STATE *of* CHARTER AUTHORIZING

2015 State of Charter
Authorizing Report

nacsa
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

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Introduction

Since 2008, NACSA has annually surveyed our nation's authorizers. Along the way, we have learned about current practices, challenges, strengths, and shortcomings in authorizing. Survey findings provide an annual measuring stick for those in the field of authorizing, and they help education decision makers, foundations, legislators, and researchers inform their understanding of the field of charter school authorizing.

Findings from 2014-15 illustrate an increase in the number of authorizers using at least 90 percent of NACSA's recommended 12 Essential Practices. But with fewer than 90 percent of authorizers stating that they use a mission for quality authorizing, written annual reports, and an expert panel to review applications, there is still work to be done.

About NACSA's Annual Survey

The 2015 survey asked authorizers to complete 107 questions on a range of topics related to charter school authorizing, including application practices, renewal decision making, as well as discipline and special education. The 2015 sample includes authorizers from every state with charter schools, and they collectively oversee 4,686 charter schools or 70% of all charter schools across the country.

NACSA collects data from authorizers of all portfolio sizes, but reports on large authorizers: those authorizers that oversee 10 or more schools. In 2014-15, there were 107 large authorizers across the country. While they make up approximately just 10 percent of all authorizers, they account for oversight of 65 percent of all charter schools. Nine of these large authorizers oversaw more than 100 charter schools each.

About Authorizers

Authorizers help translate charter school ideas into solid realities for millions of children across our country. Authorizers are responsible for deciding who should be able to open a new charter school, setting expectations and overseeing school performance, and deciding who should continue to serve students and who should lose that privilege.

Last year, there were 1,050 authorizers in 42 states and the District of Columbia. Collectively, authorizers oversaw 6,716 charter schools serving more than 2.6 million students.

School districts, also called Local Education Agencies (LEAs), make up the largest group of authorizers in the country. In 2014-15, there were 950 school district authorizers in the country, followed by 45 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), 18 State Education Agencies (SEAs), 17 Not-For-Profit organizations (NFPs), 17 Independent Charter Boards (ICBs), and three (3) Non-Educational Government entities (NEGs), such as a mayor or municipality.

Authorizers also vary tremendously in the number of schools they oversee. More than one-half (52%) of all authorizers oversee a single charter school. More than four out of five (85%) authorizers oversee five schools or fewer. By contrast, the largest authorizer in the country, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), oversees 644 charter schools.

Authorizer Types Explained

- Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are typically local or countywide districts, whose school board is the authorizer and makes final decisions.
- State Education Agencies (SEAs) are typically housed in a state's Department of Education.
- Independent Charter Boards (ICBs), also known as "commissions" and "institutes," are statewide bodies that have been set up in 15 states for the sole purpose of awarding charters and overseeing charter schools.
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can authorize charter schools in 13 states.
- Non-Educational Government entities (NEGs) are mayors and municipalities that serve as authorizers.
- Not-For-Profit organizations (NFPs) are currently active as authorizers only in Minnesota and Ohio, although permitted by law in Louisiana and Hawaii.

Major Findings

School District Authorizers

NACSA's survey results suggest that more local school districts may be embracing charter schools as part of district transformation efforts: data reveals significant growth in the number of authorizers, largely driven by new school-district authorizers. In fact, the net growth in the number of authorizers during the last five years—nearly 100 authorizers—is due almost exclusively to an increase in school district authorizers (a net increase of 93 school district authorizers during this time frame).

Contrary to popular perception, local school districts are by far the largest group of authorizers. Local districts now make up 90 percent of the 1,050 authorizers in the nation.

District authorizers are not only the largest group of authorizers numerically, they also constitute nearly 50 percent of the nation's largest authorizers.

USE OF ESSENTIAL PRACTICES
BY AUTHORIZER TYPE
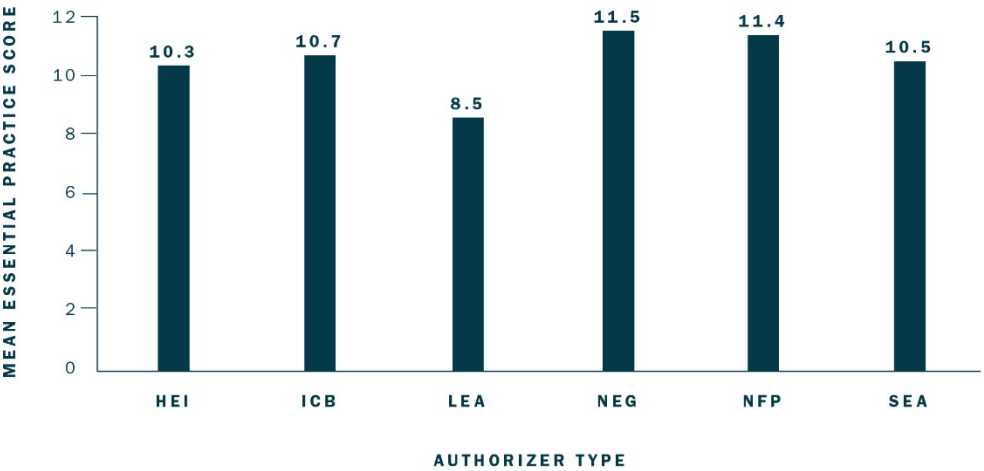
NACSA notes both negative and positive outcomes in this data:

- Many districts have not developed the capacity to effectively oversee charter schools in addition to their other duties.

- School district authorizers—by far—use fewer nationally recognized authorizing best practices (what NACSA calls "Essential Practices") compared to any other type of charter school authorizer.

- On the positive side of the ledger, there can be great outcomes when district officials work together to manage a portfolio of both quality traditional schools and quality

charter schools to meet community needs. Denver is one example of this kind of partnership.
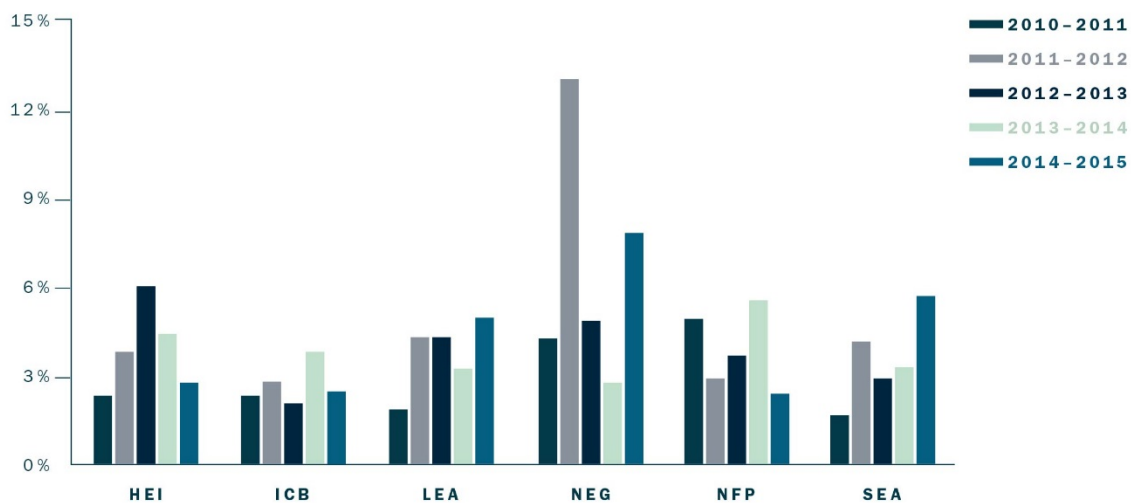
Closures

While the rate of charter school closures has remained steady—nearly 3.8 percent over the past four years among authorizers managing 10 or more schools—the total number of charter schools has grown. This is reflected by the increasing number of charter school closures, as reported in findings recently released by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

It appears that closures outside the renewal process are increasingly overtaking the planned accountability schedule. The relative increase in closures outside the renewal process—from 1.5 percent in 2011 to 2.9 percent in 2015—bears watching and merits more research.

This increase could be a signal that authorizers are taking more aggressive, early action to close underperforming schools before or between renewal timeframes (typically once every five years). This increase could also mean that state closure laws are forcing the closure of academically failing schools outside renewal.

This increase could also mean either that a growing number of charter schools—those closing after being open only a year or two—should not have been allowed to open in the first place, or schools are becoming insolvent between renewal timeframes. The Fordham Institute recently issued a report showing relatively large proportions of charter schools in Ohio opening and closing in their first or second year of operation.

OVERALL CLOSURE RATES
BY AUTHORIZER TYPE 2011–2015

School closures are painful for students, families, and communities, but are sometimes necessary to ensure every student has the opportunity to go to a quality school.

CLOSURE RATES
BY AUTHORIZER TYPE DURING 2014–2015

TYPE	CLOSURE RATE		
	DURING RENEWAL	OUTSIDE RENEWAL	OVERALL
HEI	11.5%	1.1%	2.8%
ICB	10.4%	1.9%	2.5%
LEA	6.6%	4.6%	5.0%
NEG	0%	7.9%	7.7%
NFP	3.4%	0.0%	2.4%
SEA	9.6%	4.7%	5.5%
NATIONAL	7.3%	2.9%	3.7%

Closing failing charter schools has been found to contribute to overall improvement in the charter school sector. Multiple studies report that more than 1,000 charter schools have closed during the last five years (including the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools *Data Dashboard* and Bellwether Education Partners *The State of the Charter School Movement*). The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) reported substantial improvement from 2009 to 2013 in the academic performance of the charter school sector. CREDO concluded that those dramatic gains are "caused in part by the closure of eight percent of charters in those states in the intervening years since the 2009 report." The Fordham Foundation issued a recent report on school closures in Ohio, finding that students displaced by closure had higher academic achievement in their new schools.

One of the most important roles of an authorizer is the decision to renew or revoke a charter for academic or other reasons. More research and time are warranted before drawing conclusions from the trends noted in this data on closures.

Evolving Charter Sector

Large authorizers are increasingly using recommended tools to ensure that quality existing charter school operators are expanding; for example:

- 70 percent have explicit and different criteria for applications that have a network or are affiliated with a management organization;
- 50 percent have policies promoting the replication/expansion of quality operators;
- 76 percent use external experts to evaluate each application they receive; and
- 92 percent interview all qualified applicants.

There is no evidence that large authorizers are lowering their application approval standards. In fact, evidence collected over the last four years for NACSA's State of Charter Authorizing reports suggests

that, if anything, they continue to increase expectations and standards for new schools. However, growth with quality will not be achieved if the increasing application approval rate is associated with expansion of mediocre- or low-performing operators. Overall, charter school sector performance bears watching in the future, and more data is warranted on which existing operators are expanding and their track records.

APPLICATION APPROVAL RATE
2011–2015
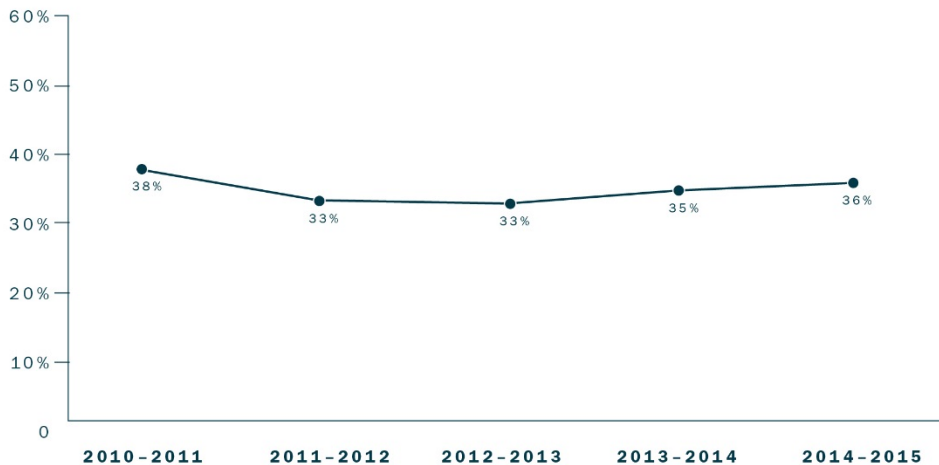
NACSA data, combined with findings from other recent research, support the notion that the national charter school community is shifting to a higher proportion of network-affiliated schools. This year's data suggests that while independent charter schools remain the majority of charters in the country, the shift to more network-affiliated schools may be due in part to the type of applications authorizers are receiving.

