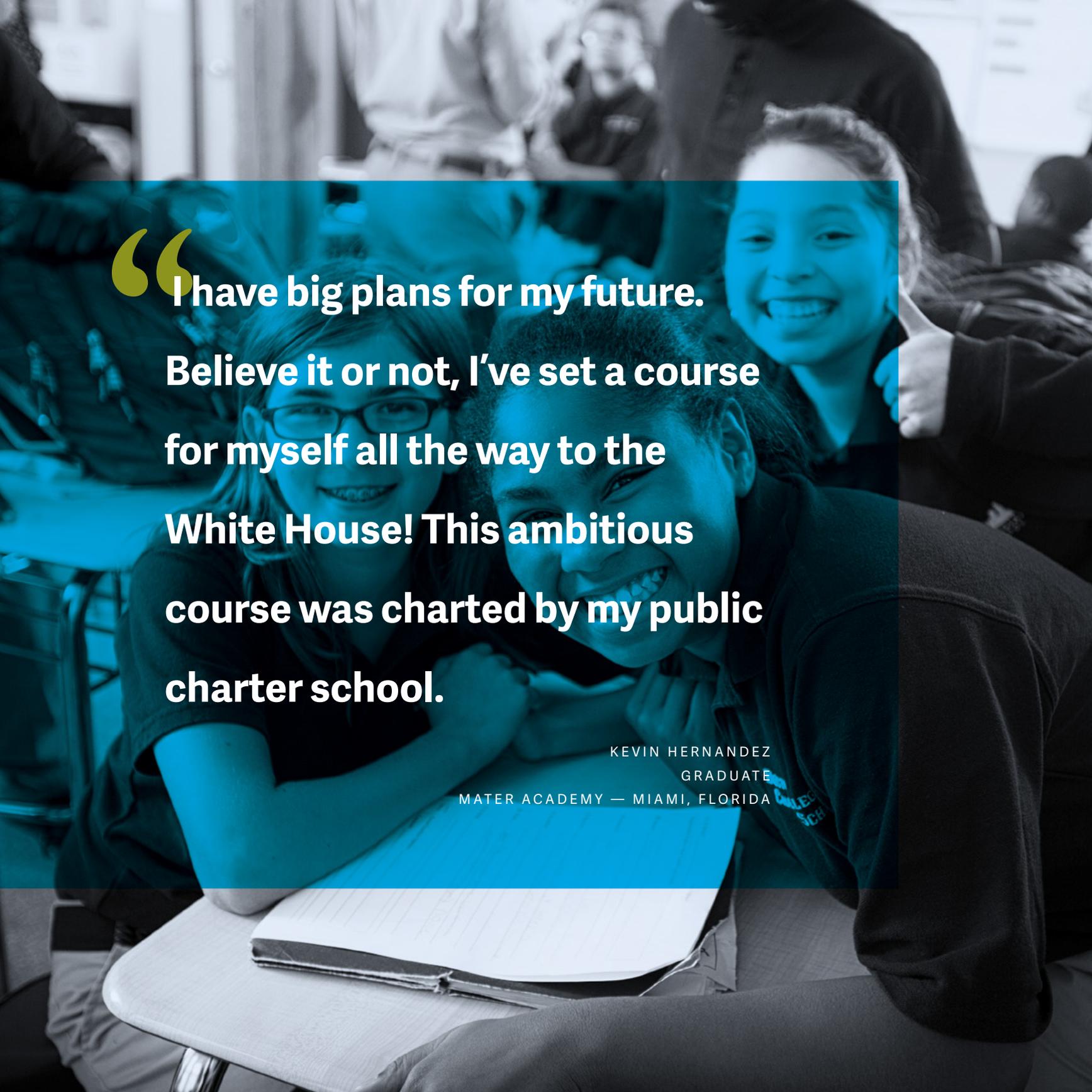




2015 ANNUAL REPORT





“I have big plans for my future. Believe it or not, I’ve set a course for myself all the way to the White House! This ambitious course was charted by my public charter school.

KEVIN HERNANDEZ
GRADUATE
MATER ACADEMY — MIAMI, FLORIDA

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Letter from Nina Rees

PRESIDENT & CEO
OF THE NATIONAL
ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC
CHARTER SCHOOLS

DEAR FRIENDS,

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2015, and we couldn't be happier with the progress we achieved over the past year and the past decade.

We were thrilled at the end of 2015 when Congress and the President agreed to an \$80 million increase in support for the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP), bringing total funding to \$333.1 million, the highest level of funding in the program's history. This support will help high-quality charter public schools expand and grow so that we can advance our mission of providing A Chance for Every Child.

Lawmakers also acted on our recommendations for improving the CSP through the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act. As a result, the CSP will now provide dedicated funding for replicating and expanding high-quality charter schools and prioritize funding to states that treat charter schools fairly.

This year brought major state victories as well, with Alabama becoming the 43rd state in the nation to allow charter schools and Oklahoma revising its law to allow charter schools statewide. In Washington State, charter schools were threatened by a state supreme court decision that invalidated a voter-approved charter law. But the National Alliance and our state partners rallied supporters across the nation and convinced the legislature to save Washington's charter schools!

In June, the National Alliance held its annual conference in New

Orleans, which has a higher percentage of students attending charter schools than any other city in America. In the 10 years since Hurricane Katrina, the people of New Orleans have demonstrated incredible tenacity in rebuilding their city and giving new hope and opportunity to students. We called attention to New Orleans' academic progress and improvements in educational equity, and joined hands with our national partners to spread the good news from New Orleans and emphasize the importance of staying the course.

You will find many more highlights throughout this report. I'm proud of what we were able to accomplish as an organization and as a movement in 2015, and I am excited about all that lies ahead. As we look to the future – and celebrate our movement's 25th anniversary in 2016 – we remain committed to ensuring that our work is rooted in promoting quality, equity, and innovation.

