

# Missouri Charter School Enrollment Report

2014-2026

February 2026

## Executive Summary

This report analyzes enrollment trends for Missouri charter schools from the 2013-14 school year through 2025-26. Over these thirteen years, charter schools have experienced significant growth in both enrollment numbers and the percentage of students attending charter schools across all grade levels from Pre-K through 12th grade. This growth is particularly notable given that national public-school enrollment declined by 1.1% and Missouri's statewide enrollment declined by 2.9% between 2013 and 2023, reflecting strong family demand for school-choice options even amid broader enrollment declines.

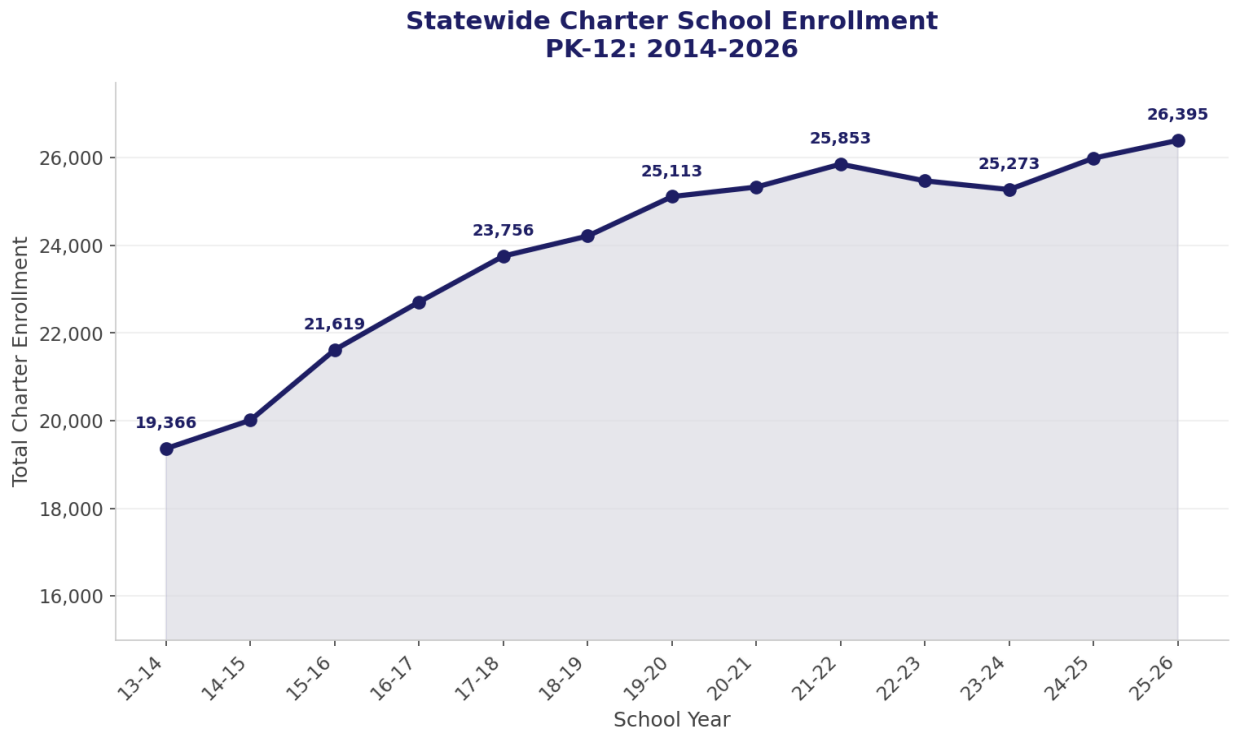
### Key Findings:

- Statewide Missouri PK-12 enrollment fell from 918,288 to 891,248 students (-2.9%)
- Statewide PK-12 charter enrollment grew from 19,366 to 26,395 students (+36.3%)
- Percentage of students in charter schools increased from 31.4% to 45.0% (+13.6%)
- St. Louis PK-12 percentage of students in charter schools rose from 25.5% to 43.1%, with Pre-K seeing the largest gains (+27.6%)
- Kansas City PK-12 percentage of students in charter schools increased from 39.9% to 47.0%, with middle school grades exceeding 54%
- Charter growth occurred across all grade levels from Pre-K through 12th grade, with over 7,000 new charter students added statewide

## Statewide Charter Enrollment Overview

Missouri's charter school sector has demonstrated consistent growth over the past thirteen years across all grade levels from Pre-K through 12th grade. Combined, these cities now serve over 26,000 PK-12 students in charter schools.