- Authorizers are receiving fewer applications overall, but more authorizers are receiving applications to replicate existing charter school models.
- Nationally, data shows higher approval rates of charter school applications.

PERCENTAGE OF AUTHORIZERS THAT RECEIVED
ANY NEW CHARTER APPLICATIONS FROM EXISTING CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATORS

■ YES   ■ NO   ■ OTHER

35%   63%

2013–2014

31%   67%

2014–2015
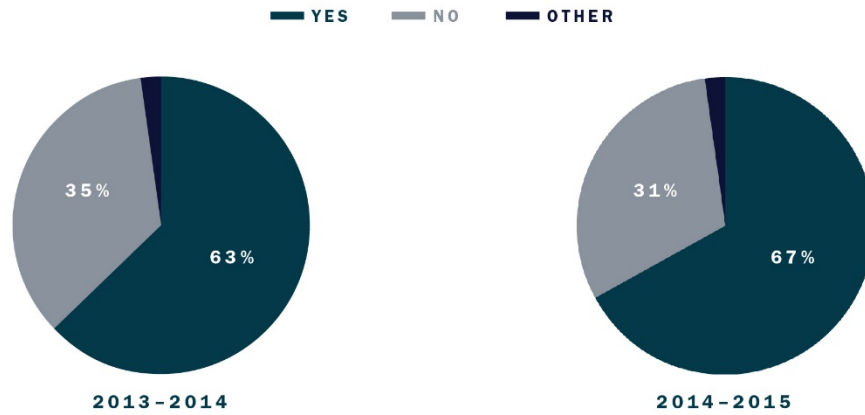
Consistent with data from NACSA's survey, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools reports that management organization-affiliated schools comprised approximately 16 percent of new charter schools in 2010; by 2015, the proportion of new schools affiliated with a management organization had jumped to 41 percent.

Use of Essential Authorizing Practices

Nearly two-thirds (61 percent) of large authorizers are now implementing at least 11 or more of NACSA's 12 Essential Practices for Quality Authorizing. That represents a nearly threefold increase, up from a baseline of fewer than one-quarter of large authorizers (23 percent) in 2012. Authorizers have consistently done well with such practices as having strong criteria for new school applications, charter school renewal, and revocation, and requiring financial audits of all schools they oversee.
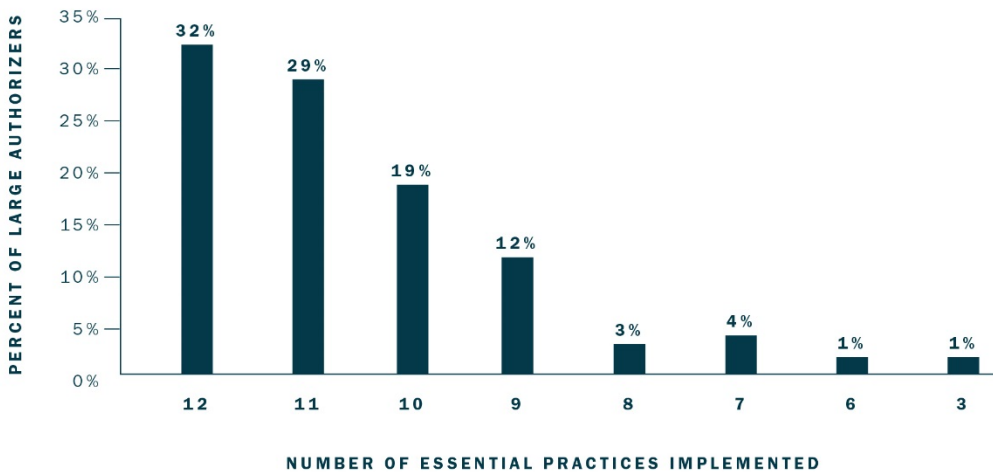
These large authorizers report implementing 11 or more Essential Practices:

Albuquerque Public School Charter School Office
Arizona State Board for Charter Schools
Arkansas Charter Authorizing Panel
Audubon Center of the North Woods
Ball State University Office of Charter Schools
Baltimore City Public Schools
Brevard County Schools
Buckeye Community Hope Foundation
Chicago Public Schools
Colorado Charter School Institute
Denver Public Schools
Detroit Public Schools
District of Columbia Public Charter School Board
Douglas County School District RE-1
Educational Resource Consultants of Ohio, Inc.
Educational Service Center of Lake Erie West
Governor John Engler Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University
Ferris State University
Thomas B. Fordham Foundation
Friends of Education - Minnesota
Indianapolis Mayor's Office of Education Innovation
Kids Count of Dayton, Inc.
Lake Superior State University Charter Schools, Technical Academy Group
Los Angeles Unified School District
Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Metro Nashville Public Schools
Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Charter School Operations
Milwaukee Common Council
Nevada State Public Charter School Authority
New Jersey Department of Education
New Mexico Public Education Commission
New York State Education Department
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Novation Education Opportunities
Oakland Unified School District
Ohio Council of Community Schools
Orange County Public Schools
Orleans Parish School Board
School District of Palm Beach County
St. Aloysius Orphanage
State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia
State University of New York Charter Schools Institute
Texas Education Agency
University of Central Missouri
University of Missouri–Kansas City
Volunteers of America–Minnesota

However, there is still cause for concern, as too many large authorizers have not adopted many of these foundational practices. Nearly 21 percent of large authorizers are implementing nine or fewer Essential Practices. Authorizers are still not implementing at high rates such areas as using a panel of experts to evaluate new school applications, annual public reporting of school performance, and establishing an initial five-year charter term, forcing a high-stakes review at that time.

PERCENTAGE OF LARGE AUTHORIZERS
IMPLEMENTING ESSENTIAL PRACTICES

Bar chart. Y-axis: PERCENT OF LARGE AUTHORIZERS (0% to 35%). X-axis: NUMBER OF ESSENTIAL PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED.

Number of Essential Practices Implemented	Percent of Large Authorizers
12	32%
11	29%
10	19%
9	12%
8	3%
7	4%
6	1%
3	1%

USE OF ESSENTIAL PRACTICES
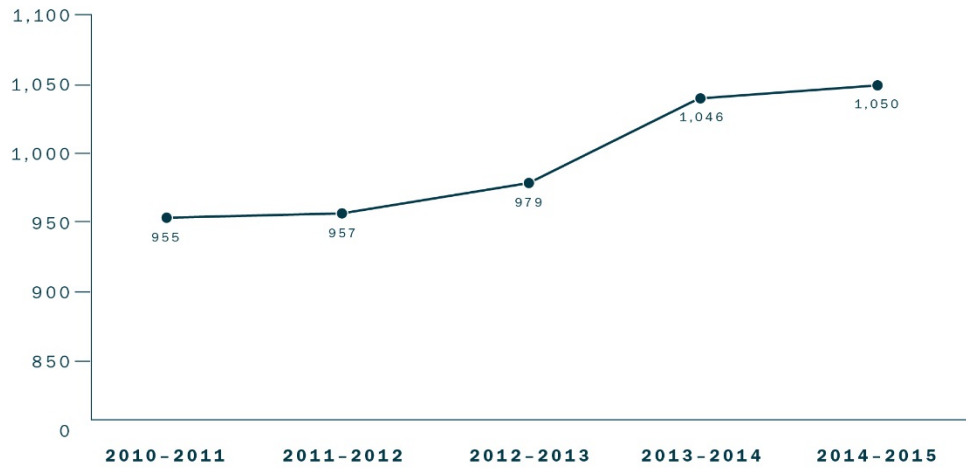### BY AUTHORIZER TYPE
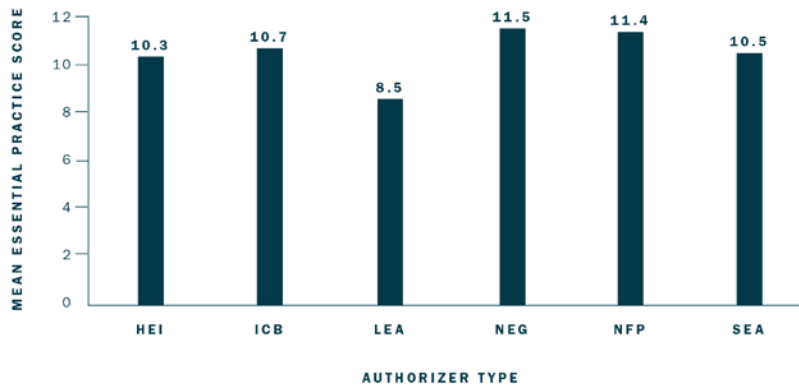
## FREQUENCY OF ESSENTIAL PRACTICES
— LARGE AUTHORIZERS —
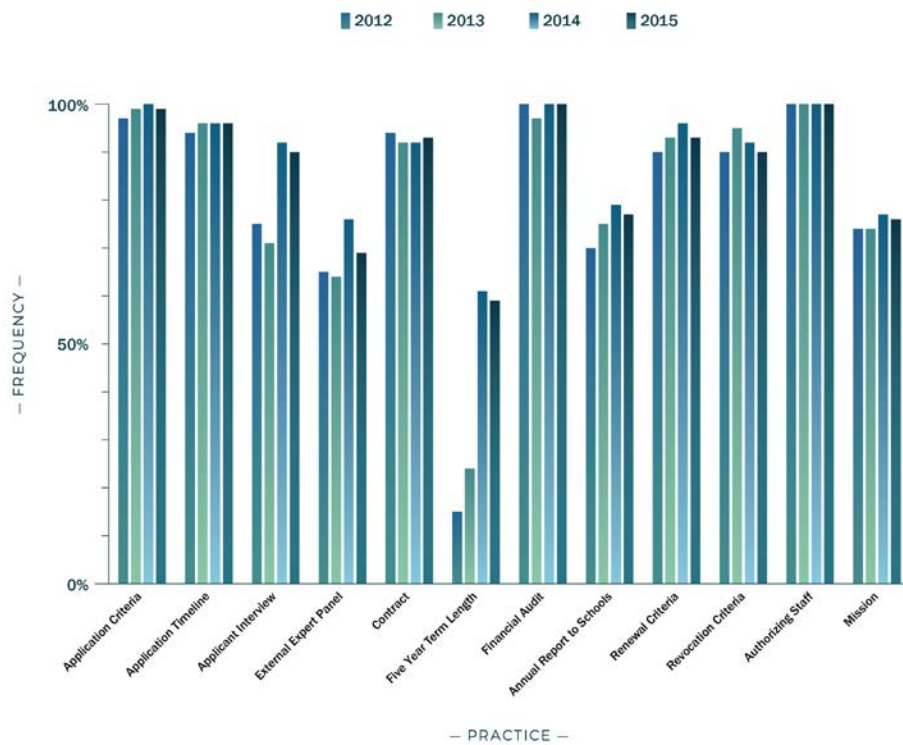
Authorizer Demographics
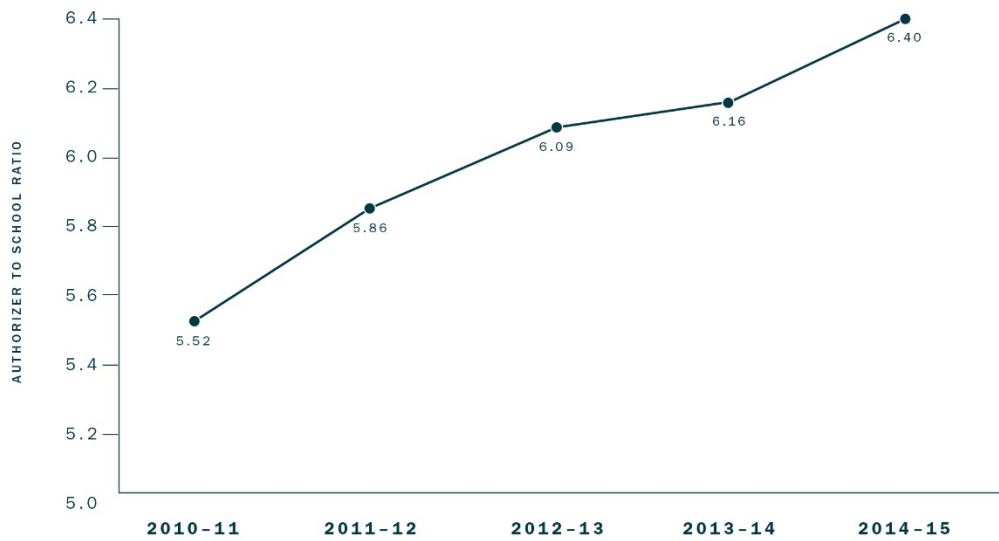
NUMBER OF AUTHORIZERS
2011–2015