Thank you for your continued commitment and support of charter schools and of the National Alliance.

Warmly,





ADVOCACY WINS

- ✓ The passage of the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) provides dedicated funding for the replication and expansion of high-performing charter schools.
- ✓ With the help of the National Alliance, [Alabama becomes the 43rd state](#) to enact charter legislation.
- ✓ Oklahoma updates its charter law to [allow charter schools statewide](#).



The growth of the charter public school movement over our first 25 years has been accelerated through good public policy, and good public policy doesn't happen by accident. As the leading voice of the charter school movement, the National Alliance is a vigorous advocate for smart policy and appropriate regulation that facilitates the growth of high-quality charter schools for students.

The big news at the federal level in 2015 was the passage of the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**. This reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act pushed more decision-making to the states, while maintaining testing and accountability requirements that make schools responsible for ensuring that all students – not just some – meet academic standards.

ESSA also improved the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) in important ways,

providing dedicated funding for the replication and expansion of high-performing charter schools.

Our advocacy also led to an **\$80 million increase** in funding for the CSP, which will directly benefit the nearly one million students waiting for their chance to attend a charter school. We mobilized more than 3,000 people who let their members of Congress know that the CSP is essential to providing high-quality educational options for students across America. In addition, our year-long *CSP in Action* series profiled schools across the country that have benefited from CSP funding and are producing positive outcomes for students. U.S. Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK) and U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO) were instrumental in rallying support for the CSP.

The National Alliance and our partners saw big wins in several states during 2015. Most exciting: **Alabama became the 43rd state to**

allow charter schools! Alabama's new law is closely aligned with the National Alliance's Model Charter School Law, particularly in the areas of innovation and accountability.

Indiana leaders approved one of the biggest new investments in charter schools in 2015, reducing the funding gap between charter and district-run public schools. **Oklahoma** updated its charter law to allow charter schools statewide. **Wisconsin's** reforms will allow more entities to authorize charter schools, strengthen school and authorizer accountability, and provide more funding to charter schools.

In **Washington State**, charter school students, parents, teachers, and supporters were disappointed when the state supreme court ruled that the voter-approved law allowing charter schools was unconstitutional. The National Alliance quickly went to work, joining our state partners to rally supporters and call on the legislature to **save Washington's charter schools**. We were thrilled when our efforts succeeded, as state legislators passed a law reaffirming the will of the voters and keeping charter schools open for Washington's students.



2015 Charter Champion Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers snaps a selfie with a student at PRIDE Prep Charter School in Spokane, Washington.

CLOSING THE FUNDING GAP

- Thanks to our efforts, Congress and the president agreed to an **\$80 million increase** in funding for the Charter Schools Program.
- Indiana approved a new **\$500 per student allotment** for charter schools and a **\$50 million loan program** to address facility costs and other needs.
- Wisconsin increased spending for charter schools by **\$120 per pupil** for the next two years.

Funding equity is a constant battle for charter public schools. With per-pupil spending on charter schools averaging just 72 percent of district-run public school funding, we have significant ground to make up to ensure that all public school students receive equal funding. Closing this funding gap is one of the National Alliance's highest priorities, and we were pleased with the progress we saw in 2015.

Thanks to a strong and consistent lobbying effort from the National Alliance, Congress and the president agreed to an \$80 million funding increase for the Charter Schools Program (CSP), bringing total **CSP funding to \$333.1 million**, the highest level in the program's history. The CSP is the main source of public funding to open new charter schools and expand those with a track record of success. The additional CSP funding will allow more high-quality schools to open, replicate, and expand to serve students who need better options. With one million student names on charter school wait lists across the country, every dollar in CSP funding is vital to opening the doors to charter schools.

States play the central role in funding operational expenses for charter schools, and two states passed substantial increases in charter school funding in 2015. Indiana approved a **new \$500 per student allotment** for charter schools and a **\$50 million loan program** to address facility costs and other needs. These resources will reduce the funding gap between charter and district-run public schools. The new \$500 per student allotment must be used primarily for facilities and transportation purposes, and requires schools to meet performance expectations. Qualification for the loan is based on the same performance criteria used to receive the facilities allotment. This combination

of increased funding and a strong focus on performance represents a solid improvement for Indiana's charter school movement.

In Wisconsin, state leaders **increased funding for independent charter schools by \$120 per pupil** over the two years of the budget. They also ensured that independent charter schools in Milwaukee will have greater access to vacant and underutilized school district buildings, and made independent charters eligible for state transportation aid. Combined with provisions allowing more entities to authorize charter schools in the state and improving authorizer accountability, the new funding positions Wisconsin's charter school movement to grow with quality in the years ahead.

Our efforts to educate policymakers about the funding challenges charter schools face resulted in the **U.S. Conference of Mayors** passing a resolution that calls for improved facilities access and funding for charter schools. The resolution supports policies to improve charter school facility acquisition, funding, and access, including a policy that would ensure that charter schools have "right of first refusal" to purchase or lease underused school district buildings. This bold

statement by the nation's mayors is an important step in leveling the playing field for charter school students in urban school systems.

Funding battles are playing out on the legal front as well. In Washington, D.C., the National Alliance supported the DC Association of Chartered Public Schools as it challenged the city government's years-long, illegal practice of providing unequal funding for the District's charter school students. That case is currently in court-ordered mediation.



Sen. Roy Blunt visits the Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls in St. Louis, Missouri.

HONORING THE MOVEMENT'S LEADERS

As a leader of the charter public school movement, the National Alliance honors key figures who spearhead the growth and improvement of charter schools nationwide. We also collaborate with leaders at all levels of government to advance our core principles of charter school quality, growth, and innovation.