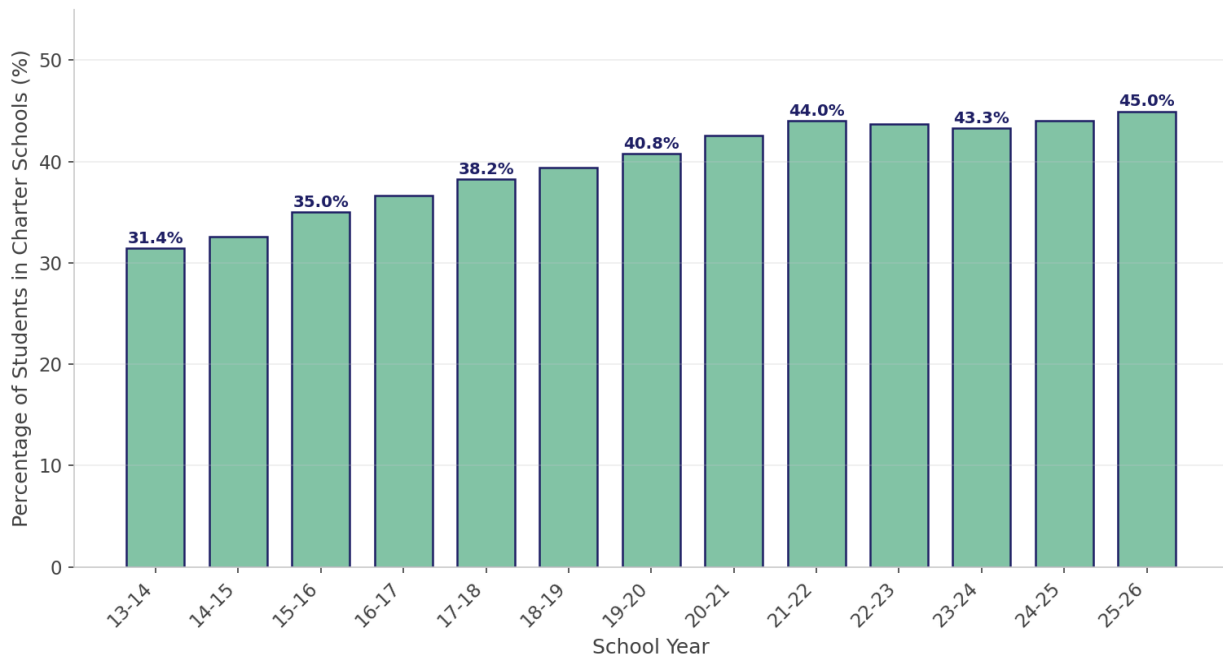
### Total Charter Enrollment Growth



Statewide PK-12 charter enrollment reached an all-time high of 26,395 students in 2025-26, representing a net gain of 7,029 students since 2013-14. This 36.3% growth occurred amid declining enrollment nationally and statewide. National public-school enrollment fell from 50.0 million to 49.5 million (-1.1%) between fall 2013 and fall 2023, while Missouri's total public-school enrollment declined from 918,288 to 891,248 (-2.9%) over the same period.