- Since 2010-11, the number of authorizers has increased by 10%.
- In 2010-11, there were 955 authorizers; by 2015, that number had grown to 1,050, a net increase of 95 authorizers in five years.

RATE OF GROWTH OF AUTHORIZERS VS. SCHOOLS
2011–2015

AUTHORIZERS	10.0%
SCHOOLS	27%

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%   30%
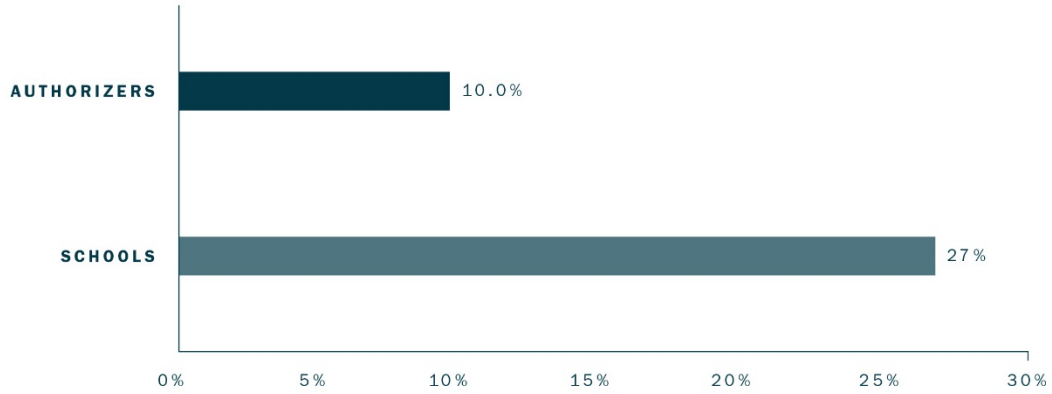
- The rate of charter school growth has been nearly three times the rate of authorizer growth during the last five years.

## RATE OF AUTHORIZER TO SCHOOL GROWTH

- The number of schools per authorizer has increased by nearly a full point during the last five years, from 5.5 schools for every authorizer to nearly 6.5 schools for every authorizer.

NUMBER OF AUTHORIZERS BY PORTFOLIO SIZE

| NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	NET CHANGE 2011–2015	% CHANGE 2011–2015
0–1	540	542	520	554	546	+6	1%
2	158	156	162	173	175	+17	11%
3–5	122	121	152	166	172	+50	41%
6–9	52	49	50	50	50	-2	-4%
10–50	66	72	77	82	84	+18	27%
51–99	12	11	11	13	14	+2	17%
100+	5	6	7	8	9	+4	80%
TOTAL	955	957	979	1,046	1,050	+95	10%

- The number of very large authorizers (100 or more schools) has increased by 80% since 2010-11.
- There are more authorizers in each portfolio size group, except authorizers of 6-9 schools, which has stayed nearly constant.
- The number of authorizers overseeing 10-50 schools has increased by 27% since 2010-11.

TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS OVERSEEN BY NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN AN AUTHORIZER'S PORTFOLIO 2014–2015
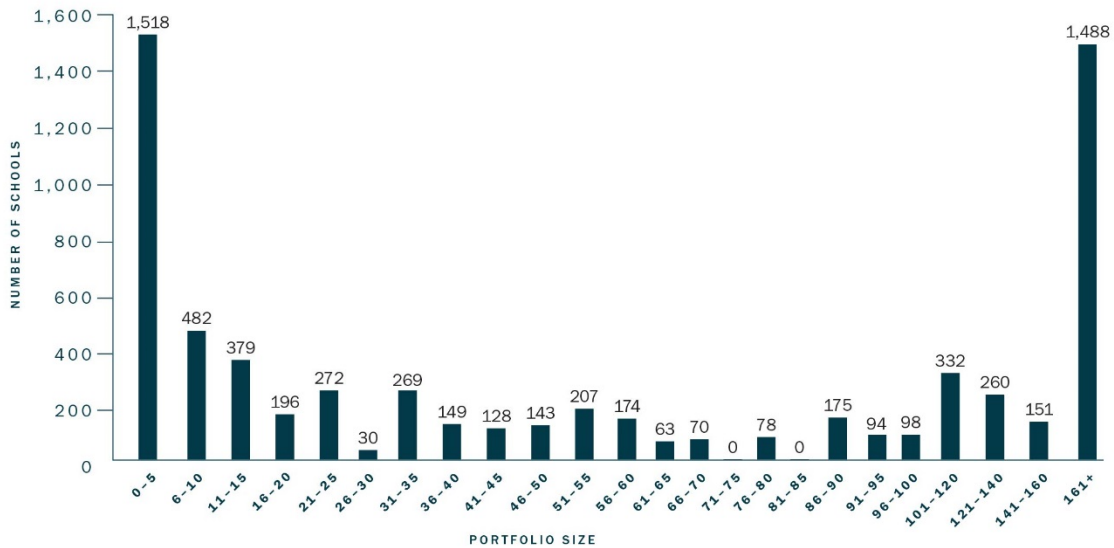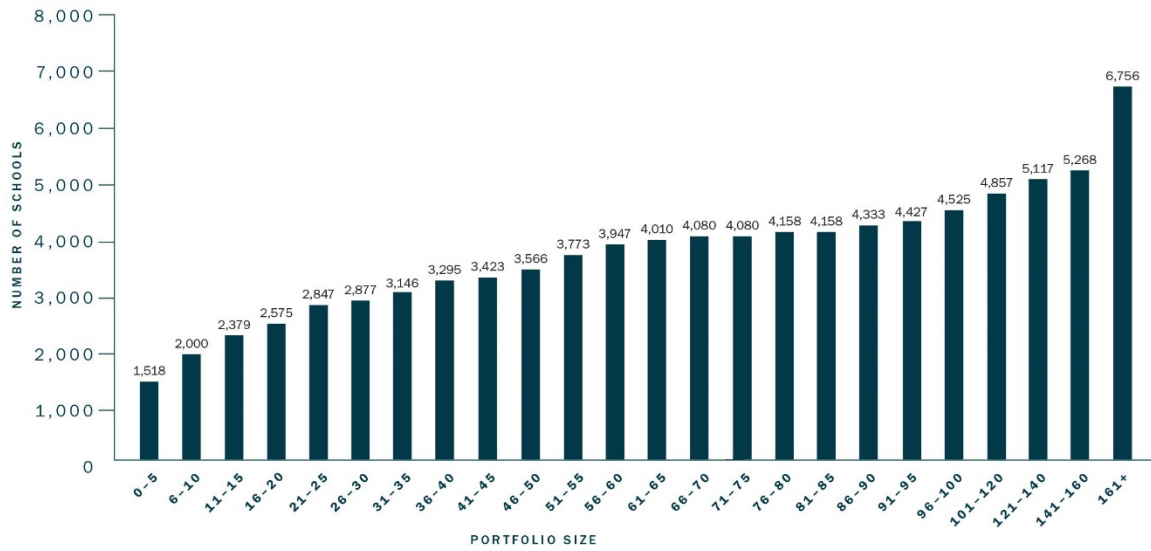

- Authorizers that oversee 5 schools or less collectively oversee a total of 1,518 schools.
- Authorizers with more than 160 schools in their portfolio oversee a total number of schools that is nearly the same number of total schools as authorizers with 5 schools or less in their portfolios.

PROPORTION OF AUTHORIZER PORTFOLIO SIZE
OF ALL CHARTER SCHOOLS: 2014–2015

22% — 0 TO 5 SCHOOLS IN PORTFOLIO
45% — 6 TO 99 SCHOOLS IN PORTFOLIO
33% — 100 OR MORE SCHOOLS IN PORTFOLIO
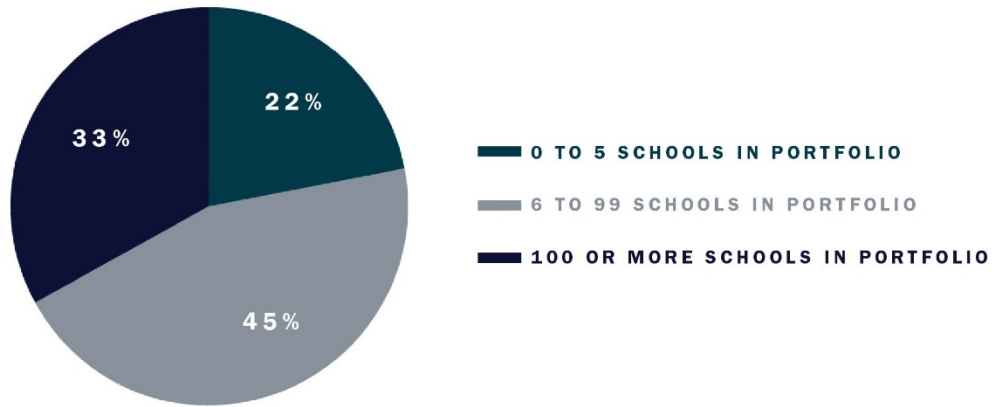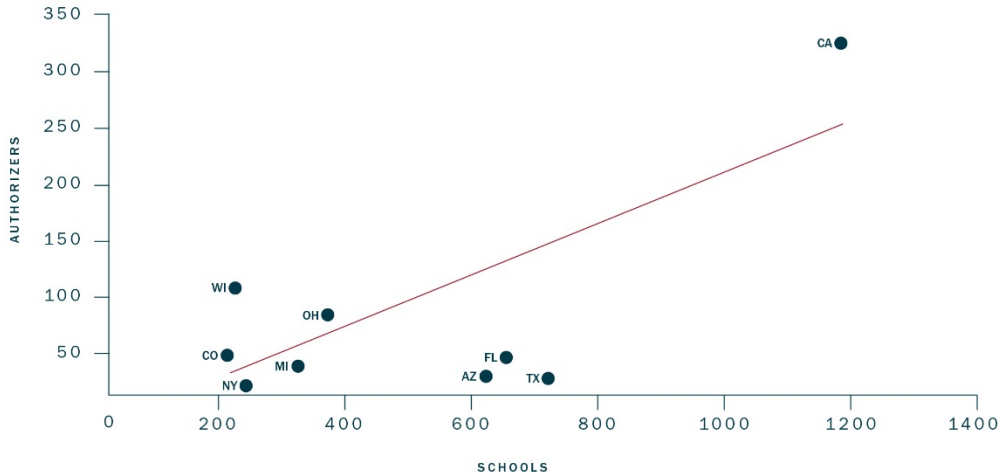
- Authorizers with 5 schools or less in their portfolio oversee 22% of all charter schools in the country.
- Authorizers with 100 or more schools in their portfolios oversee 33% of all charter schools in the country. The 893 authorizers with 5 or fewer schools and the 9 authorizers with 100 or more schools collectively oversee more than half (55%) of all charter schools in the country.

CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
BY AUTHORIZER PORTFOLIO SIZE

Bar chart — NUMBER OF SCHOOLS (y-axis, 0 to 8,000) by PORTFOLIO SIZE (x-axis):

Portfolio Size	Number of Schools
0–5	1,518
6–10	2,000
11–15	2,379
16–20	2,575
21–25	2,847
26–30	2,877
31–35	3,146
36–40	3,295
41–45	3,423
46–50	3,566
51–55	3,773
56–60	3,947
61–65	4,010
66–70	4,080
71–75	4,080
76–80	4,158
81–85	4,158
86–90	4,333
91–95	4,427
96–100	4,525
101–120	4,857
121–140	5,117
141–160	5,268
161+	6,756

AUTHORIZERS AND SCHOOLS BY STATE 2014–2015
### (STATES WITH 200 OR MORE CHARTER SCHOOLS)

AUTHORIZERS AND SCHOOLS BY STATE 2014–2015
(STATES WITH FEWER THAN 200 CHARTER SCHOOLS)
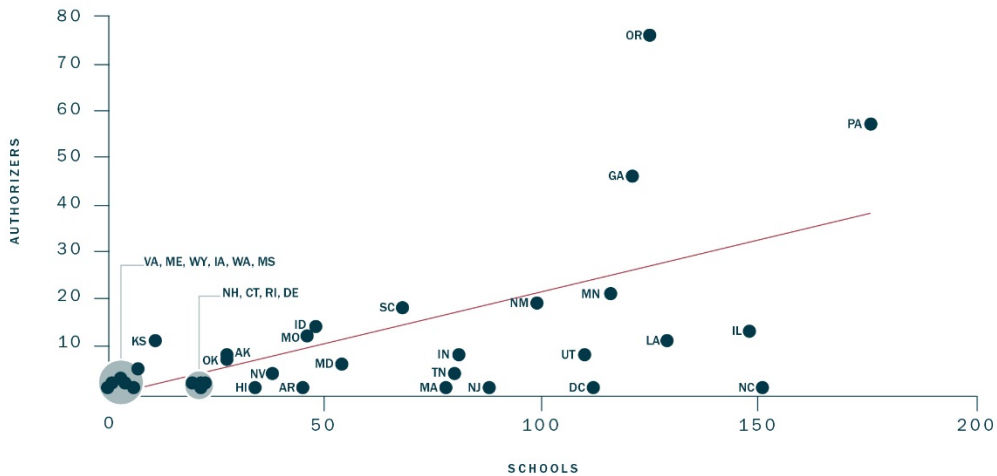
In the graphs above, the red line represents the average (regression line) authorizer to school relationship. States above each red line have more authorizers than average given the number of charter schools in that state. States below each red line have fewer authorizers than average given the number of schools in that state.

NET CHANGE IN AUTHORIZERS*
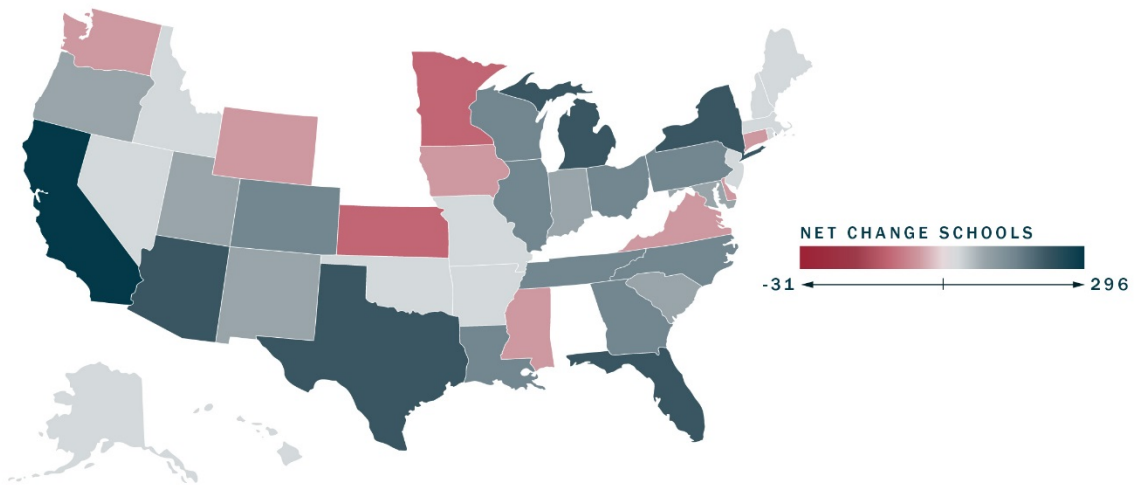### 2011–2015

NET CHANGE AUTHORIZERS

-25 ← → 31
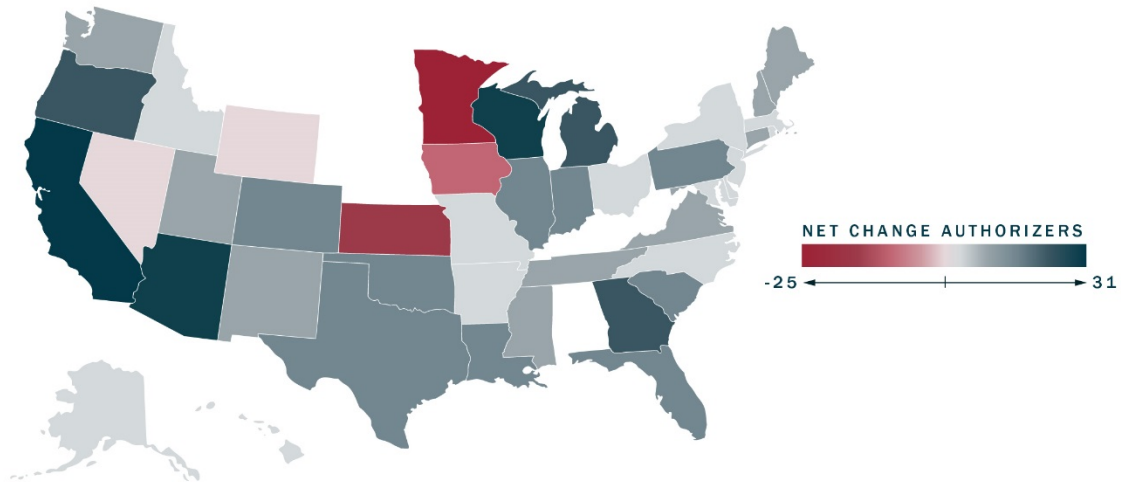
*SEE APPENDIX FOR NET CHANGE BY STATE

- Net change is calculated by taking the total number of authorizers in 2010-11 and subtracting it from the number of authorizers in 2014-15

NET CHANGE IN SCHOOLS*
2011–2015

NET CHANGE SCHOOLS

-31 ⟵——————|——————⟶ 296

*SEE APPENDIX FOR NET CHANGE BY STATE

- Net change is calculated by taking the total number of schools in 2010-11 and subtracting it from the number of schools in 2014-15
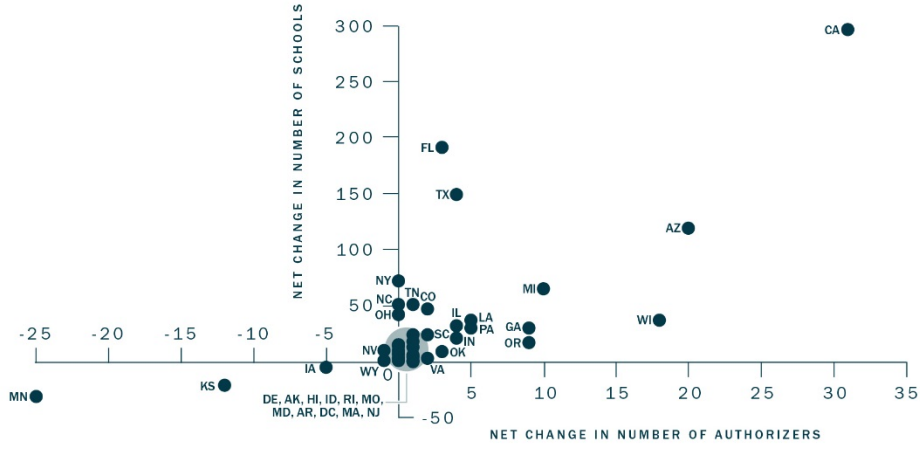
NET CHANGE OF AUTHORIZERS AND SCHOOLS
BY STATE 2011–2015

NUMBER OF AUTHORIZERS BY TYPE
2011–2015

AUTHORIZER TYPE	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	% CHANGE 2011–2015
HEI	49	46	43	47	45	-8%
ICB	8	10	14	15	17	113%
LEA	857	859	882	944	950	11%
NEG	2	2	3	3	3	50%
NFP	20	20	19	19	17	-15%
SEA	19	20	18	18	18	-5%
TOTAL	955	957	979	1,046	1,050	10%

Charter schools are authorized by a range of entities nationwide.

- Half of the authorizer types have increased in number since 2010-11 (ICB, LEA), while the other half have remained relatively stable (SEA) or decreased (HEI, NFP).
- The number of ICBs has more than doubled in the last five years.
- The number of LEAs has increased every year, adding nearly 100 additional LEAs during the last five years.

PERCENT OF AUTHORIZERS BY TYPE
OVER TIME 2010–2015

AUTHORIZER TYPE	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
HEI	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%
ICB	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
LEA	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%
NEG	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
NFP	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
SEA	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

- Local school districts (or LEAs) have consistently made up the vast majority of authorizers in the country. In 2015, 91% of all authorizers (950 out of the total 1,050 authorizers) were LEAs.
- The relative proportion of all authorizing types has remained fairly stable during the past five years.

AUTHORIZER TYPE
BY PORTFOLIO SIZE 2015

	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS						
TYPE	0–1	2	3–5	6–9	10–50	51–99	100+
HEI	3%	5%	3%	6%	11%	21%	11%
ICB	0%	0%	1%	4%	8%	7%	22%
LEA	96%	94%	95%	88%	57%	29%	44%
NEG	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
NFP	1%	1%	0%	2%	11%	7%	0%
SEA	0%	1%	1%	0%	11%	36%	22%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

- While LEAs constitute the majority of authorizers (90%), their proportion of schools in smaller authorizer portfolios is much more pronounced. LEAs make up 96% of all authorizers with only one school, and nearly 50% of authorizers with 100 or more schools.
- For many other authorizing types, the inverse is true. While SEAs represent between 0-1% of authorizers with small portfolio sizes (nine schools or fewer), they make up 36% and 22% of authorizers with 51-99 and 100 or more schools, respectively.
- Although ICBs make up only 2% of all authorizers, they are much more heavily represented among authorizers with 100 schools or more.

