

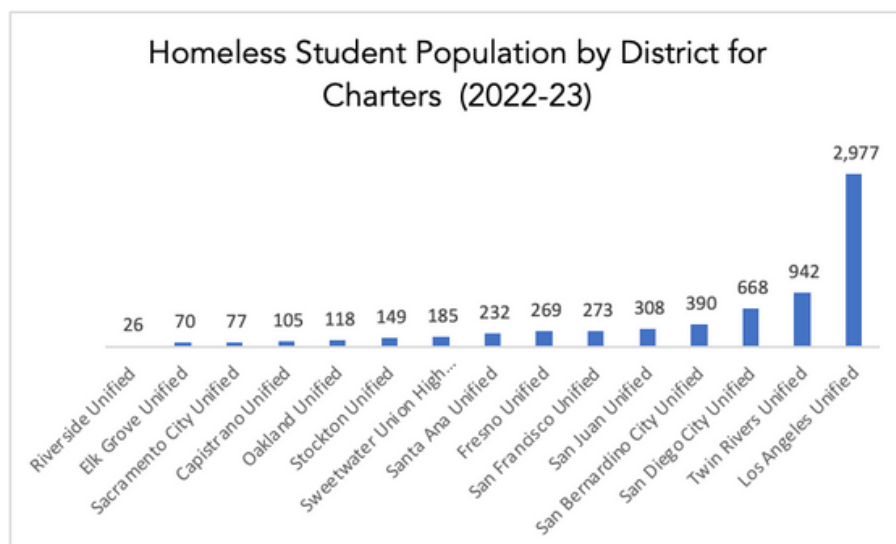
Homeless Youth in California Charter Public Schools

In this research brief, CCSA provides demographic and academic information about California's homeless student population enrolled in charter public schools. We also highlight charter schools that go above and beyond to serve homeless youth. The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youth as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence."

Overview

[One in five of the nation's students identified as experiencing homelessness lives in California.](#) Moreover, the number of charter students experiencing homelessness in California has gradually increased over the past five years. In fact, over 14,700 students enrolled in charter public schools were identified as homeless youth in 2022-23, roughly 2% of all charter student enrollment. This is an increase of about 2,070 students from the previous year (12,652).

Although homeless youth exist throughout the state, the school districts with the highest concentration of charter students experiencing housing insecurity are Los Angeles Unified (2,977), Twin Rivers Unified (942), San Diego City Unified (668), and San Bernardino City Unified (390). It is important to note that the number of homeless youth enrolled in charter public schools is likely higher as homeless youth often go undercounted, as [reported by the Learning Policy Institute](#). Furthermore, given the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that these numbers will continue to steadily increase.



Academic Performance

Existing enrollment trends beg the question, what is the cause of youth homelessness? There are several conditions that contribute to this rising number. According to the California Homeless Youth Project, this includes [“multi-generational housing insecurity, discrimination, family conflict and other reasons for being on the street, lack of shelter and educational opportunities, health and mental health needs, and the effect of interactions with the foster care and law enforcement.”](#)

Although it is difficult to pinpoint one reason for youth homelessness, it is clear that lacking a place to live greatly impacts a student's academic progress. Homeless youth are more likely to experience:

- **Chronic absenteeism:** Twenty-nine percent of homeless students enrolled in charters are chronically absent, compared to 21% of all students.¹

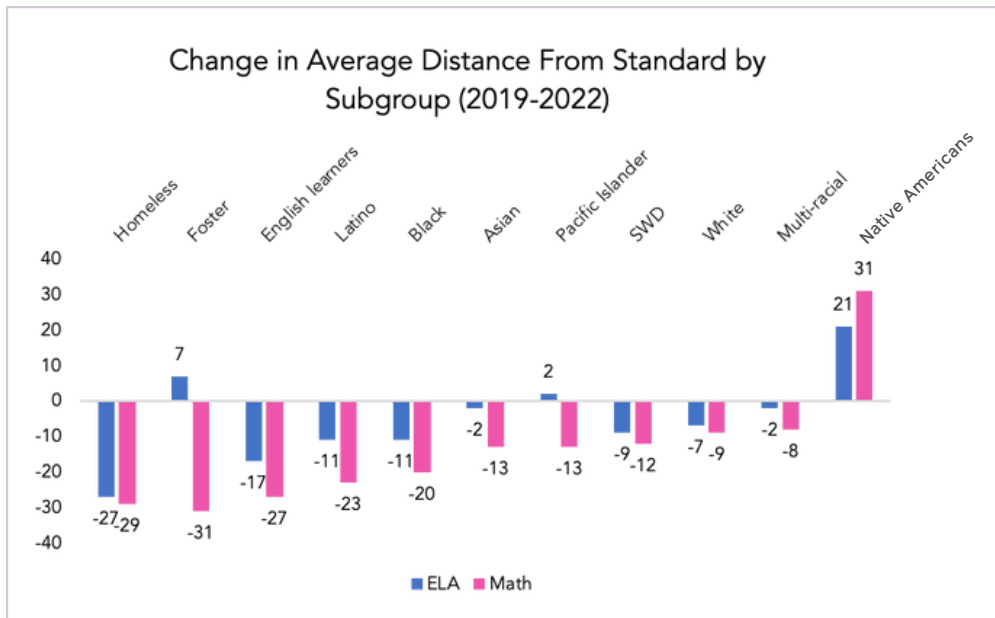
Chronic Absenteeism Rates for non-DASS schools (2021-22)

