



**ALABAMA PUBLIC CHARTER
SCHOOL COMMISSION**

ANNUAL CHARTER SCHOOL REPORT 2023-2024

Logan Searcy, Executive Director

Alabama Charter School Commissioners 2023-2024

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Mrs. Terri Reynolds Resignation 10-1-2024 Open Position		Appointed by Senate Minority Leader		

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Introduction

The 2015 Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act marked a pivotal step in Alabama's educational reform by authorizing the establishment of public charter schools across the state. This legislation aimed to increase educational options for Alabama families, particularly in underserved communities, by allowing the creation of high-quality, innovative charter schools focused on improving student outcomes. Under the Act, the Alabama Public Charter School Commission (the Commission) was established to oversee charter schools' approval, support, and accountability as an authorizer. The Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act is critical in enhancing access to quality education and addressing diverse student needs by empowering educators and providing parents with greater school choice.

The Commission's mission is to empower educators, engage communities, and provide families with innovative schooling options prioritizing student success and academic excellence. This annual report reflects the Commission's progress in advancing Alabama's educational landscape, highlighting the impact of charter schools in fostering student achievement, community engagement, and educational equity. Through rigorous accountability and collaborative partnerships, the Commission strives to support schools that meet the diverse needs of Alabama's learners, preparing them for college, career, and civic life.

Since the passage of the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act, the Commission's functions have included thorough application cycles, charter contracts, resolutions, amendments, and renewals in addition to ensuring accountability and oversight. The Commission has authorized fifteen start-up charter schools. Twelve of the fifteen are open and three are in the planning stages. Local authorizers have three conversions and two start-up charter schools. Over 5,400 students are currently enrolled in open public charter schools authorized by the Commission.

The chart that follows provides an overview of the schools authorized by the Alabama Public Charter School Commission. Each school listed represents a commitment to delivering high-quality, innovative education options that cater to the diverse needs of Alabama's students and communities. Two of these schools are in rural areas, while the remaining thirteen are in urban, inner-city locations. All schools are relatively new, with less than ten years of operation. Notably, two schools have served their communities for five years or more, while eight have operated for under five years. This distribution reflects the Commission's recent yet growing impact in expanding educational opportunities across Alabama.

Authorized Charter School	Local School System	Contract Approval Year	Year Students Began Attending	Original Contract Renewal Year	Grade Levels Served and Enrollment	2023-2024 Student Count	Recipient USDOE Grant
Acceleration Day and Evening Preparatory Academy	Mobile City	2016	2017	2022	6-8 th and 9-12 th 813	679	yes
University Charter School	Sumter County	2017	2018	2023	PreK-5 th and 6 th -12 th 709	691	yes
Legacy Preparatory School	Birmingham City	2018	2019	2024	K-6 th 525	407	yes
Lead Academy	Montgomery	2019	2019	2024	PreK-3 rd and 4 th -9 th 748	717	no
i3 Academy	Birmingham City	2019	2020	2025	K-5 th and 6 th -9 th 816	704	yes
Breakthrough Charter School	Perry County	2020	2021	2026	PreK-10 th 367	319	yes
Magic City Acceptance Academy	Jefferson County	2020	2021	2026	6 th -12 th 334	335	yes
Empower Community School	Bessemer City	2021	2022	2027	K-3 rd and 6 th -7 th 399	399	yes
Alabama Aerospace and Aviation High School	Bessemer City	2021	2022	2027	9 th -11 th 153	153	yes
Covenant Academy	Mobile County	2022	2023	2028	K-5 th 322	322	yes
Freedom Preparatory Academy – Birmingham	Birmingham City	2022	2024	2029	K-1 39	N/A	yes
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	Mobile County	2023	2024	2029	6 th -11 th 222	N/A	yes
Independence Preparatory Academy	Birmingham City	2023	Approved to open in 2025	Not Yet Open	K-8 th	N/A	yes
I Dream Big Academy	Tuscaloosa City	2024	Approved to open in 2025	Not Yet Open	6 th -12 th	N/A	yes
Freedom Preparatory Academy – Montgomery	Montgomery	Pending	Pending	Not Yet Open	K-5	N/A	yes