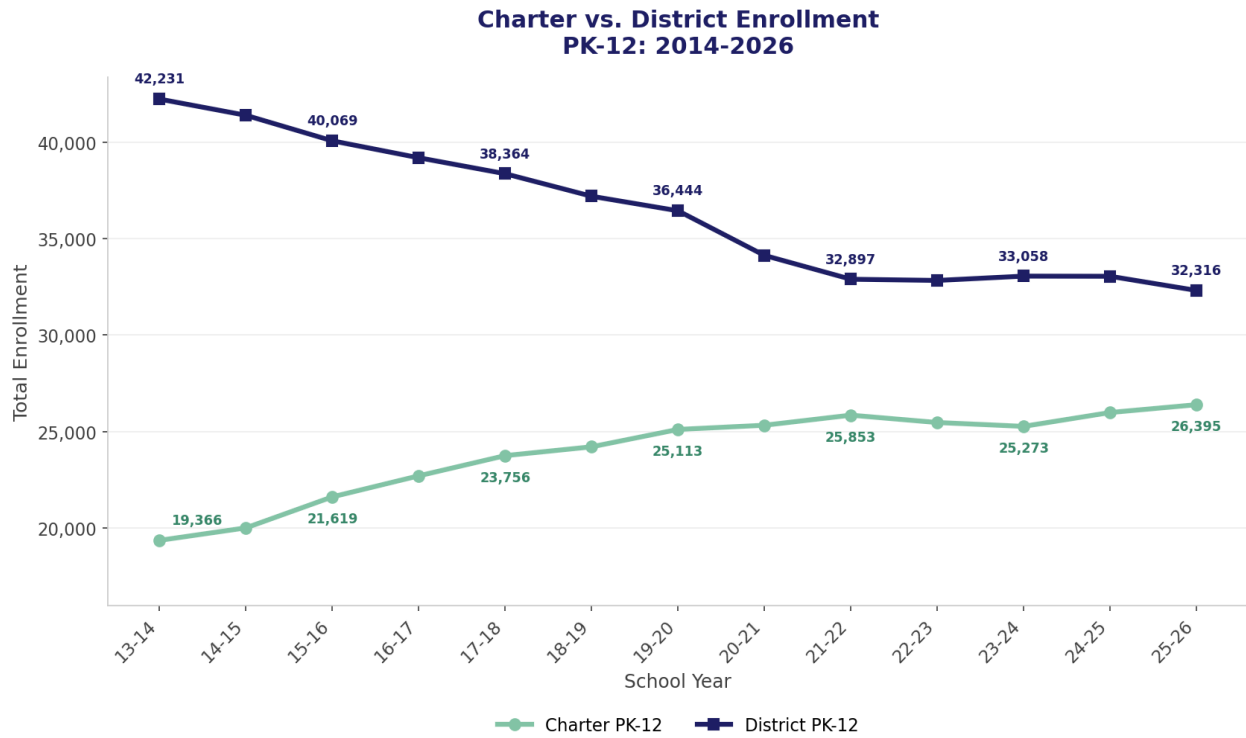
### Charter School Enrollment as a Percentage of Urban Students

**Percentage of Students in Charter Schools  
PK-12: 2014-2026**



Charter schools' share of the combined St. Louis and Kansas City PK-12 student population has seen charter enrollment grow steadily from 31.4% in 2013-14 to 45.0% in 2025-26. Half of all public-school students in these urban areas now attend charter schools, reflecting strong and sustained family preference for these options across all grade levels.

## Charter vs. District Enrollment Trends



The diverging trajectories of charter and district enrollment illustrate a fundamental shift in how families in Missouri’s urban areas are choosing schools. While PK-12 charter enrollment has grown by 36.3% over the same period, district enrollment has declined by 23.5%. This divergence is more pronounced than state trends, where Missouri’s overall public-school enrollment declined 2.9% from 2013 to 2023, suggesting the shift toward charter schools in these urban areas goes well beyond general population changes.

## St. Louis Analysis

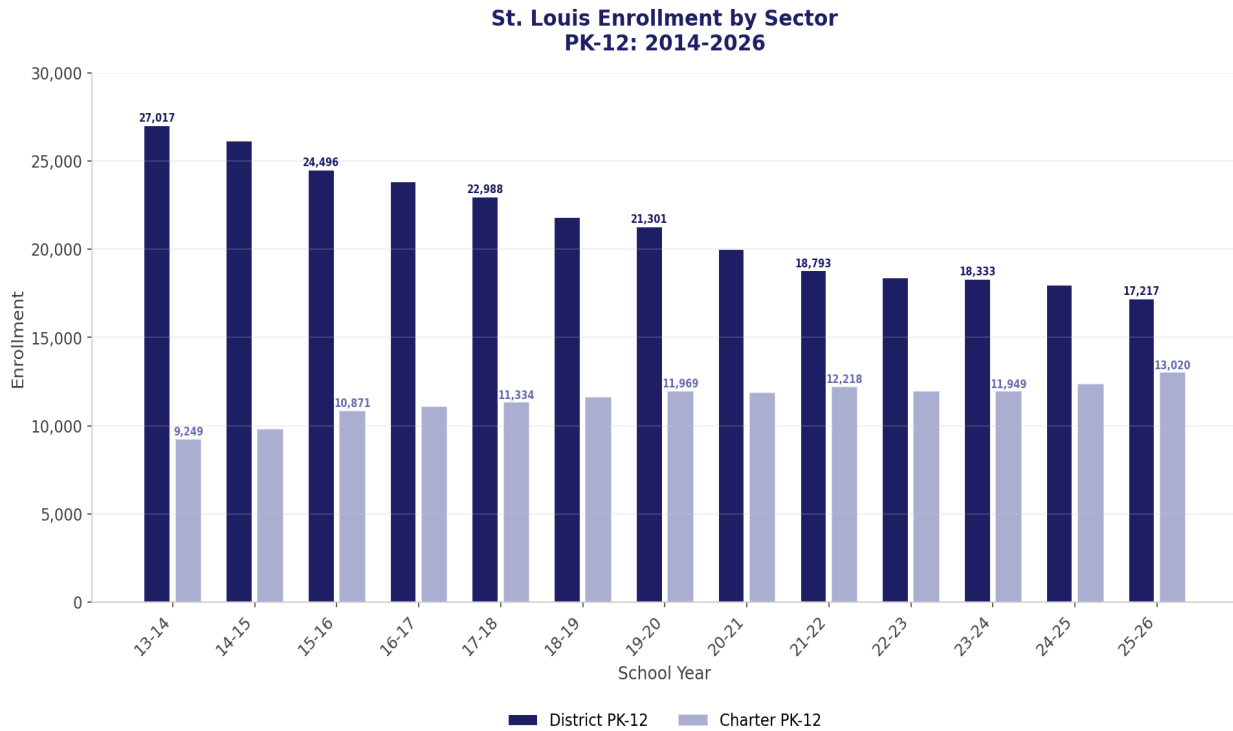
The St. Louis charter school sector has experienced a remarkable transformation over the past thirteen years. Charter schools have grown from serving about one-quarter of PK-12 students to over 43%. This growth has occurred amid significant population decline in the region and has been particularly dramatic in Pre-K (from 0% to 27.6%) and high school grades, where the percentage of students in charter schools more than doubled.