Charter School Hall of Fame Inductees

Each year at the National Charter Schools Conference, we honor individuals who have made major contributions to the charter school movement by inducting them into the [National Charter Schools Hall of Fame](#). In 2015, we inducted former **U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu** (D-LA); **Deb McGriff**, a National Alliance board member and managing partner at NewSchools Venture Fund; and **Nelson Smith**, a past president and CEO of the National Alliance and current senior advisor to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.

Champions for Charters

During National Charter Schools Week, the National Alliance announced our [2015 Charter Champions](#) – public officials across America who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to support charter public schools. We recognized **U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet** (D-CO); **U.S. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers** (R-WA); and **Mayor Michael Hancock** of Denver. Following the passage of Alabama's first-ever charter school law, we recognized state **Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh** and state **Rep. Terri Collins** for their leadership. **Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin**; Oklahoma state **Sen. Clark Jolley**; and **House Speaker Lee Denney** of Oklahoma were also honored for leading the effort to substantially improve their state's charter law.



2015 Charter Champion Governor Mary Fallin with Nina Rees and National Alliance Senior Director of State Advocacy Russ Simnick



2015 Charter Champion Senator Michael Bennet with Nina Rees and National Alliance Chair Brian Jones



Bellwether Education Partners' Andy Rotherham moderates a discussion with 2015 Charter Champion Representative Terri Collins and 2015 Hall of Fame Inductee Mary Landrieu



2015 Hall of Fame Inductee Nelson Smith



2015 Hall of Fame Inductee Deb McGriff

VOICE OF THE MOVEMENT

As a voice for the entire charter public school movement, the National Alliance works actively with public officials, members of the media, and key influencers and thought leaders to ensure that the movement's message reaches the right audiences. We showcase the many stories of charter school success across America and combat myths peddled by charter school opponents. By touting the strengths of high-quality charter schools while also being clear about areas where we can improve, the National Alliance has developed a reputation as a credible source of information and facts about charter schools.



Senior Director of Legal Affairs Rob Reed speaks out against a proposed moratorium on new charter schools at a press event in Connecticut. [Watch Video](#)

OUR TOP 3 TWEETS OF 2015



We need your help to [#saveWacharterschools](#)! Contact [@GovInslee](#) NOW! [p2a.co/savewacharters](#)



[#GeoffreyCanada](#): "If our kids are failing, it doesn't mean there's something wrong with them. It means we need to do a better job." [#NCSC15](#)



[#MayThe4thBeWithYou](#) as you celebrate National [#CharterSchoolsWeek](#)!



MEDIA APPEARANCES

THE WASHINGTON POST
FOX NEWS POLITICO
U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT
WALL STREET JOURNAL
DAILY NEWS FORBES
USA TODAY THE SEATTLE TIMES
BLOOMBERG TV ONE
EDUCATION WEEK
THE 74 BLACK ENTERPRISE
HOUSTON CHRONICLE
THE EDUCATION POST C-SPAN
REAL CLEAR EDUCATION



Nina Rees discusses the one million student names on charter school wait lists across the country with Mary Kissel on WSJ Live. [Watch Video](#)