Charter schools operate with increased flexibility in exchange for heightened scrutiny and accountability. As an authorizer, the Alabama Public Charter School Commission's role is to ensure that the schools in its portfolio provide a safe learning environment, maintain fiscal responsibility, and uphold high academic standards. To this end, the Commission monitors and evaluates schools across three axes: Academic, Financial, and Organizational. A quality charter school must demonstrate excellence in these areas, with performance measured through multiple indicators. The following sections provide an overview of the Alabama Public Charter School Commission's portfolio along these axes, followed by concluding remarks.

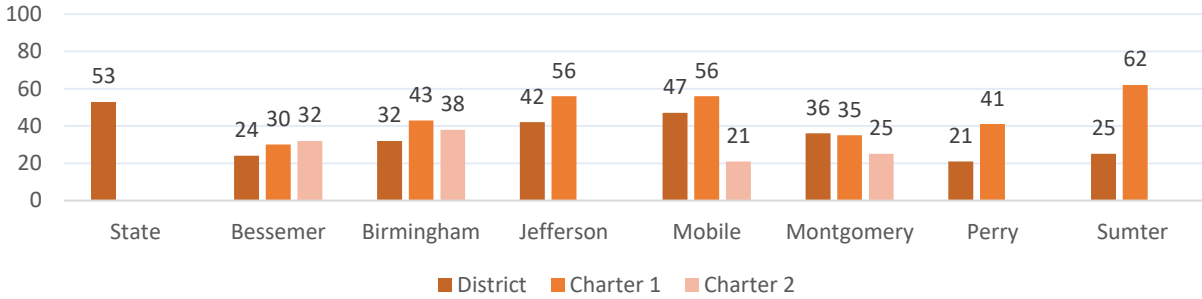
Academic Performance and Accountability

Schools authorized by the Alabama Public Charter School Commission operate within a rigorous framework emphasizing accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. Each school is held to high academic standards, financial stewardship, and operational integrity to ensure they deliver quality education and meet the needs of their students and communities. Through regular performance reviews and accountability measures, the Commission supports schools in maintaining their commitment to excellence, fostering environments where students can thrive and succeed academically, socially, and personally. This framework ensures that all authorized schools are aligned with Alabama's educational goals and contribute positively to the state's public education system. What follows are some key takeaways from the ACAP and ACT assessments.

School	Grade Band	2023 (ELA)	2024 (ELA)	Change	2023 (Math)	2024 (Math)	Change	2023 (Science)	2024 (Science)	Change
Empower Community School	LEA (302)	33	30	-3	0	1	1	15	10	-5
Alabama Aerospace HS	LEA (168)	-	32	-	-	15	-	-	25	-
i3 Academy	LEA (718)	29	43	14	8	11	3	9	31	22
Legacy Prep	LEA (438)	24	38	14	1	9	8	12	18	6
Magic City Acceptance Academy	6-12 (343)	59	56	-3	14	18	4	43	33	-10
Covenant Academy of Mobile	LEA (262)	N/A	56	N/A	N/A	21	-	N/A	29	N/A
MAEF	LEA	17	21	4	3	2	-1	10	14	4
LEAD Academy	LEA (740)	31	35	4	2	5	3	22	15	-7
Life Academy	LEA (528)	16	25	9	12	3	-9	4	7	3
Breakthrough Charter School	LEA (314)	27	41	14	10	10	0	30	16	-14
University Charter School	LEA (651)	57	62	5	32	31	-1	34	53	19