### St. Louis Key Statistics

Metric	2013-14	2025-26	Change
Charter PK-12 Enrollment	9,249	13,020	+40.8%
District PK-12 Enrollment	27,017	17,217	-36.3%

Total PK-12	36,266	30,237	-16.6%
Percentage of Students in Charters	25.5%	43.1%	+17.6%

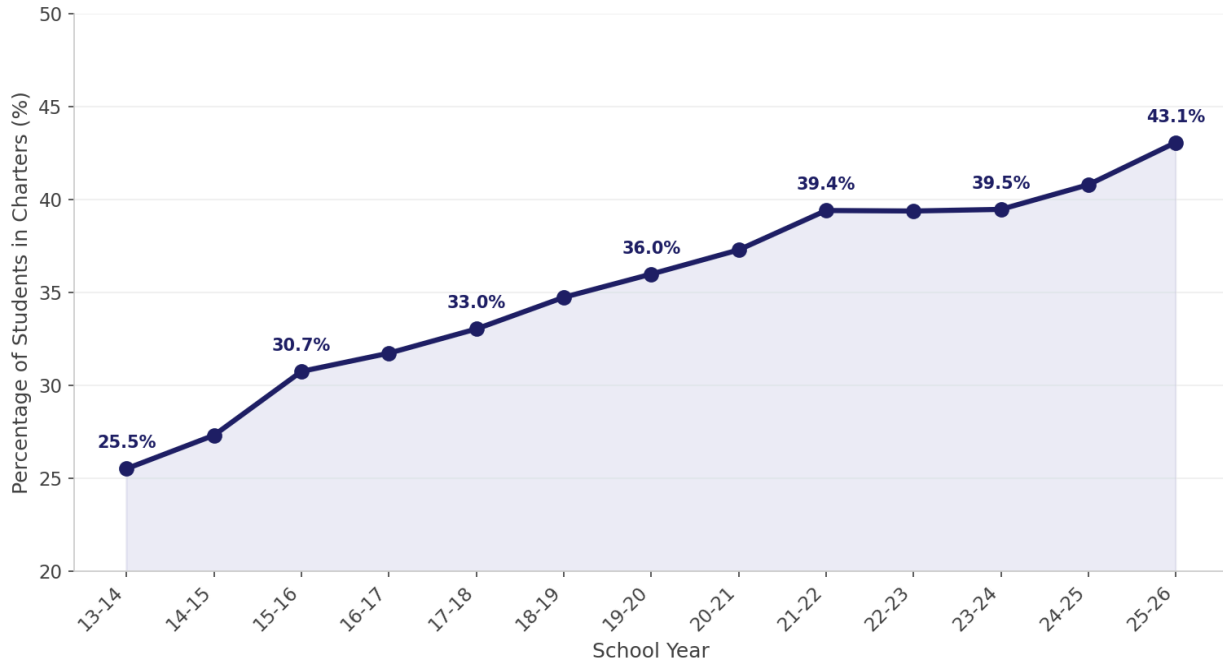
### Enrollment by Sector



St. Louis district schools have experienced a dramatic 36.3% PK-12 enrollment decline since 2013-14, losing nearly 10,000 students. In contrast, charter schools have gained 3,771 students over the same period. For context, Missouri’s statewide public enrollment declined just 2.9% over a comparable period, and the national decline was only 1.1%, underscoring that St. Louis’s enrollment dynamics reflect local factors well beyond broader demographic trends.