24 MILLION
#CHARTERSCHOOLWEEK
IMPRESSIONS



4.8 MILLION
WEB VIEWS



18,875
TWITTER FOLLOWERS



16,523
FACEBOOK LIKES



1,250
MEDIA MENTIONS



186
BLOG POSTS



31
OP-EDS

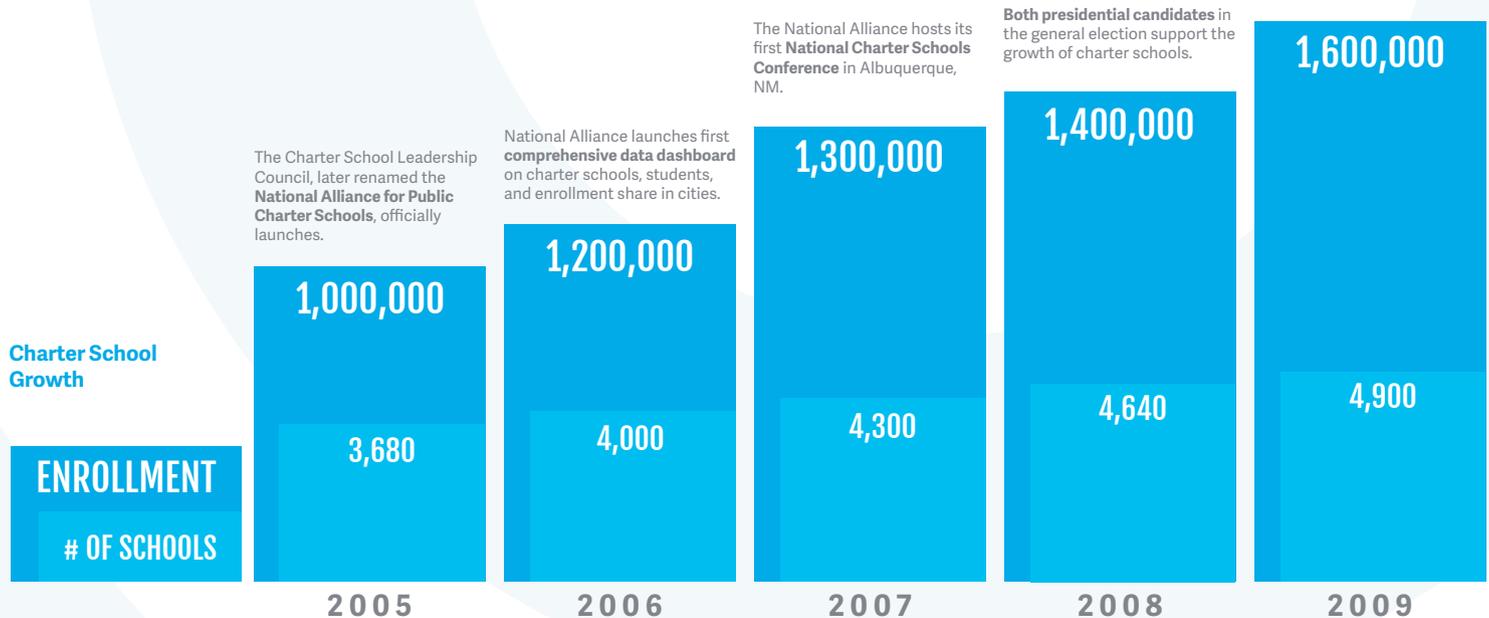


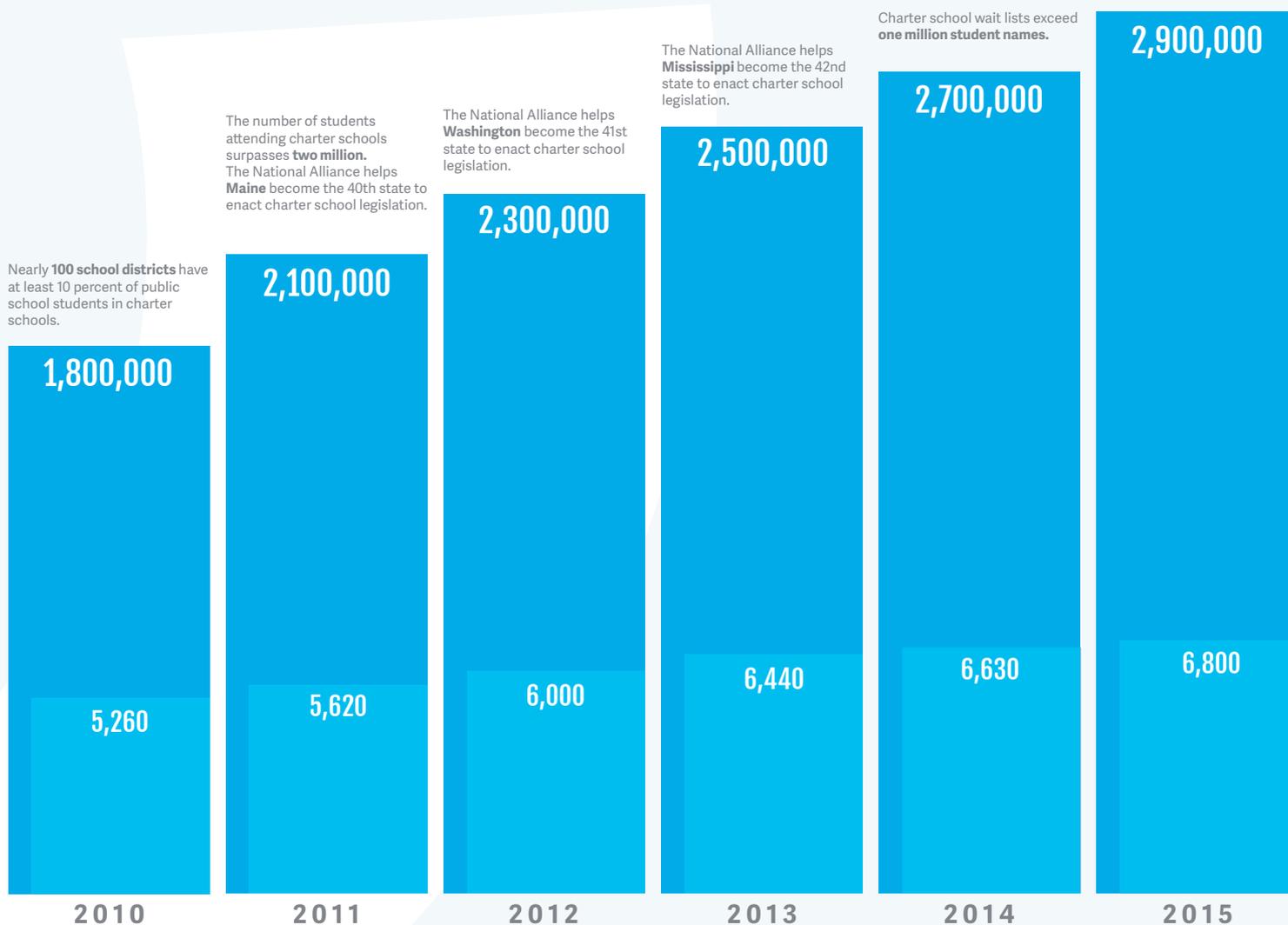
13
PUBLICATIONS

10 YEARS STRONG

Since 2005, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools has been the leading national nonprofit organization committed to advancing the quality, growth, and sustainability of charter schools. In 2015, we celebrated our 10th anniversary as an organization and we look forward to continuing to serve the millions of students who attend or hope to attend charter schools.

The National Alliance publishes a **new state model charter school law** emphasizing quality, growth, and accountability as well as helps to **secure federal charter school funding** through Race to the Top and a \$50M Charter Schools Program increase.







The National Alliance cultivates networks of charter public school leaders and other experts to help us stay on top of trends affecting charter schools, amplify the impact of our work, and build capacity among state and local charter school movements.

State Leaders Council

The State Leaders Council (SLC) is an advisory body made up of the leaders of state-based charter support organizations. The SLC is responsible for identifying issues affecting charter schools and the state and local organizations that serve them, and for advising the National Alliance's Board of Directors on ways to improve the support environment for charter schools. In 2015, the SLC was instrumental in producing a [Commitment to Quality pledge](#) that more than 40 SLC leaders released at the National Charter Schools Conference in June.