	Homeless Youth	All Students
Charter Public Schools	29%	21%
Traditional Public Schools	44%	31%

- **Dropout:** The dropout rate for homeless students enrolled in charters is 14% compared to 6% for non-homeless students.²
- **Lower academic achievement:** Homeless students tend to have lower academic outcomes than their peers with gaps widening since the start of pandemic. According to data collected in 2019 and 2022, in comparison to significant subgroups, homeless students have experienced the most overall decline in CAASPP performance in ELA (-16 points) and Math (-23 points) among all charter students.

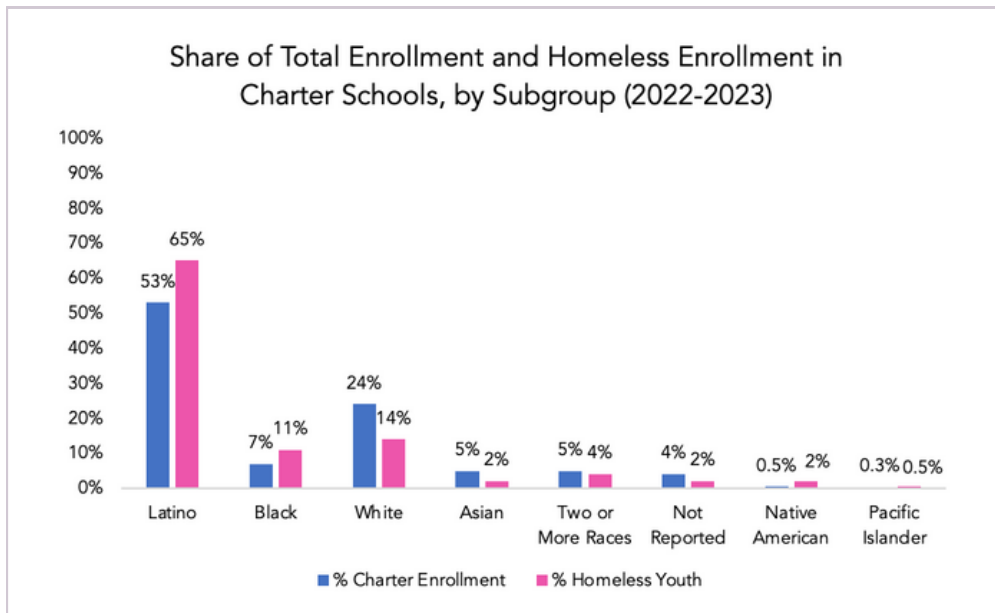
¹ Students are determined to be chronically absent if they were absent for 10% or more of the days they were expected to attend; <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sg/homelessyouth.asp>

² The four-year cohort dropout rate is calculated as the percent of cohort students who (1) do not graduate with a regular high school diploma, (2) do not otherwise complete high school, or (3) are not still enrolled as a "fifth-year senior" are considered dropouts; <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sg/homelessyouth.asp>



This data is troubling because it indicates that homeless youth are falling further behind academically. Therefore, there is a heightened need to act now to support this vulnerable student population and close the opportunity gap.

Furthermore, homelessness disproportionately affects Latino and Black charter students compared to their peers. For example, Latino students make up [53% of the charter student population](#), and [represent 65% of charter students](#) identified as homeless youth. Similarly, Black students [comprise 7% of charter student enrollment](#) and [11% of homeless charter student enrollment](#). This data supports the importance of collecting and analyzing data by subgroups to pinpoint their specific needs and provide direct services.



Spotlights: How California Charter Public Schools Serve Homeless Youth

Charter public schools have a unique opportunity to support underserved students with innovative practices in exchange for undergoing an accountability process. As a result, several California charters have programs that not only provide flexibility, but also strive to meet basic needs of homeless youth with culturally responsive supports. These approaches meet state mandated expectations.

