.7	15.8	15.7	15.5	14.9	304	346	353	346	371
Senior High	16%	16%	16%	16%	16%	16.8	16.3	16.6	16.9	16.8	477	526	503	481	487



Appendix E: Number of Buildings Usable for the Average Charter School by School Level (with Average Utilization and Capacity)

	Number of Buildings					Average Utilization					Average Capacity (According to Work Plan)				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2025	2025
1-50% Utilized															
Combination	14	18	14	13	17	27.6%	27.6%	29.7%	29.3%	32.5%	1,101	1,167	1,215	1,238	1,281
Elementary	12	24	22	25	31	35.1%	34.7%	33.3%	32.1%	36.1%	1,103	1,008	987	993	1,008
Middle/Jr. High	22	27	35	31	36	41.1%	41.1%	41.1%	41.5%	39.8%	1,345	1,333	1,347	1,339	1,384
Senior High	24	25	31	30	35	30.0%	32.4%	33.2%	29.7%	31.7%	1,745	1,640	1,818	1,646	1,742
51-100% Utilized															
Combination	6	11	16	16	8	60.7%	61.7%	62.2%	61.0%	60.6%	1,887	1,873	1,838	1,810	1,864
Elementary	5	4	4	4	3	53.2%	57.0%	53.8%	54.0%	53.7%	1,272	1,307	1,262	1,259	1,275
Middle/Jr. High	24	25	26	30	43	57.2%	58.4%	58.7%	58.0%	57.7%	1,689	1,708	1,717	1,664	1,546
Senior High	78	103	90	80	77	68.1%	68.2%	67.6%	66.8%	68.0%	2,617	2,628	2,600	2,594	2,508

Appendix F: Average Charter Schools Size By Year of Operation

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Enr.	198	282	332	361	386	410	423	429	447	458	473	484	486	493	493	507	519	531	540	552	593	602

Endnotes

1. https://flrules.org/Gateway/View_notice.asp?id=29944596.
2. From a 2023 survey data of charter schools.
3. Numbers drawn from a data collection effort conducted in partnership between Momentum and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.
4. <https://www.fldoe.org/finance/edual-facilities/wkplans/>.
5. <https://eds.fldoe.org/EDS/MasterSchoolID/>.
6. <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/facts-figures.stml>.
7. <https://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/privateschooldirectory/DownloadExcelFile.aspx>.
8. Table S0101: <https://data.census.gov/table>.
9. Census data provides smaller groupings that can be added together to create both included categories. The data does not include a 5 to 18 category or other groupings that could be combined to create one, so this report provides figures for both 5-17 and 5-19 assuming that the total applicable population is somewhere between those two, given the range of ages of PK-12 students.
10. 1 Year ACS estimates were not available for 2020, so the 5 Year ACS estimates were used here.
11. Utilization rates are a district/state calculated metric in the Five-Year Educational Work Plans as the prior year COFTE divided by the capacity of the building.
12. This number represents the net change in buildings across the 20 districts, rather than new building construction only.
13. Momentum calculated the seats available by taking the capacity in the work plan data and subtracting the prior year COFTE; this number was calculated for only buildings that were underutilized. This number provides a more tangible look at the available space.
14. Data from annual charter school financial audits can be found at audit.flcharterinstitute.org.
15. Vacant buildings account for about 5% of the usable space. However, some of these are either newly established and not yet utilized by students or are not suitable for students due to various factors like age or hurricane damage.
16. Data from annual charter school financial audits can be found at audit.flcharterinstitute.org.
17. This is a statewide average, however, not every charter school received all these funds every year, so this is a slightly lower estimate to provide the picture of how much would go to each charter school student.