From left to right: Ursula Wright and Nadya Dabby from the U.S. Department of Education present before the Policy and State Leaders Councils; State Leaders Council members network at a reception in the heart of New Orleans; National Charter Schools Conference attendees enjoy the parade at the National Charter Schools Conference Welcome Reception; charter support organization staff attend a Master Class on parent and school engagement strategies.



Master Classes

Throughout the year, the National Alliance offers [content-rich and movement-specific classes](#) that provide cutting-edge training for charter support organization (CSO) executives and staff. Funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant to the National Charter School Resource Center, these courses are designed to build the capacity of CSOs to support new and existing charter schools, while also creating and fostering a community of practice and peer-to-peer problem solving among CSO staff nationwide. Topics in 2015 included new school development, board governance, parent and school engagement strategies, weighted lotteries, and federal funding opportunities for charter schools.

The Alliance of Public Charter School Attorneys

The [Alliance of Public Charter School Attorneys](#) (APCSA) serves as a source of information, networking, and support for attorneys across the country fighting to secure and defend charter school rights and freedoms. Each year, APCSA convenes two seminars on major topics on the legal horizon, and gives charter school attorneys the opportunity to tap into expertise on particular topics. Our September 2015 seminar in Seattle occurred shortly after the Washington State Supreme Court's ruling that the state's charter school law was unconstitutional. Thus, the seminar provided a forum for APCSA attorneys to offer insights, strategies, and substantive knowledge to our Washington State partners as they sought to combat the court's decision.

Communities of Practice

In 2015, we launched [communities of practice](#) in eight states – Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee. As part of this collaborative initiative, we are working to improve the advocacy capability of our state partners in a variety of ways, including in-person meetings, an advocacy planning process, funds for advocacy support, and coalition-building. Over the next two years, we are optimistic about achieving policy victories related to accountability, autonomy, and funding in these states.



A CHANCE FOR EVERY CHILD

The 2015 National Charter Schools Conference

Each year, the [National Charter Schools Conference](#) (NCSC) brings together teachers, school leaders, policy experts, and others to exchange ideas and learn about the latest trends influencing education and driving the growth of charter public schools. NCSC 2015 welcomed more than 4,700 attendees to New Orleans, where 93 percent of public school students attend charter schools. As New Orleans approached the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's devastation, the Conference provided an opportunity to celebrate the success of the city's revitalization, particularly in bringing new hope to students' lives through charter schools.





Michael Milkie



Caroline Roemer



Mitch Landrieu



Bryan Stevenson



John White



Ashley Judd

Caroline Roemer, the Executive Director of the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools, and New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu welcomed Conference attendees to New Orleans. Organized around the theme "A Chance for Every Child," the Conference program featured some of the most innovative thinkers in education, including Geoffrey Canada, founder of Harlem Children's Zone; Bryan Stevenson, a groundbreaking speaker on social justice issues and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative; John White, the Louisiana State Superintendent of Education who is spearheading one of the largest school reform initiatives in the country; and Ashley Judd, noted for her commitment to equity issues around the world. Marc Sternberg, the K-12 Education Director for the Walton Family Foundation, spoke about the Foundation's plans to create more high-quality educational options, spur innovation and create deeper support for improved education in cities across the nation. The Noble Network of Charter Schools was announced as the 2015 Broad Prize for Charter Schools winner and Michael Milkie, CEO and Superintendent of Noble, accepted the award on the main stage.

HIGHLIGHTING QUALITY, EQUITY, AND INNOVATION

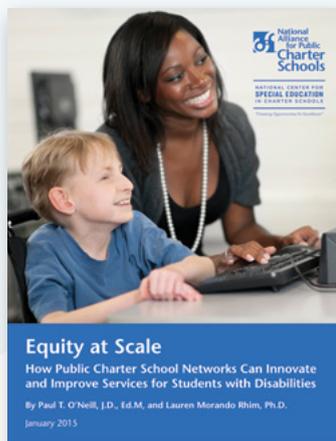
One of the National Alliance's key functions is to help educate lawmakers and the general public about charter schools and the role they play in promoting quality, equity, and innovation. In 2015, we produced nearly two dozen publications exploring these topics, each of which was downloaded an average of nearly 4,500 times.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS



[Measuring Up to the Model: A Ranking of State Charter School Laws](#)

January 2015



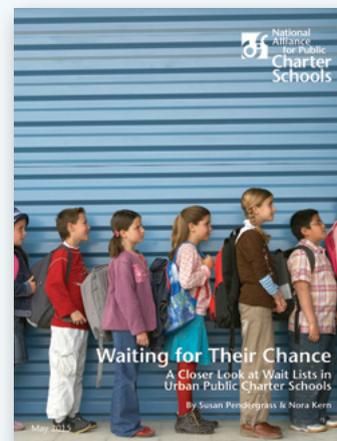
[Equity at Scale: How Charter School Networks Can Innovate and Improve Services for Students with Disabilities](#)

January 2015



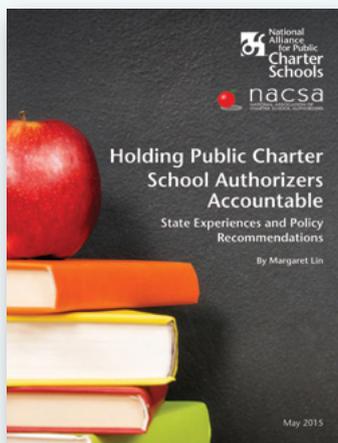
[Issues in the Allocation of ESEA Title I Funds to Charter Schools](#)

April 2015



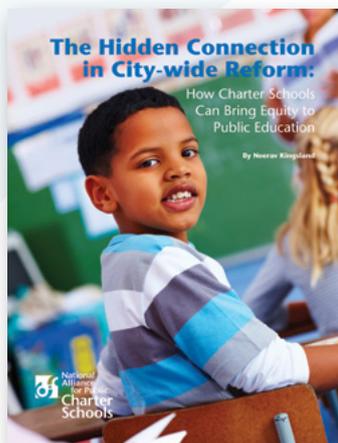
[Waiting for Their Chance: A Closer Look at Wait Lists in Urban Public Charter Schools](#)