Student "On Grade Level" %:
At or above district
At or above state

ELA Proficiency by LEA



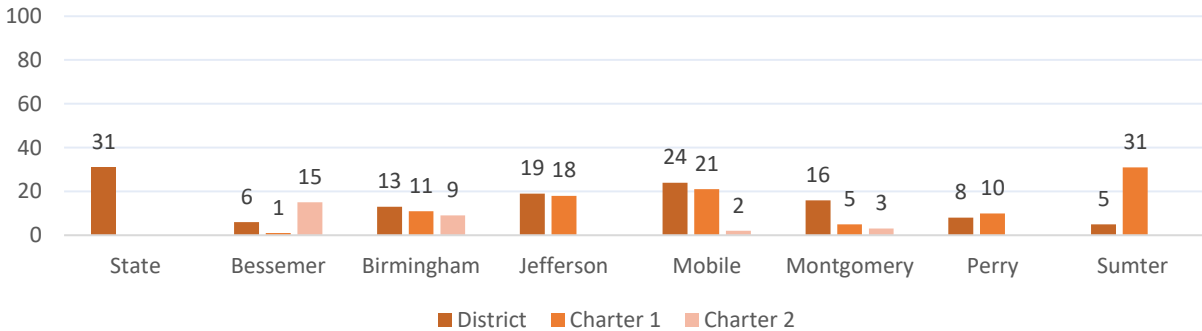
Eight of Eleven Charter LEAs outperformed the district in ELA. (State ELA 53%)

- Bessemer (24%): Empower Community School (30%) , Alabama Aerospace High School (32%)
- Birmingham (32%): i3 Academy (43%), Legacy Prep (38%)
- Jefferson County (42%): Magic City Acceptance (56%)
- Mobile County (47%) Covenant Academy of Mobile (56%)
- Perry County (21%) Breakthrough Charter (41%)
- Sumter County (25%) University Charter (62%)

Three of Eleven outperformed the state in ELA.

- Magic City Acceptance (56% above district and state)
- Covenant Academy of Mobile (56 above district and state)
- University Charter (62% above district and state)

Math Proficiency by LEA



Three of Eleven Charter LEAs performed at or above the district in Math.

- Perry County (8%) Breakthrough (10%)
- Sumter County (5%) University Charter (31%)
- Bessemer City (6%) Alabama Aerospace HS (15%)

One of Eleven equaled the *state* in Math. (31%)

- Sumter County: University Charter (31%)

A necessary condition for an organization to operate a public school, charter or not, is the financial resources required to meet the needs of students. In Alabama, the bulk of these resources for public charter schools originate from state and federal sources supplemented by grants and donations from private entities. Opening a new charter school is complicated by the fact that state and federal resources only apply once open - so planning and initial start-up costs all must be handled through grants and donations. While traditional public schools can tap local tax dollars, public charter schools in Alabama have yet to be able to do so at a significant level. Even once open and operational, public charter schools are at a fiscal disadvantage compared to traditional peer schools in the school system. Public charter schools cannot charge tuition or collect fees above what a traditional public school allows. Hence, public charter schools are being asked to do more with much less.

A *near-term indicator* and a *sustainability indicator* determine the financial health of public charter schools. Because of the local landscape in Alabama, an additional *flexibility indicator* is also used. As suggested by the name, the near-term indicator uses measures that reflect the charters' ability to meet the short-term financial needs of the institution and thus keep the school operational through the academic year. The sustainability indicator determines the charters' ability to stay operational for the next several years, ensuring the organization is financially stable, with financial metrics trending in a favorable direction. The flexibility indicator reflects the ability of the school to innovate by describing the types of funds available and the restrictions on those funds. All schools within the portfolio achieved a meets standards rating for the near-term indicator. The current ratio for schools ranged from 2.2 to 80.6, with the best practices target at 1.1 or higher. Days cash ranged from 49 to 203 days, where the target was 30 days or more. There is some concern with enrollment variance, but it should be noted that the school capacity numbers are dated from the original charter contract and do not reflect the school's current capacity. No school is in default, and the revenue projection ratio is higher than the expense projection ratio for only one school. The charter schools within the portfolio are living within their means.