PROPORTION OF AUTHORIZER TYPE
BY PORTFOLIO SIZE 2015

| TYPE | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS | | | | | | | TOTAL |
	0-1	2	3-5	6-9	10-50	51-99	100+	
HEI	33%	18%	13%	7%	20%	7%	2%	100%
ICB	13%	0%	13%	13%	44%	6%	13%	100%
LEA	55%	18%	18%	5%	5%	0%	0%	100%
NEG	33%	0%	0%	0%	67%	0%	0%	100%
NFP	29%	6%	0%	6%	53%	6%	0%	100%
SEA	0%	6%	6%	0%	50%	28%	11%	100%

- Most authorizer types except LEAs, and to a lesser degree HEIs, tend to have relatively large portfolios.
- Nearly 90% of SEAs have portfolio sizes of 10 schools or more (50% have 10-50 schools; 28% have 51-99 schools; and 11% have 100 or more schools).
- More than half of ICBs (63%) have 10 or more schools.
- Conversely, 91% of LEAs have 5 or fewer schools, with more than half of LEA authorizers having just a single school.

PERCENTAGE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS
BY AUTHORIZER TYPE 2011–2015

AUTHORIZER TYPE	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
HEI	9%	10%	9%	8%	8%
ICB	15%	13%	14%	14%	14%
LEA	55%	57%	52%	53%	53%
NEG	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
NFP	5%	4%	5%	4%	3%
SEA	16%	16%	20%	20%	20%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

- The proportion of schools overseen by various authorizer types did not vary much during the last five years.
- ICB authorizers oversaw 15% of all charter schools in 2010, and that percentage had shifted only slightly (14%) by 2015.
- LEA authorizers have consistently overseen the majority of charter schools in the country and currently oversee 53% of all charter schools.
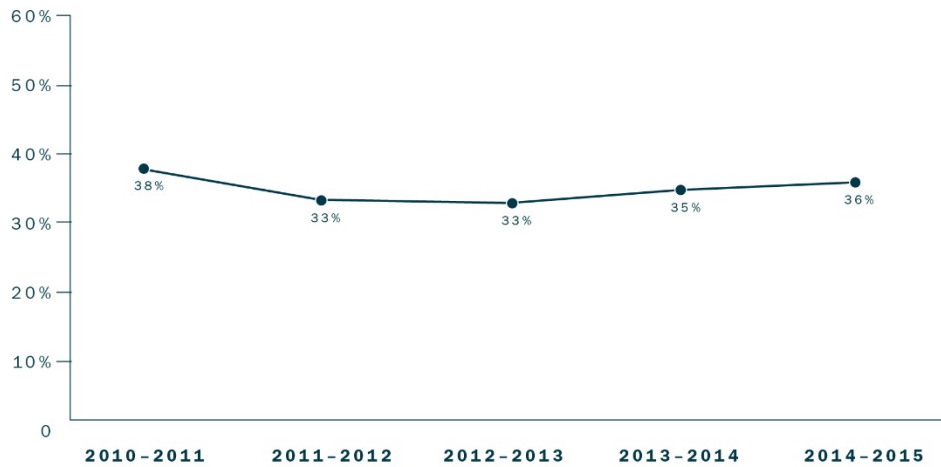
Applications

AVG. NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED
### PER LARGE AUTHORIZER 2011–2015
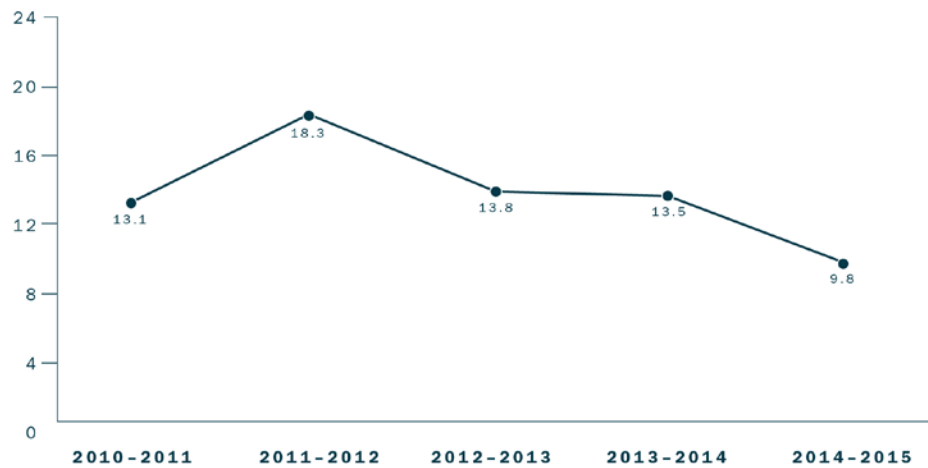
- Large authorizers reported receiving an average of 9.8 applications in 2015, a marked drop from the previous year.
- After a jump in applications received from 2011 to 2012, large authorizers have reported receiving fewer applications for new charter schools every year since then.

APPLICATION APPROVAL RATE
2011–2015

A line chart showing application approval rates from 2010–2011 to 2014–2015.

Year	Rate
2010–2011	38%
2011–2012	33%
2012–2013	33%
2013–2014	35%
2014–2015	36%

- In 2014-15, large authorizers approved 36% of all applications for new charter schools, consistent with an upward trend since 2013.

APPLICATION APPROVAL RATES
BY AUTHORIZER TYPE* 2011–2015

Legend:
- 2010–2011
- 2011–2012
- 2012–2013
- 2013–2014
- 2014–2015
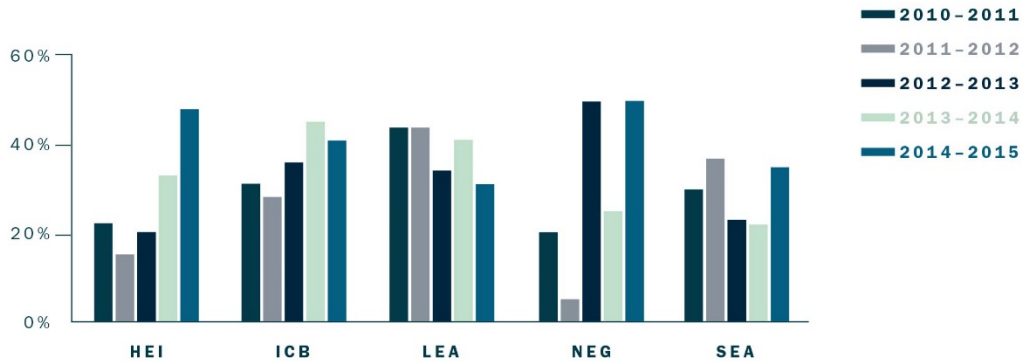
*NFP AUTHORIZERS OMITTED DUE TO A SMALL SAMPLE SIZE

- HEI and ICB authorizers tend to show an upward trend in application approval rates.
- LEAs, and to some degree SEAs, show a slight downward trend, although it varies from year to year.

PERCENTAGE OF AUTHORIZERS THAT RECEIVED
ANY NEW CHARTER APPLICATIONS FROM EXISTING CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATORS

■ YES ■ NO ■ OTHER

| 2013–2014	2014–2015
35% 63%	31% 67%
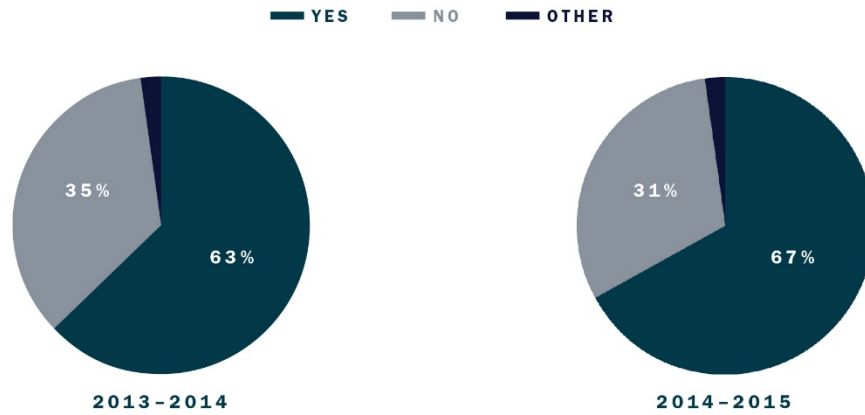
- Nearly two-thirds of large authorizers report receiving at least one application for a new charter school from an existing operator.
- The percentage of authorizers that received new charter applications from existing operators has increased slightly since 2014.

Closures

*(This data is from Large Authorizers only—authorizers that oversee 10 or more schools)*

NACSA collects data on two different types of closures: those that happen during a charter school's renewal process (typically once every five years) and those that happen outside the renewal process (typically a charter revocation for persistently or egregiously low performance). The overall closure rate is the total number of closures in a given year as a proportion of all charter schools in an authorizer's portfolio.
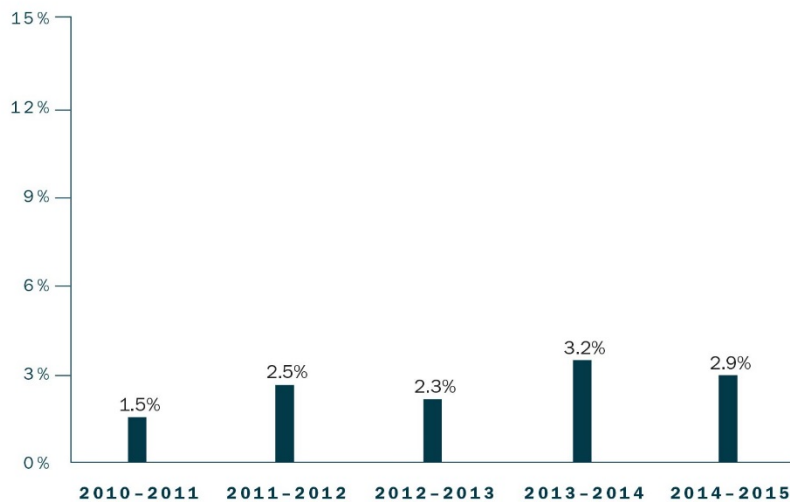
OVERALL CLOSURE RATE
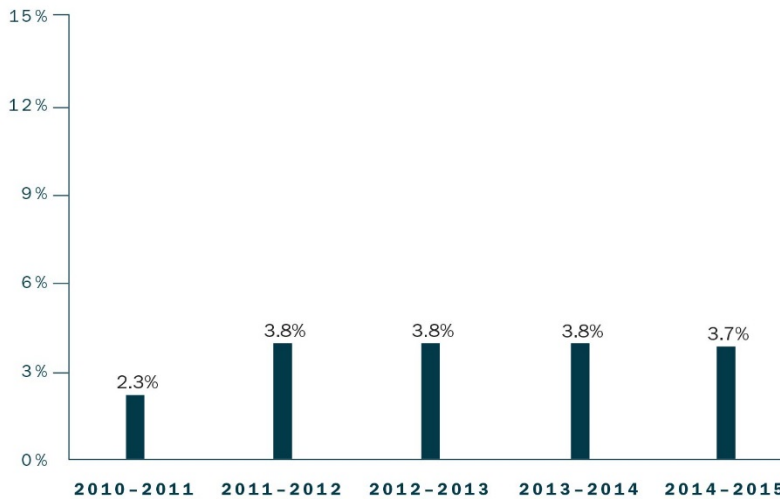
- The overall closure rate has increased compared to 2010-11 and remained fairly stable since 2011-12.