May 2015



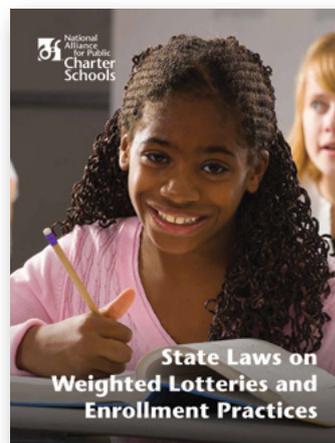
[Holding Public Charter School Authorizers Accountable: State Experiences and Policy Recommendations](#)

May 2015



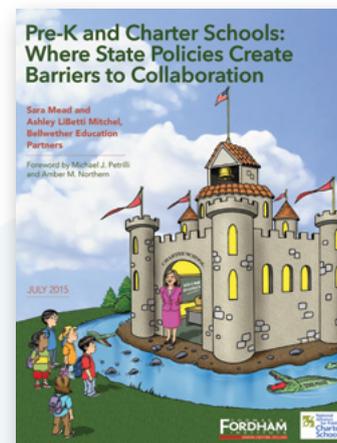
[The Hidden Connection in City-wide Reform: How Charter Schools Can Bring Equity to Public Education](#)

June 2015



[State Laws on Weighted Lotteries and Enrollment Practices](#)

July 2015



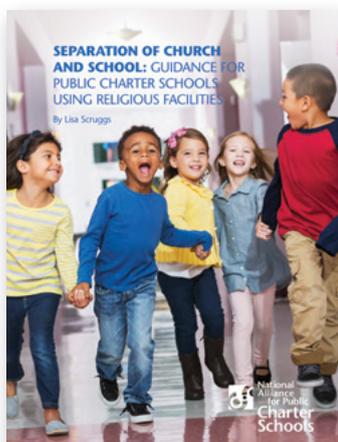
[Pre-K and Charter Schools: Where State Policies Create Barriers to Collaboration](#)

July 2015



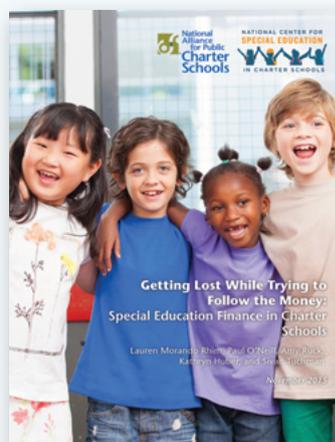
[Chartering Turnaround: Leveraging Public Charter School Autonomy to Address Failure](#)

August 2015



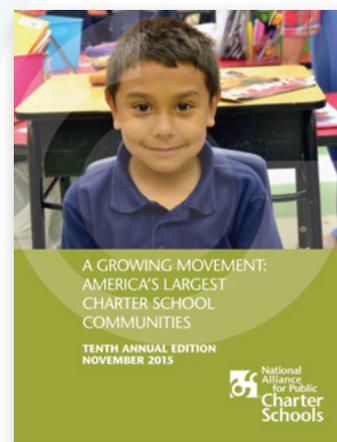
[Separation of Church and School: Guidance for Public Charter Schools Using Religious Facilities](#)

August 2015



[Getting Lost While Trying to Follow the Money: Special Education Finance in Charter Schools](#)