Passed in 2021, [AB 27 expands](#) on the federal [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#) requiring every public school to identify the number of students experiencing homelessness as well as hire a local liaison to coordinate services for these students. In viewing high performing California charter schools with 5% or more of their students identified as unhoused, as well as having a Similar Students Rank of 8 out of 10 and above, it is clear that some charters are leading the charge in applying unique methods to close the opportunity gap. In this section, we highlight five charter public schools that are serving homeless youth with excellence:

Scholarship Prep, Orange County

[Scholarship Prep](#) is a K-8 charter school located in Orange County. Homeless youth make up 21% of their student population.

To support homeless youth, the charter school ensures all staff are trauma trained, offers free dress code items, provides food and toiletry products in every classroom, laundry services, summer programs, family education courses, and more.

Scholarship also provides "[intervention of support services to students during the school day and after school as needed.](#)" Scholarship's partnerships include Project Hope Alliance, Latino Health Access, and Serve the People.



SCHOLARSHIP PREP
ORANGE COUNTY

- Region: Southern California
- Homeless Youth: 21%
- Total enrollment: 519

HIGHLIGHT:
Multiple partnerships that provide wraparound services

³ CCSA created the Similar Students Ranks (SSR) as a key component of our Accountability Framework. The Similar Students Rank (SSR) orders schools according to how their students perform on standardized tests compared to schools serving similar students statewide; <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3049635/CCSA-Accountability-Framework-Technical-Guide-2019.pdf>

Inland Leaders Charter

[Inland Leaders Charter](#) is a TK-8 charter school located in San Bernardino. Homeless youth make up 5% of their student population. In 2018-19, the school had a Similar Students Rank of 10 out of 10, meaning they were in the top 10% of schools in the state on state tests when demographics were considered. Inland Leaders partners with Olive Crest Family Services to provide resources and supports for high needs families and students.



- Region: Southern California
- Homeless Youth: 5%
- Total enrollment: 998

HIGHLIGHT:

Mental health and family service program

Olive Crest Family provides “[counseling, education, and mentoring for teens and young adults in crisis, working around the clock to not only house young people, but also help them transition into healthy adulthood.](#)” Inland Leaders also provides a supportive environment for all students, which includes a mental health program, an extensive afterschool electives program, strong intervention program, full inclusion program, as well as an advisory program connecting students with an adult mentor or teacher to plan and assess their development.

The Learning Choice Academy, East County

[The Learning Choice Academy](#) (TLC) is a K-12 independent study program based out of San Diego. Homeless youth make up 10% of their student population. [TLC has a 99% attendance rate, a 0% suspension rate, and a 90% graduation rate.](#) As part of their program, each student receives a personalized learning plan, one-on-one teacher support, individualized college and career planning, as well as a flexible schedule.



- Region: Southern California
- Homeless Youth: 10%
- Total enrollment: 368

HIGHLIGHT:

Flexible, personalized learning

To support this work, TLC also employs bilingual staff members to promote effective engagement and communications for parents and families of English learners.

New Heights Charter School

[New Heights Charter](#) is a TK-8 charter school located in Los Angeles. Homeless youth make up 8% of their student population. At New Heights, its Student and Family Support team collaborates with a Homeless Liaison to identify and provide services for homeless students. [These services include](#) providing additional intervention sessions after school, distribution of clothing and class supplies, and flexibility in assignment completion due dates.



- Region: Los Angeles
- Homeless Youth: 8%
- Total enrollment: 411

HIGHLIGHT:

Team dedicated to supporting high needs students

To ensure students have access to mental health supports and that their nutritional needs are met, the team also conducts regular check-ins to support students' social, emotional, and academic development.

Rocketship Mosaic

[Rocketship Mosaic](#) is a K-5 charter school located in Santa Clara County. Homeless youth make up 7% of their student population. U.S. News and World Report ranked Mosaic in the top 10% of all elementary schools in the state. To support high needs students, Mosaic created [CareCorps](#), a designated group of educators who works directly with students and families to identify those in need of supports and connect them to applicable resources and services.



MOSAIC

- Region: Northern California
- Homeless Youth: 7%
- Total enrollment: 558

HIGHLIGHT:

Family service program and afterschool program offerings

They have also partnered with a local enrichment provider, KidzToPros, to provide STEAM based afterschool enrichment.

About CCSA

The vision of the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) is to build great public schools of joy and rigor that prepare all California students for success in college, career, community, and life. The mission of CCSA is to meet parent, educator, and community need for great public school options by supporting and advocating for high quality non-profit charter schools and sharing their success throughout California's public schools. Click here to [learn more](#).