CLOSURE RATE DURING RENEWAL
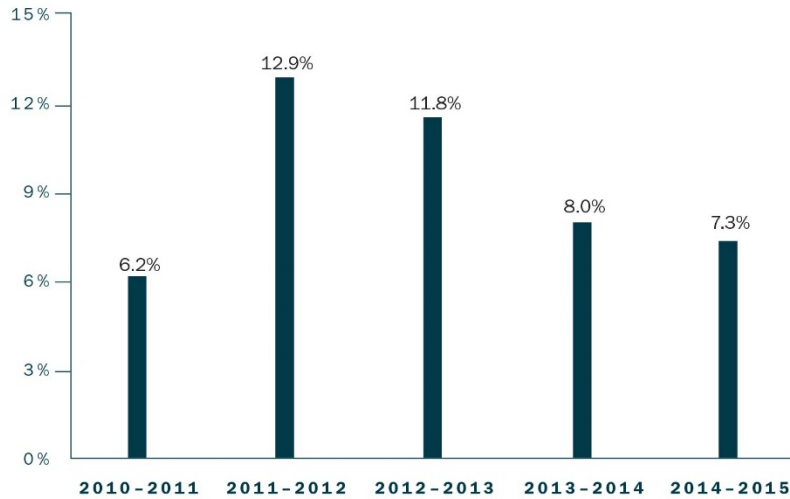
- After a jump in the closure rate during renewal from 2010-11 to 2011-12, that rate has declined substantially.

CLOSURE RATE OUTSIDE RENEWAL

- The closure rate outside renewal has fluctuated during the last five years, but has increased substantially since 2010.

CLOSURE RATES
BY AUTHORIZER TYPE DURING 2014–2015

| TYPE | CLOSURE RATE | | |
	DURING RENEWAL	OUTSIDE RENEWAL	OVERALL
HEI	11.5%	1.1%	2.8%
ICB	10.4%	1.9%	2.5%
LEA	6.6%	4.6%	5.0%
NEG	0%	7.9%	7.7%
NFP	3.4%	0.0%	2.4%
SEA	9.6%	4.7%	5.5%
NATIONAL	7.3%	2.9%	3.7%

- LEA (5.0%), NEG (7.7%), and SEA (5.5%) authorizers had overall closure rates above the overall closure rate among all large authorizers (3.7%), while NFP (2.4%), ICB (2.5%), HEI (2.8%) authorizers reported having a slightly lower closure rate than the overall closure rate.
- Some authorizers had wide differences in the closure rates during and outside the renewal process—HEIs and ICBs, in particular—while others, such as SEA authorizers, reported a smaller difference.

OVERALL CLOSURE RATES
BY AUTHORIZER TYPE 2011–2015
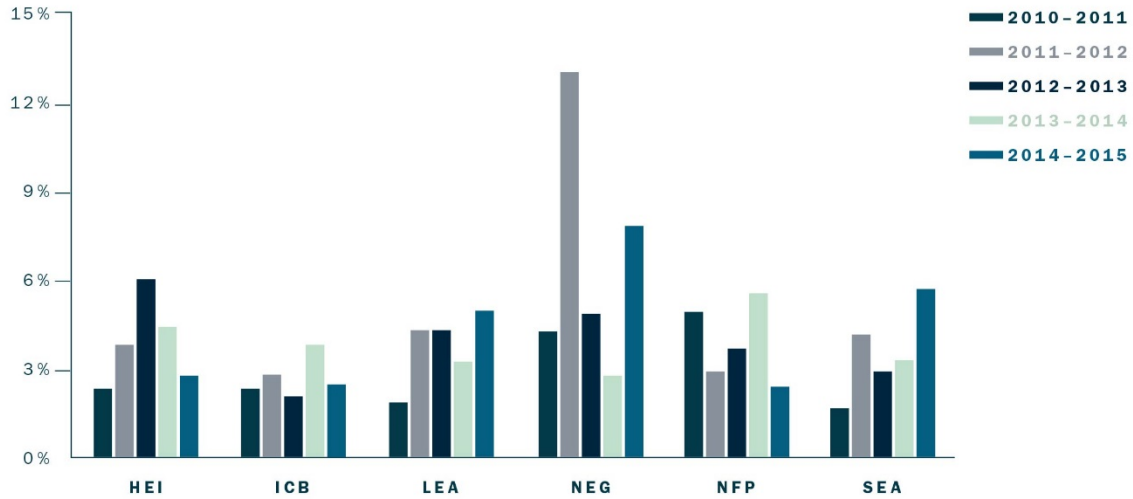
- While there are significant annual fluctuations, it appears that LEA and SEA authorizers have a slightly increasing closure-rate trend, while ICB authorizers appear fairly stable.

PERCENTAGE OF CLOSURE DECISIONS APPEALED

YES **NO**

19%

81%

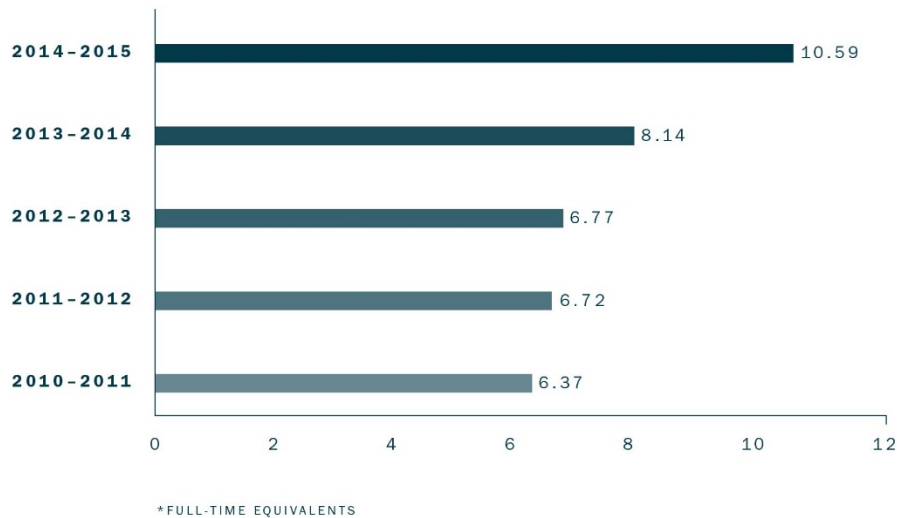**2013–2014**

30%

70%

2014–2015
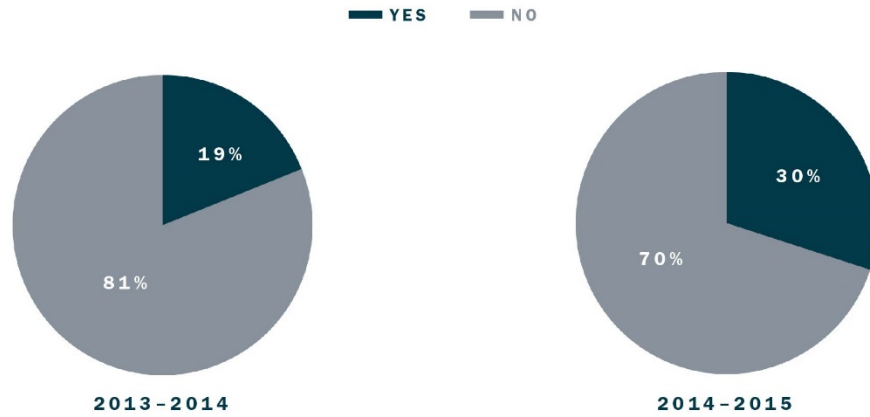
- The proportion of large authorizers reporting having a closure decision appealed has been relatively low but appears to be trending upward (19% in 2013-14 vs. 30% in 2014-15).
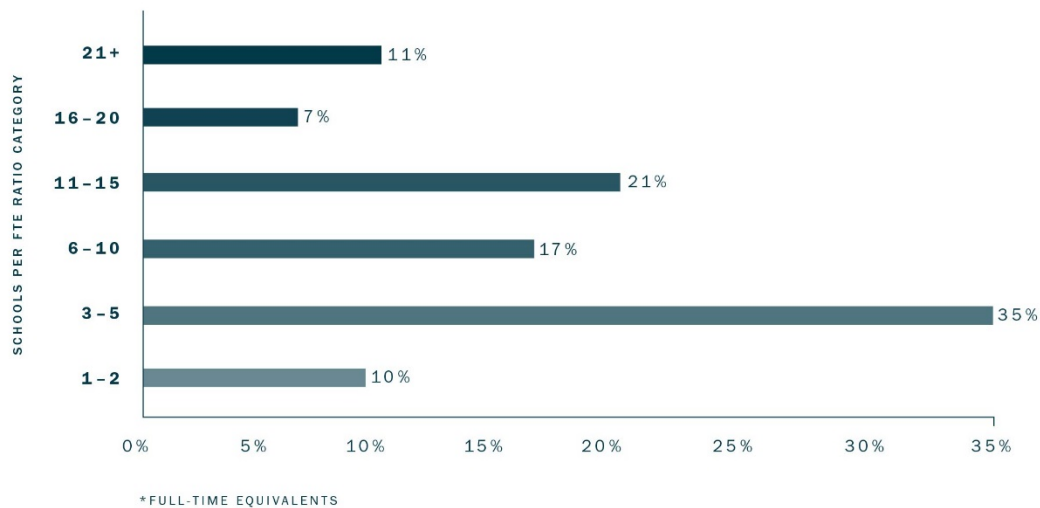
Staffing

(This data is from Large Authorizers only—authorizers that oversee 10 or more schools)

SCHOOLS PER FTE*

| Year	Schools per FTE
2014–2015	10.59
2013–2014	8.14
2012–2013	6.77
2011–2012	6.72
2010–2011	6.37

*FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS

- In 2014-15, large authorizers reported having 1 FTE for every 10.59 schools they oversaw.
- The schools per FTE ratio has increased every year since 2010-11, where the ratio was 1 FTE for every 6.37 schools overseen.

PERCENT OF AUTHORIZERS
BY SCHOOLS PER FTE* 2011–2015

| Schools per FTE Ratio Category	Percent
21+	11%
16–20	7%
11–15	21%
6–10	17%
3–5	35%
1–2	10%

*FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS

- Survey results from large authorizers show no consistency and marked variation in staffing patterns. While the most typical staffing ratio is 1 FTE for every 3-5 schools overseen, note that approximately only one-third (35%) of large authorizers follow that staffing pattern.
- There are also authorizers with extremely high and low school-per-FTE patterns: 10% of authorizers appear to be very highly staffed, with 1 FTE for every 1-2 schools in their portfolio, while authorizers on the other end of the distribution have large portfolios of schools and few staff (11% of authorizers have 1 FTE for every 21 [or more] schools in their portfolio).

NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTE)
BY NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN THE PORTFOLIOS OF LARGE AUTHORIZERS: 2014–2015

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN A LARGE AUTHORIZER PORTFOLIO
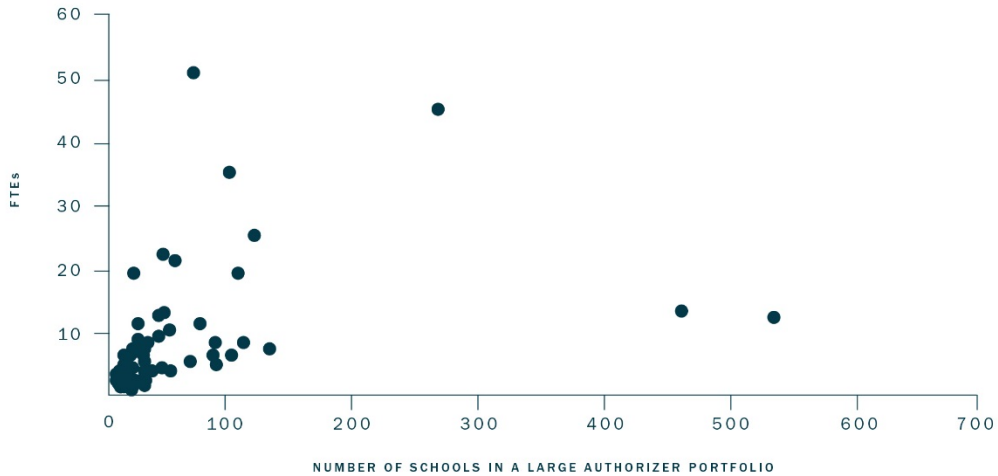
- This chart shows wide variation in the number of staff that authorizers use, as a function of their portfolio size. Some authorizers are clear outliers: one large authorizer oversees nearly 600 schools with 12 FTE, and another authorizer oversees 79 schools with 50 FTE.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND FTEs
FOR LARGE AUTHORIZERS
BETWEEN 60 AND 300 SCHOOLS: 2014–2015
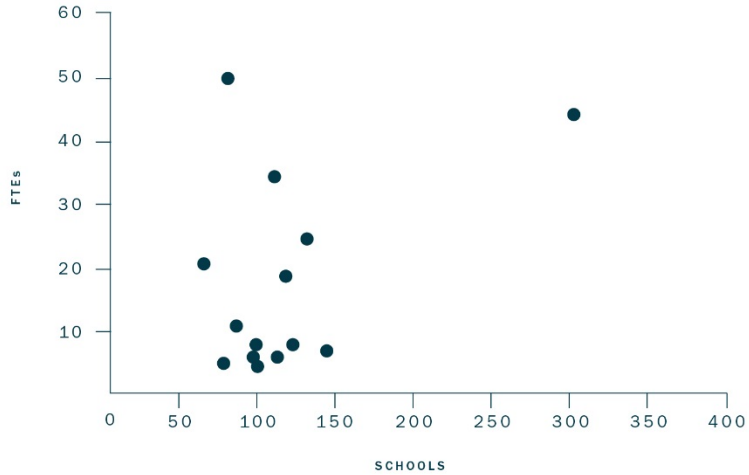
*Authorizers with portfolios of 60-300 schools only

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND FTEs
FOR LARGE AUTHORIZERS
WITH FEWER THAN 60 SCHOOLS: 2014–2015
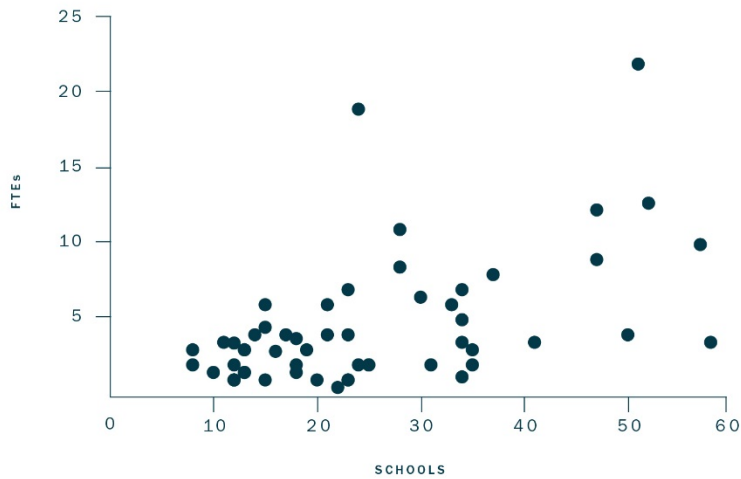
*Authorizers with portfolios of fewer than 60 schools only

SCHOOLS PER FTE
BY AUTHORIZER TYPE 2011–2015

AUTHORIZER TYPE	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015
HEI	2.32	2.55	4.04	2.94	5.87
ICB	17.55*	8.28	8.11	6.05	8.42
LEA	8.28	6.04	6.84	6.61	7.54
NEG	4.80	5.75	5.20	5.14	6.00
NFP	4.32	4.49	4.82	3.97	3.99
SEA	7.94	9.82	8.30	9.44	12.64

*SUBSTANTIALLY INFLUENCED BY ONE ICB AUTHORIZER WITH A VERY HIGH SCHOOLS PER FTE RATIO

- SEA authorizers have fairly consistently had the largest schools-per-FTE ratio of any authorizing type.
- HEI and NFP authorizers tend to have the lowest schools-per-FTE ratios.

Special Ed

What role should authorizers play in overseeing charter school special education policies and practices?

Special education and charter schools is a highly contentious issue in educational policy and practice these days. What do authorizers think about—and what are they doing to address—a number of these complicated and challenging issues? NACSA's 2015 survey of the nation's authorizers explored a number of special education oversight and accountability topics. Here is what survey respondents told NACSA.

Authorizing Practices and Special Education
- NACSA asked authorizers if they use certain special education oversight and accountability practices, either currently, or at least once over the last two years.
- Authorizer use of these specific practices varies, and oversight practices are the most heavily used.

Read Reactions, One Set of Data/Four Unique Perspectives on Special Education and Authorizing

	YES	NO
Require applications to have marketing/outreach plans for SWD*	25.7%	68.8%
Require applications to have specific student outcomes for SWD	36.8%	56.9%

*SWD= Students With Disabilites

	YES	NO
Require special education enrollment rates	16.0%	80.6%
Require special education student outcomes	32.6%	63.9%

|	YES	NO
Collect or receive special education enrollment data	84.7%	11.1%
Collect or receive student outcome data for SWD*	76.4%	19.4%
Monitor percentage of SWD enrolled in each school	79.2%	17.4%
Provide direct technical assistance for special education	69.4%	26.4%

*SWD= Students With Disabilites

	YES	NO
Report percentage of SWD* enrolled in authorized schools	55.6%	37.5%
Report SWD enrollment data disaggregated by race/ethnicity or identified disability	28.5%	62.5%
Report SWD student outcomes	46.5%	47.2%

*SWD= Students With Disabilites

Authorizer Practices in Addressing Special Education Challenges

AUTHORIZER PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING SPECIAL EDUCATION CHALLENGES
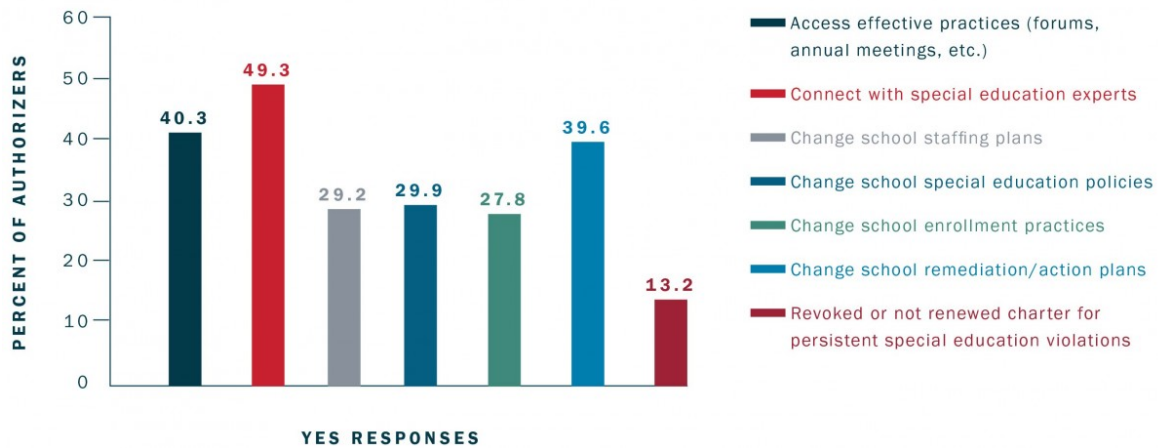
- Authorizers were asked about which practices they would require of authorized schools in addressing special education challenges. "Yes" responses mean either the practice was used over the last two years, the practice is currently in place, or the authorizer would consider using this practice in the future.
- Authorizers have, are, or will consider requiring schools to use a range of interventions. The most frequently cited practice was requiring schools to access effective practices at forums or technical assistance meetings (49.3%), and the least frequently mentioned practice was revoking or not renewing a charter for persistent special education violations (13.2%).

AUTHORIZER PERSPECTIVES ON SPECIAL EDUCATION PROPORTIONALITY AND ENFORCEMENT
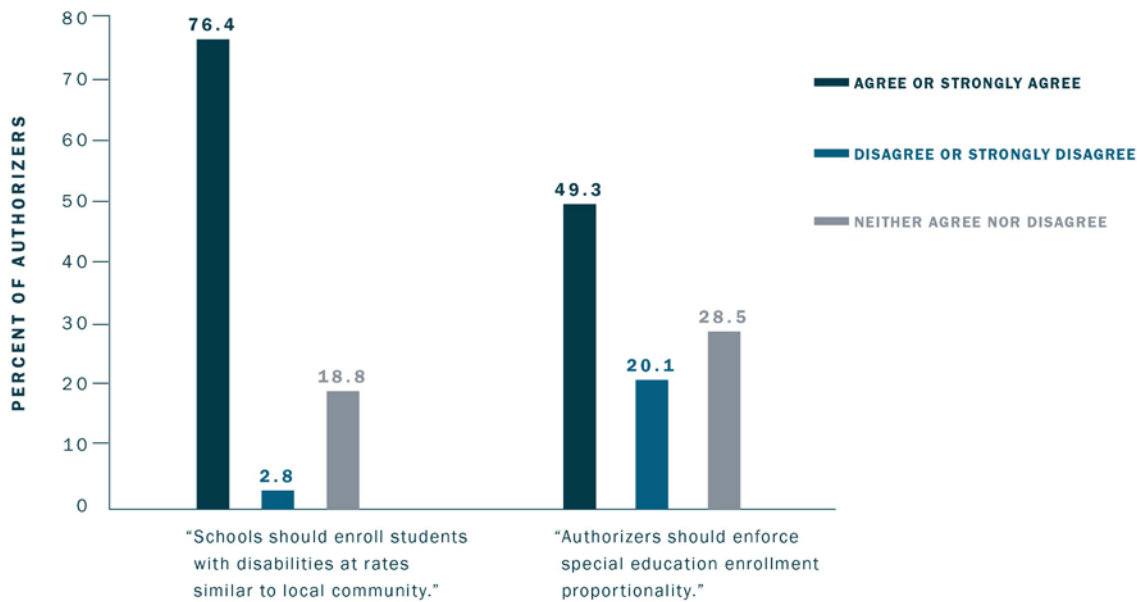
- Authorizers were asked about their perspectives on special education proportionality and enrollment on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), with 3 being "neither agree nor disagree."
- More than three out of four authorizers (76.4%) agreed or strongly agreed with the principle of proportionality: that charter schools should enroll students with disabilities at rates similar to the local community where the charter school is located (or for statewide schools, the state rate).
- Authorizers were split on the degree to which they should enforce special education enrollment proportionality: nearly half of authorizers (49.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that authorizers should enforce special education enrollment proportionality, while the other half either disagreed or strongly disagreed (20.1%) or neither agreed nor disagreed (28.5%).