November 2015

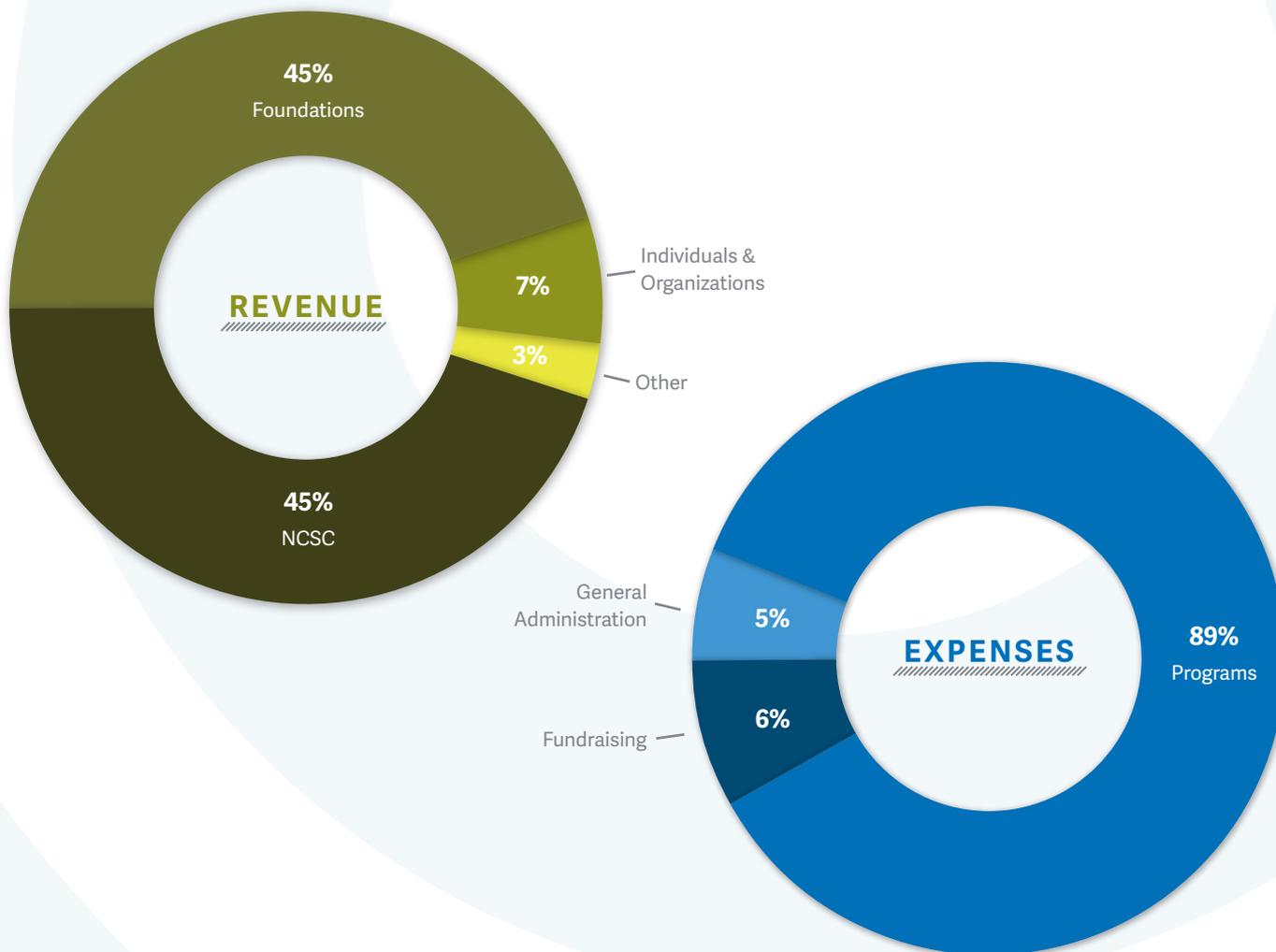


[A Growing Movement: America's Largest Charter School Communities](#)

November 2015

FINANCIALS

The National Alliance operating budget was \$9 million in 2015. Building on our previous efforts, we continued to diversify our fundraising base by reaching out to new foundations and individuals. We remain an excellent steward of our financial resources and a strong investment for donors committed to ensuring all children have access to a high-quality education.



MAJOR FUNDERS

The work done by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is made possible through the generous support of individuals, corporations, and the following foundations. Thank you to our funders for helping us grow and strengthen the charter school movement. [Click here](#) to help us continue to fuel the growth of high-quality public charter schools by fostering a strong charter movement.