Near-Term Measures						
	Current Ratio	Days Cash	Enrollment Variance	Debt Default	Revenue Projection Ratio	Expense Projection Ratio
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	10.3	70	38%	NO	0.87	0.79
Breakthrough Charter School	9.6	150	98%	NO	1.09	0.89
Covenant Academy of Mobile*	4.3	200	75%	NO	2.41	1.04
Empower Community School	80.6	137	55%	NO	1.01	0.84
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	2.2	98	88%	NO	N/A	N/A
Freedom Preparatory Academy - Birmingham	N/A	N/A	43%	NO	N/A	N/A
I-3 Academy	8.1	61	95%	NO	0.84	0.94
LEAD Academy Montgomery	28.2	96	93%	NO	0.87	0.65
Legacy Prep	25.7	166	93%	NO	1.42	1.02
ACCEL Academy (MAEF)	22.5	115	114%	NO	1.45	1.09
Magic City Acceptance Academy	5	49	81%	NO	0.98	0.95
University Charter School	2.9	203	96%	NO	1.11	1.1
* Submitted financial data has not been vetted and approved by the ALSDE.						

All schools within the portfolio achieved a meets standards rating for the sustainability indicator. All FY24 actual cash flows are positive, with favorable current margins ranging from 4.89% to 35.79% (the standard is 1.5% or higher). The projected cash flows are more mixed, with several negatives. However, these projections are based on the FY25 budgets, which are conservative. The revenue and expense projection ratios suggest that schools in the portfolio underestimate revenues and overestimate expenses during budgeting. This resulted in slightly negative cash flows in several FY25 budgets. All carry-overs, actual FY24, and projected FY25 are positive. The current net per student is \$1000 or more, and current carry-overs per student are substantial for all schools (divided by enrollment adjustments for the school size). While historical trends on these metrics would provide a fuller picture of sustainability,

that data is unavailable now as Alabama is an emerging market, and several schools are recent additions to the portfolio. Moving forward, historical data will be kept and included in the annual report. As the metrics indicate, all schools within the portfolio provide substantial evidence of fiscal sustainability.

Sustainability Measures					
	Current Net: (Cash Flow)	Current Margin	Current Carry-Over	Current net per student	Current Carry-Over per student
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	\$326,210	7.30%	\$719,712	\$2,330	\$5,141
Breakthrough Charter School	\$1,377,642	19.78%	\$2,049,345	\$3,892	\$5,789
Covenant Academy of Mobile*	\$3,778,965	35.79%	\$4,295,021	\$11,592	\$13,175
Empower Community School	\$1,568,340	21.41%	\$2,138,172	\$3,892	\$5,306
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	\$210,588	14.00%	\$198,780	\$979	\$925
Freedom Preparatory Academy - Birmingham	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
I-3 Academy	\$808,869	4.89%	\$2,361,625	\$1,001	\$2,923
LEAD Academy Montgomery	\$2,154,965	17.31%	\$4,006,800	\$2,912	\$5,415
Legacy Prep	\$1,611,572	16.84%	\$3,498,835	\$2,995	\$6,503
ACCEL Academy (MAEF)	\$1,320,885	8.90%	\$4,067,306	\$1,591	\$4,900
Magic City Acceptance Academy	\$457,914	6.32%	\$735,472	\$1,145	\$1,839
University Charter School	\$1,347,603	10.06%	\$4,462,694	\$2,089	\$6,919
* Submitted financial data has not been vetted and approved by the ALSDE.					

Seven of the twelve schools in the portfolio obtained a meets standards rating on the flexibility indicator, while the other five obtained an approaches standards rating. The main metric is the percentage of revenues originating from state or federal sources, with the target being 90% or lower. Funds from state or federal sources are targeted toward specific purposes with little flexibility to move those funds

toward other needs. This can pigeonhole charters into a financial framework that looks remarkably similar to traditional public schools and remove the ability for the charter school to innovate. The initial target of 90% is geared to allow some flexibility to fund innovative and mission-specific programming. Six schools meet the flexibility standard using FY24 actuals, and all but one meet the standard based on FY25 budget projections.