AUTHORIZER PERSPECTIVES ON SPECIAL EDUCATION AUTONOMY
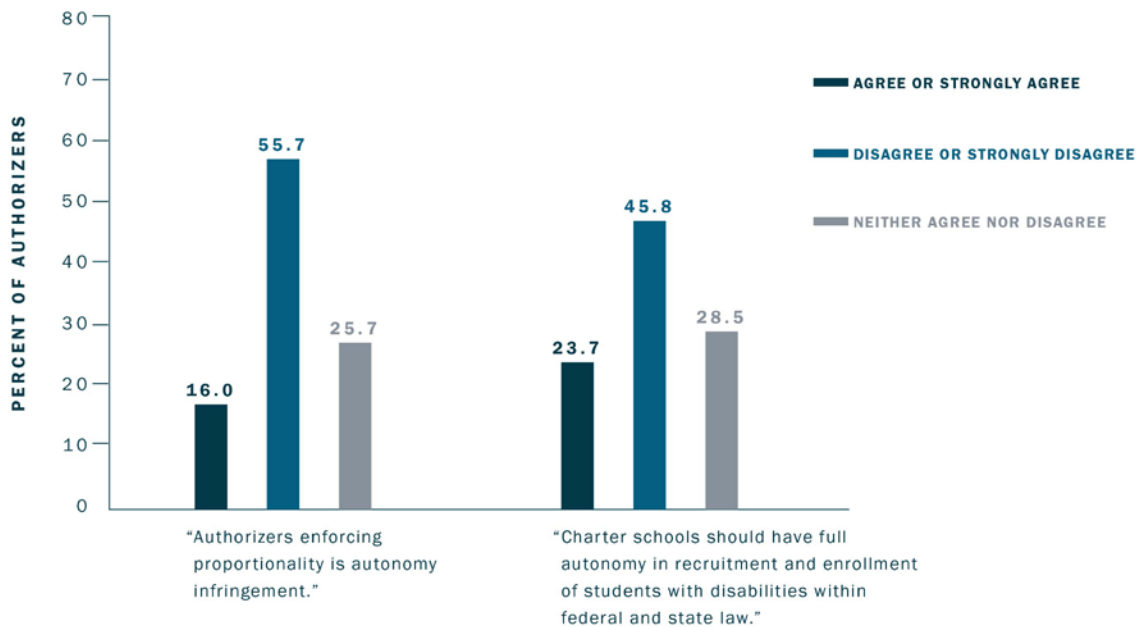
- Authorizers were asked about their perspectives on special education and autonomy on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), with 3 being "neither agree nor disagree."
- More than half (55.7%) of authorizers disagreed that enforcing enrollment proportionality is an autonomy infringement, while 16% of authorizers agreed or strongly agreed and 25.7% of authorizers neither agreed nor disagreed.
- Similarly, just under half (45.8%) of authorizers disagreed that charter schools should have full autonomy—within federal and state law—in recruitment and enrollment of students with disabilities, while 23.7% of authorizers either agreed or strongly agreed, and 28.5% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Portfolio Size is Related to Practices, but not Perspectives

Analytic models (i.e., analysis of variance and logistic regression) were created to predict authorizer beliefs and practices using the type of authorizer (e.g., school district, higher education institution, independent chartering board) and the number of schools in the authorizer's portfolio.

As the size of an authorizer's portfolio increases, authorizers more frequently report using a number of practices. These practices include

- enrollment monitoring
- public reporting of student with disability enrollment
- publicly reporting student with disability outcomes
- requiring use of special education experts

- requiring staffing changes
- requiring policy changes
- changing enrollment practices, and
- requiring changes to school remediation/action plans.
- None of the models significantly predicted authorizer perspectives (e.g., perspectives about proportionality, enforcement, autonomy infringement, etc.) and the type of authorizer did not predict authorizer beliefs or practices.

Model findings are available upon request.
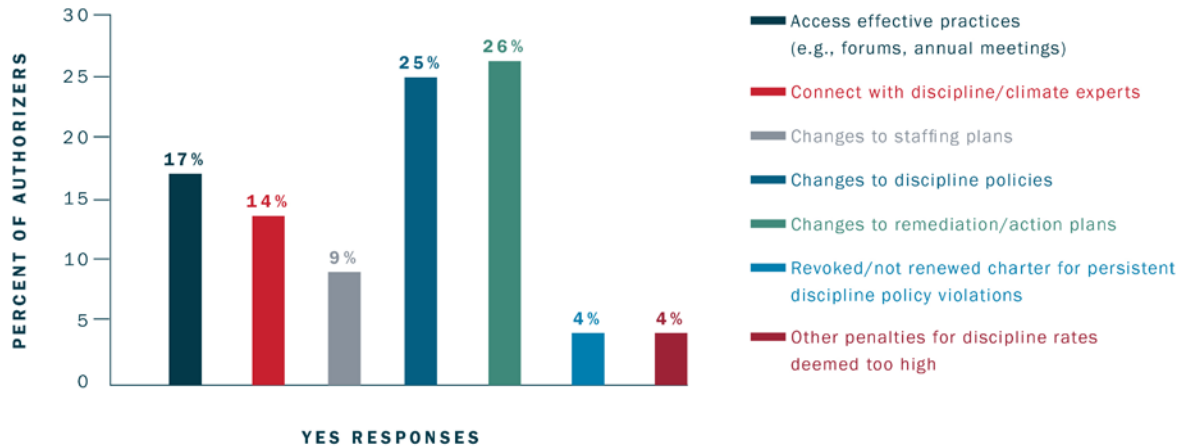
School Discipline

What role should authorizers play in overseeing and holding charter schools accountable for school discipline policies and practices?

School discipline and charter schools continues to be a "hot topic" in education reform, receiving continuous national and local media attention. In order to begin understanding authorizer perspectives and actions, NACSA surveyed the nation's authorizers on a number of topics related to school discipline. Here is what survey respondents told NACSA.

For a further examination of authorizer practices and perspectives on school discipline, read our report "Authorizers Are Not Monolithic on School Discipline."

|	YES	NO
Require applications to include comprehensive discipline plans that include suspension and expulsion practices	72%	24%
Collect or receive suspension and expulsion data	77%	20%
Monitor school suspension and expulsion rates	70%	27%
Publicly report suspension and expulsion rates	42%	52%
Publicly report disaggregated suspension and expulsion rates (by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special education status)	26%	67%
Set performance expectations for suspension and expulsion rates, beyond what is required in federal or state law	10%	85%

- NACSA asked authorizers if they use certain application, oversight, and accountability practices for school discipline, either currently, or at least once over the last two years.
- Authorizer use of these specific practices varies markedly. Seventy percent or more require applicants to submit discipline plans and collect and monitor suspension and expulsion rates. Far fewer publicly report suspension and expulsion rates, and very few set expectations for suspension and expulsion rates.

Legend:
- Access effective practices (e.g., forums, annual meetings)
- Connect with discipline/climate experts
- Changes to staffing plans
- Changes to discipline policies
- Changes to remediation/action plans
- Revoked/not renewed charter for persistent discipline policy violations
- Other penalties for discipline rates deemed too high

Chart values (Yes Responses): 17%, 14%, 9%, 25%, 26%, 4%, 4%

- Authorizers were asked which practices addressing school discipline challenges they would require of authorized schools. "Yes" responses mean either the practice was used over the last two years, the practice is currently in place, or the authorizer would consider using this practice in the future.
- A very low percent of authorizers have, are, or will consider requiring schools to use a range of interventions. The most frequently cited practice was requiring schools to change their remediation/action plans (26%), and the least frequently mentioned practice was revoking or not renewing a charter for persistent school discipline policy violations (4%).

Authorizer Perspectives on School Discipline
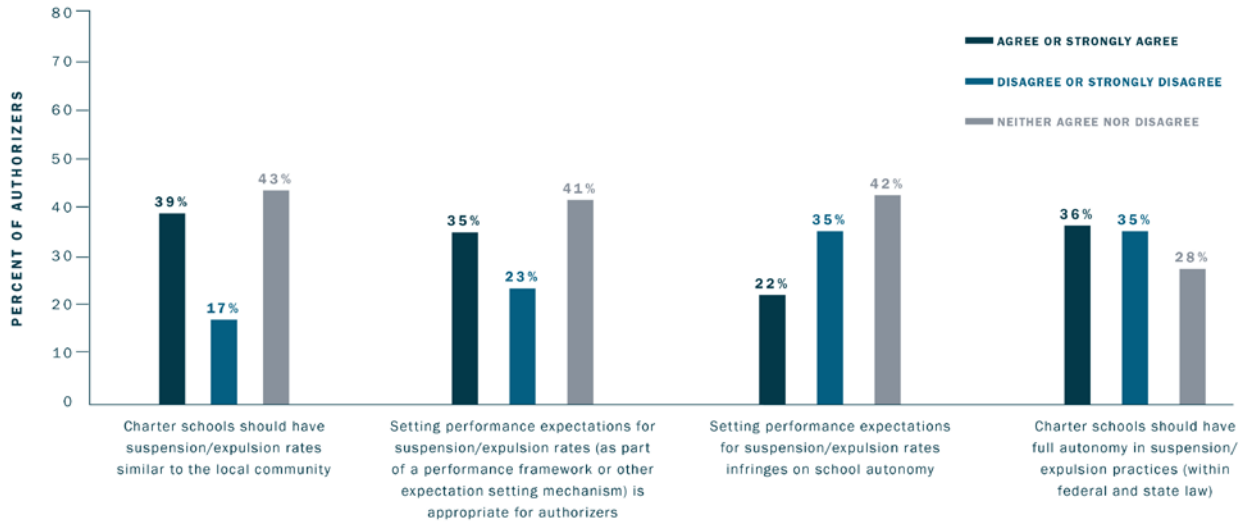
- Authorizers were asked about their perspectives on school discipline rates, performance expectations, and autonomy on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), with 3 being "neither agree nor disagree."
- For these questions, a relatively high percentage of authorizers appear to be "neutral." In all but one response, the percentage of authorizers who neither agreed nor disagreed was higher than the proportion of authorizers who agreed or strongly agreed and the proportion of authorizers who disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Authorizers appear to be split on the degree to which charter schools should have full autonomy in suspension and expulsion practices, with 36% indicating they agree or strongly agree, 35% disagree or strongly disagree, and 28 percent neither agree nor disagree.

Available 2015 Data

NACSA's 2015 survey contains data on 163 authorizers across the country. While we provide complex sets of information to individual authorizers, we are happy to provide aggregated information to other parties interested in advancing quality opportunities for students.

Please contact NACSA's Manager of Research and Evaluation, Sherry Tracewski, at sherryt@qualitycharters.org for inquiries. If your inquiry topic is not listed in the following sampling of available 2015 survey data, NACSA may still be able to help answer your questions about authorizers or authorizing.

APPLICATION PRACTICES
- Number and percentage of applications received and approved
- Extent to which authorizers use expert panels
- Extent to which authorizers interview applicants

CLOSURE PRACTICES
- Number and percentage of charters undergoing a high-stakes review
- Charter renewal and non-renewal criteria
- Closure rate, including number and percentage of closures during the renewal review process and outside that process (i.e., revoked or surrendered charters)
- Extent to which authorizer closure decisions are appealed

REPLICATION AND EXPANSION
- Number and percentage of charters that are replications or expansions

PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS AND FRAMEWORKS
- Number and percentage of authorizers that sign performance contracts

OVERSIGHT PRACTICES
- Financial oversight and monitoring practices, including how authorizers evaluate school financial health, as well as how often
- Length of typical charter term

STAFFING
- Future hiring plans
- Number of staff, including number of staff by number of schools and number of students

VIRTUAL SCHOOLS AND ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES
- Number and percentage of authorizers overseeing virtual schools or alternative education campuses
- Proportion of schools that are virtual schools or alternative education campuses

- Number of applications received from virtual school or alternative education campus proposals
- Use of alternative accountability systems for alternative education campuses

INDEX OF ESSENTIAL PRACTICES
- Number and percentage of authorizers implementing any and/or all of NACSA's Essential Practices