The
Louis Calder
Foundation

DORIS & DONALD FISHER FUND

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

Ewing Marion
KAUFFMAN
Foundation

— THE —
KERN FAMILY
— FOUNDATION —

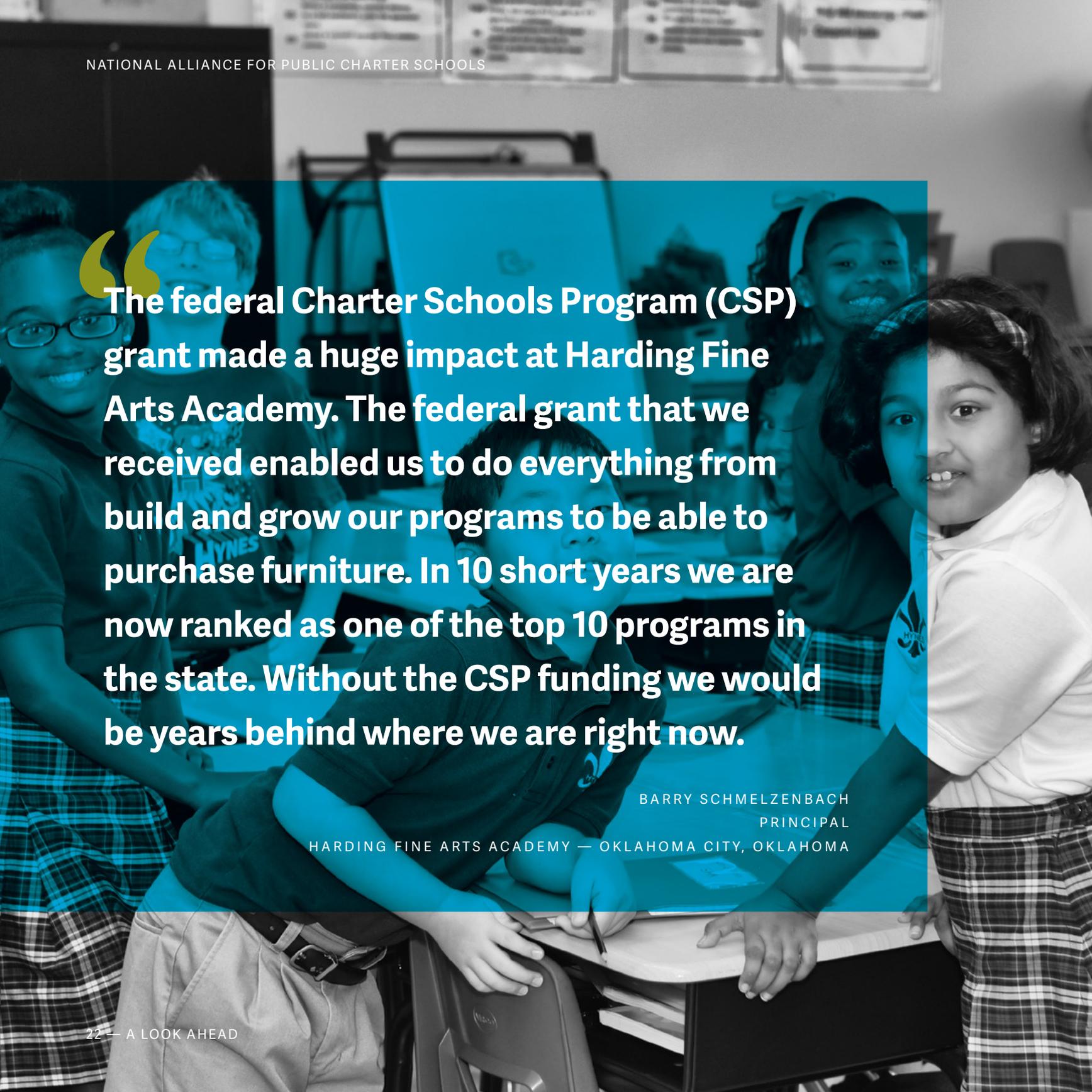


ROBERTSON
FOUNDATION

CHARLES AND HELEN
SCHWAB *foundation*



The
WALTON FAMILY
FOUNDATION



“The federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant made a huge impact at Harding Fine Arts Academy. The federal grant that we received enabled us to do everything from build and grow our programs to be able to purchase furniture. In 10 short years we are now ranked as one of the top 10 programs in the state. Without the CSP funding we would be years behind where we are right now.

BARRY SCHMELZENBACH
PRINCIPAL

HARDING FINE ARTS ACADEMY — OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

A LOOK AHEAD



*In 2016, the charter school
movement celebrates
a milestone – the 25th
anniversary of the very first
charter school law!*

When Minnesota passed its charter school law in 1991, the concept of a charter school was still vague. People were intrigued by the idea of creating public schools with more freedom to innovate in education – to get away from the one-size-fits-all model and see how we could provide better choices for all students – but what charter schools would look like in practice was an open question.

Over the past 25 years, countless students, parents, teachers, administrators, authorizers, and policymakers have shaped this movement. Charter schools earn consistently strong support from the public. Forty-three states and the District of Columbia now have charter laws. Nearly three million students attend more than 6,700 charter schools. These schools use a variety of teaching models, and they have brought new hope to students who most need a great education, dispelling the myth that life circumstances determine a student's academic outcomes.

As we look ahead, it's clear that we have plenty of room for growth, and that we must grow with quality. One million names are on charter school wait lists across America. As a result of caps on charter school growth, inadequate funding, and other policy limitations, demand for charter schools continues to outstrip supply. In the years to come, we must build on the strong legacy of our first quarter-century by working to open, expand, and replicate high-quality charter schools. Every remaining state should pass a law permitting charter schools to open. The federal government and state governments should commit to giving charter school students the same funding and resources as district-run public school students. And we must preserve the model of charter schooling that we know works – high expectations, accountability, autonomy, and innovation.

Every student who has thrived in a charter school, often beating the odds by going on to college, a good career, or military and public service, is a testament to the vision of the earliest charter school champions and supporters. Every student who still needs access to a great education motivates us to keep working to bring charter public schools to every state and community in America.

As we celebrate 25 years of growth and success on behalf of students, we at the National Alliance thank you for your support, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure a chance for every child.

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PRESIDENT
STRAYER UNIVERSITY



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FOUNDATION TRUSTEE
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FERNANDO ZULUETA
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ACADEMICA CORPORATION

NATIONAL ALLIANCE STAFF



NINA REES
PRESIDENT & CEO



ERIC PAISNER
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SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS



TODD ZIEBARTH
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
STATE ADVOCACY &
SUPPORT



KIMBERLY LANE
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SENIOR DIRECTOR,
RESEARCH & EVALUATION



ANGELA CHRISTOPHE
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PROGRAMS



MARIO DA COSTA
PROGRAM ASSISTANT,
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS



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RESEARCH ASSISTANT



NIA DAVIS
SENIOR MANAGER, POLICY
AND LEGAL RESEARCH



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MANAGER, OPERATIONS



WENTANA GEBRU
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EVALUATION



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COORDINATOR, PROGRAMS



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ADVOCACY



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EMILY SCHULTZ
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ADVOCACY & POLICY



RUSS SIMNICK
SENIOR DIRECTOR, STATE
ADVOCACY



MARLENE VOELKER
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT



CHRISTY WOLFE
SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR



The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (National Alliance) is the leading national nonprofit organization committed to advancing the charter school movement. Our mission is to lead public education to unprecedented levels of academic achievement by fostering a strong charter movement.

WHY WE EXIST

When given the option, parents increasingly are choosing to enroll their children in charter schools. In most communities, the demand for charter schools is far outpacing the supply. What began as a small movement in a couple of states has grown into a major force in education reform. Today there are more than 6,700 charter schools in 42 states and Washington, D.C., educating nearly 3 million students. By 2020, we expect that 10,000 high-quality charter schools will be serving over four million students, and more than 200 communities will demonstrate their support for charter schools by growing their enrollment share to 10 percent or higher.

The National Alliance occupies a critical role in the charter movement: as a leader in federal education policy, as a major supporting force to improve state charter policy and advocacy, and as a prominent national voice in the policy and public discourse on charter schools.

WHAT WE DO

To support the growth of a high-quality charter school community, we work to:

- Fuel the growth of high-quality charter schools by advocating for increased public funding of charter schools;
- Shape federal and state policy to create the climate in which high-quality charter schools can grow; and
- Improve the overall health and perception of the movement in order to increase our influence with policymakers.

The National Alliance speaks and advocates for the millions of students attending and hoping to attend a charter school. Through our advocacy efforts at the federal and state level, our legal activities, our research, and our national communications work, we ensure lawmakers, the media, opinion-shapers, charter school leaders, thought leaders, and the general public understand what charter schools are, the promise they hold for our children, and how best to promote the growth of high-quality, innovative schools nationwide.

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We chose to be a charter school because the school district does not have a program that is tailored specifically for Alaska Native and American Indian children teaching culture, where culture happens every single day in the classroom. For children of ethnic backgrounds, that is often a big part of their lives.

ELIZABETH HANCOCK
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT & PARENT
NATIVE CULTURAL CHARTER SCHOOL — ANCHORAGE, ALASKA





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