Flexibility		
	FY24 Actual State & Federal Revenue Percent:	FY25 Projected State & Federal Revenue Percent:
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	93.77%	76.44%
Breakthrough Charter School	93.29%	84.19%
Covenant Academy of Mobile*	83.14%	61.87%
Empower Community School	78.70%	81.96%
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	20.38%	75.11%
Freedom Preparatory Academy - Birmingham	N/A	45.14%
I-3 Academy	90.66%	73.17%
LEAD Academy Montgomery	98.06%	90.70%
Legacy Prep	91.36%	80.78%
ACCEL Academy (MAEF)	68.45%	71.99%
Magic City Acceptance Academy	77.27%	59.95%
University Charter School	78.21%	77.49%
* Submitted financial data has not been vetted and approved by the ALSDE.		

The best practice is to use audited financial statements to calculate fiscal metrics. This would require using audited FY23 data, which is only available for a subset as many schools in the portfolio were not open then. Additionally, dated audited data loses relevance when schools are in the growth phase, which is the case for most schools in the portfolio. Since the charter landscape in Alabama is

rapidly changing, the decision was made to use unaudited FY24 end-of-year actuals, and the charter school board approved FY25 budgets.

Organizational Performance and Accountability

The last axis along which public charter schools are measured is organizational capacity. To operate effectively, a school must have dedicated and innovative key personnel who can not only manage the academic needs of their students but also follow all state and federal rules and regulations. The School Board should take an active role in the management of the school.

The best indicators for whether a charter leadership team has the organizational capacity to operate a school are if the school is academically rigorous and financially sound - and on both of these measures, the schools in the portfolio succeed. While portfolio schools generally performed well, challenges persist - in particular, in meeting reporting requirements. Public charter schools operate as both a school and as a Local Educational Agency (LEA), with the executive director often serving as the principal and superintendent and the volunteer board functioning as a school system board. The net effect is that a collective of a few people for a charter may take the role of several individuals at the local school system level.

A particular challenge for portfolio schools is maintaining institutional knowledge. Charters are relatively new to Alabama, and the reporting requirements for school systems to the Alabama Public Charter School Commission and the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) have a significant learning curve. While both the Commission and the ALSDE provide several opportunities for training, the number of tasks for a leadership team can feel overwhelming. Losing key staff can result in losing institutional knowledge, requiring charters to restart the process. State and federal funding is routed through the ALSDE, while authorization comes from the Commission, which means meeting reporting requirements is paramount.

To help charter schools address these challenges, in addition to our assessment duties, the Commission serves as a liaison to assist portfolio schools in completing the necessary reporting requirements for the ALSDE. Commission staff have connected charters to the relevant ALSDE personnel and have guided charter staff step-by-step through reporting processes. This communication is multi-directional, with the ALSDE personnel contacting the Commission to seek help in resolving an issue. Proactive communication between charter school leadership, Commission staff, and the ALSDE has been instrumental in portfolio success.

The Commission assesses organizational effectiveness through five indicators: *educational programs, financial management and oversight, governance, employee rights and requirements*, and

school environment. To reduce redundancy, the Commission partners with the ALSDE and only actively monitors a few measurements under each indicator. The ALSDE completes in-depth, comprehensive compliance monitoring of school systems, including charter schools, on a revolving basis, with public charters starting in the second year of being open to students. Combining results from the ALSDE comprehensive compliance monitoring activities with the Commission's monitoring gives a complete picture of the organizational performance of portfolio schools.

The table below provides some information on the schedule of the ALSDE’s compliance monitoring activities for portfolio schools. It should be noted that the complete report is several hundred pages long and covers every state and federal law and the documentation necessary to prove compliance. Often, when a school undergoes ALSDE compliance monitoring, findings can be noted, and the Commission assists portfolio schools in rectifying and correcting the issue.

ALSDE Compliance Monitoring Schedule				
	Year Students Began Attending	Last Compliance Monitoring Year	Scheduled This Academic Year	Next Scheduled Compliance Monitoring Year
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	2022	2023	No	2028
Breakthrough Charter School	2021	2021	No	2027
Covenant Academy of Mobile	2023	N/A	No	2029
Empower Community School	2022	2023	No	2028
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	2024	N/A	Pre-Compliance Monitoring Visit	2025
Freedom Preparatory Academy - Birmingham	2024	N/A	Pre-Compliance Monitoring Visit	2025
I-3 Academy	2020	2021	No	2026

LEAD Academy Montgomery	2019	2021	No	2025
Legacy Prep	2019	2022	No	2025
ACCEL Academy (MAEF)	2017	2018	Yes	
Magic City Acceptance Academy	2021	2022	No	2027
University Charter School	2018	2019	Yes	

As a collective, portfolio schools perform well on most indicators of organizational effectiveness. Almost across the board, schools obtain a meets standards rating for each indicator. The only measurements for which portfolio schools uniformly struggle are compliance with reporting requirements—and the reasons why have been articulated above.

It is worth noting that, in general, when an issue arises, the school in question has the appropriate policy in place or has completed/scheduled the appropriate activity. Portfolio schools are quality schools with excellent staff that do well for their students. The challenge is appropriately documenting the issue and providing that documentation to prove compliance.

Two schools in the portfolio opened in the fall of 2024, and there is insufficient data to provide a rating. After reporting requirements, the next area of concern centers around transparency with financial documents and board agendas and minutes. For some schools, the available data is dated, and for others, the data does not appear to be available publicly as required by law.

Data for each measurement under each indicator with an overall rating is provided in the tables that follow.

Organizational Performance Educational Programs			
	Charter Contract-Specific Measures	Complying with Reporting Requirements	Overall Rating
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Breakthrough Charter School	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Covenant Academy of Mobile	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Empower Community School	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data
Freedom Preparatory Academy - Birmingham	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data
I-3 Academy	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
LEAD Academy Montgomery	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Legacy Prep	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
ACCEL Academy (MAEF)	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Magic City Acceptance Academy	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
University Charter School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards

**Organizational Performance
Financial Management & Oversight**

	Following Generally Accepted Accounting Principles	Financial Transparency	Board Governance	Complying with Reporting Requirements	Overall Rating
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Breakthrough Charter School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Covenant Academy of Mobile	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards	Does Not Meet Standards	Meets Standards
Empower Community School	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	Meets Standards	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data
Freedom Preparatory Academy - Birmingham	Meets Standards	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data
I-3 Academy	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
LEAD Academy Montgomery	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Legacy Prep	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
ACCEL Academy (MAEF)	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Magic City Acceptance Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
University Charter School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards

Organizational Performance Governance						
	Board Composition	Governance Requirements	Management Oversight	Board Transparency	Complying with Reporting Requirements	Overall Rating
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Breakthrough Charter School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Covenant Academy of Mobile	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Empower Community School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Meets Standards
Freedom Preparatory Academy - Birmingham	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Meets Standards
I-3 Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
LEAD Academy Montgomery	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Legacy Prep	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
ACCEL Academy (MAEF)	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Magic City Acceptance Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
University Charter School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards

Organizational Performance Employee Rights & Requirements					
	Credentialing Requirements	Background Checks	Employee Handbook	Complying with Reporting Requirements	Overall Rating
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	Approaches Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Approaches Standards
Breakthrough Charter School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Covenant Academy of Mobile	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Empower Community School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Insufficient Data	Meets Standards
Freedom Preparatory Academy - Birmingham	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Insufficient Data	Meets Standards
I-3 Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
LEAD Academy Montgomery	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Legacy Prep	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
ACCEL Academy (MAEF)	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Magic City Acceptance Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
University Charter School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards

Organizational Performance School Environment						
	Safety	Health Services	Counseling & Guidance	Student Handbook	Complying with Reporting Requirements	Overall Rating
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Breakthrough Charter School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Covenant Academy of Mobile	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Empower Community School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Floretta P. Carson Visual and Performing Arts Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Insufficient Data	Meets Standards
Freedom Preparatory Academy - Birmingham	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Insufficient Data	Meets Standards
I-3 Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
LEAD Academy Montgomery	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Legacy Prep	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
ACCEL Academy (MAEF)	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
Magic City Acceptance Academy	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Approaches Standards	Meets Standards
University Charter School	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards	Meets Standards

Conclusion

Charter schools in Alabama are navigating a challenging landscape. Since the passage of the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act in 2015, several obstacles have impacted their ability to operate smoothly, expand, and meet community needs. One of the primary hurdles is securing adequate funding. Unlike traditional public schools, which receive stable state and local funding, Alabama's charter schools often rely heavily on grants and donations to cover costs, especially in the initial years of operation.

Beyond opening, Alabama charter schools often struggle to attract qualified staff due to competition with traditional schools, where teachers may find more stability or benefits. Charter schools have limited budgets and, therefore, must be creative with staffing and resources, which can lead to burnout or high teacher and administrator turnover.

Once operational, charter schools in Alabama continue to face hurdles in terms of facilities and resources. Charter schools generally cannot access state-provided buildings, forcing them to either renovate older buildings or pay for leased spaces, which significantly strains their budgets. Additionally, as they serve diverse communities, these schools need to offer various support services, from special education resources to extracurricular activities, to meet the needs of all students.

Ultimately, Alabama charter schools need supportive policies, consistent funding access, and community engagement to thrive. Adjustments in funding allocations, facility access, and hiring support would help ensure that charter schools in Alabama can provide quality education and effectively address community needs.

In Alabama, charter schools are held to high-performance expectations despite their relative infancy. Since the first charter schools opened under the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act, all Alabama charter schools are less than ten years old. They operate in a system where they are expected to match and often surpass the performance of their traditional public school counterparts but with considerably less time to establish themselves.

Unlike public schools with decades of institutional history, these young schools are building their programs, cultures, and communities from the ground up. This pressure for quick results is rooted in their accountability to state regulators and their communities. Alabama charter schools must prove their efficacy almost immediately to secure continued funding and justify their existence. The Alabama Public Charter School Commission monitors these schools' performance, especially focusing on academic outcomes, often reviewed within the first two to five years.

Moreover, Alabama charter schools are expected to serve a wide range of students, including those who may have struggled in traditional school settings. This expectation amplifies the challenge, as

these schools must quickly establish targeted support programs and interventions to meet diverse student needs while still achieving strong academic results.

The time constraints and high-performance demands can be overwhelming. Building a successful educational environment often takes years of refinement, adjustments, and resources. Yet Alabama charter schools must accomplish this within the first few years of opening, demonstrating outcomes, securing family support, and simultaneously satisfying regulatory demands. These schools are balancing the immense challenge of rapid development with the necessity to prove their worth and succeed in an education landscape that traditionally requires much more time to show progress.

Alabama charter schools need understanding and support to continue thriving under these pressures. Policies that recognize their unique challenges, funding structures that acknowledge their need for rapid growth, and community involvement will be essential in helping these schools succeed and fulfill their promise of providing high-quality education alternatives across Alabama.

The Commission transitioned to a stand-alone agency in FY24 and received funding in this capacity for FY25. As a state agency, the Commission's finances are audited by the Alabama Department of Finance. The most recent comprehensive financial report can be found using the following link: [State of Alabama 2023 ACFR Document](#). The Commission has established three key personnel positions: executive director, academic specialist and finance specialist.