## St. Louis Charter Enrollment Percentage Growth

**St. Louis Percentage of Students in Charter Schools  
PK-12: 2014-2026**



St. Louis PK-12 percentage of students in charter schools has grown consistently, rising from 25.5% in 2013-14 to 43.1% in 2025-26. This 17.6 percentage point increase represents a dramatic shift in the educational landscape, with charter schools now serving over four in ten PK-12 students in St Louis City.

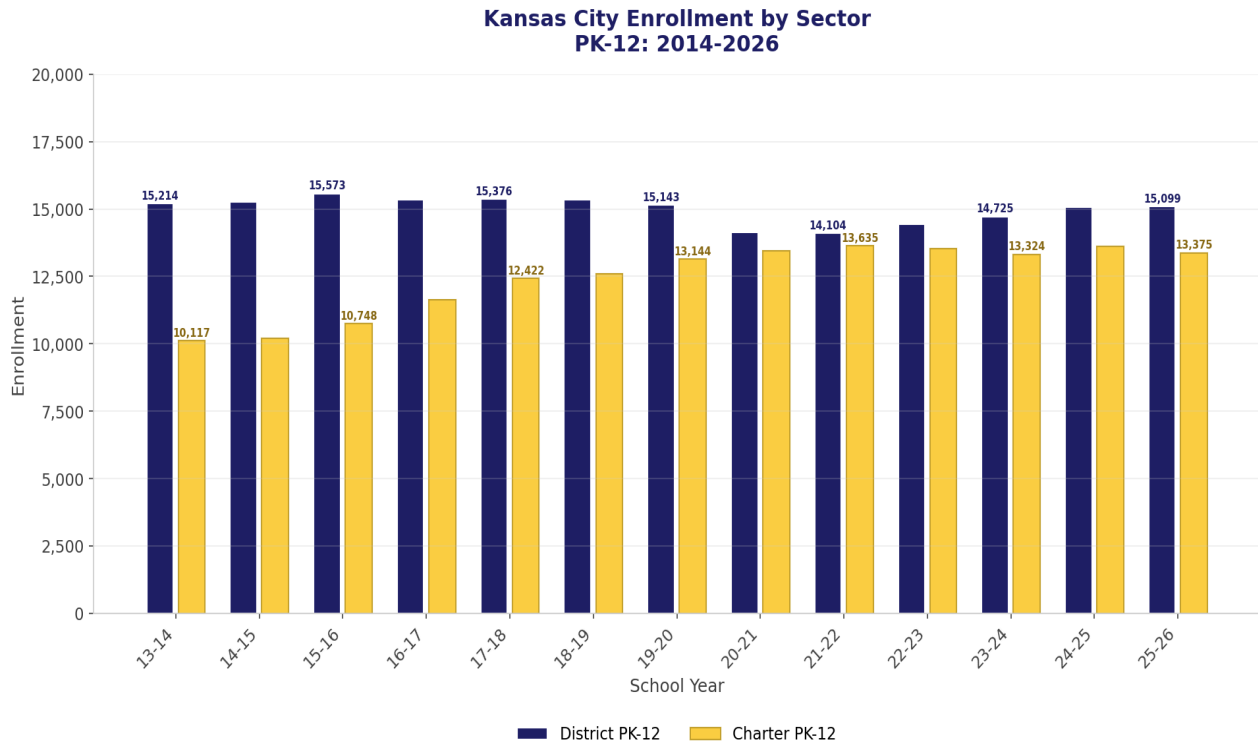
## Kansas City Market Analysis

Kansas City represents a more mature charter school sector than St. Louis, having achieved a higher charter enrollment percentage earlier. Charter schools in Kansas City have maintained strong enrollment levels while also experiencing growth across all grade levels. Notably, Kansas City's middle school grades (6-8) have crossed the 50% threshold, meaning most middle schoolers in Kansas City now attend charter schools.

### Kansas City Key Statistics

Metric	2013-14	2025-26	Change
Charter PK-12 Enrollment	10,117	13,375	+32.2%
District PK-12 Enrollment	15,214	15,099	-0.8%
Total PK-12	25,331	28,474	+12.4%
Percentage of Students in Charters	39.9%	47.0%	+7.1 pts

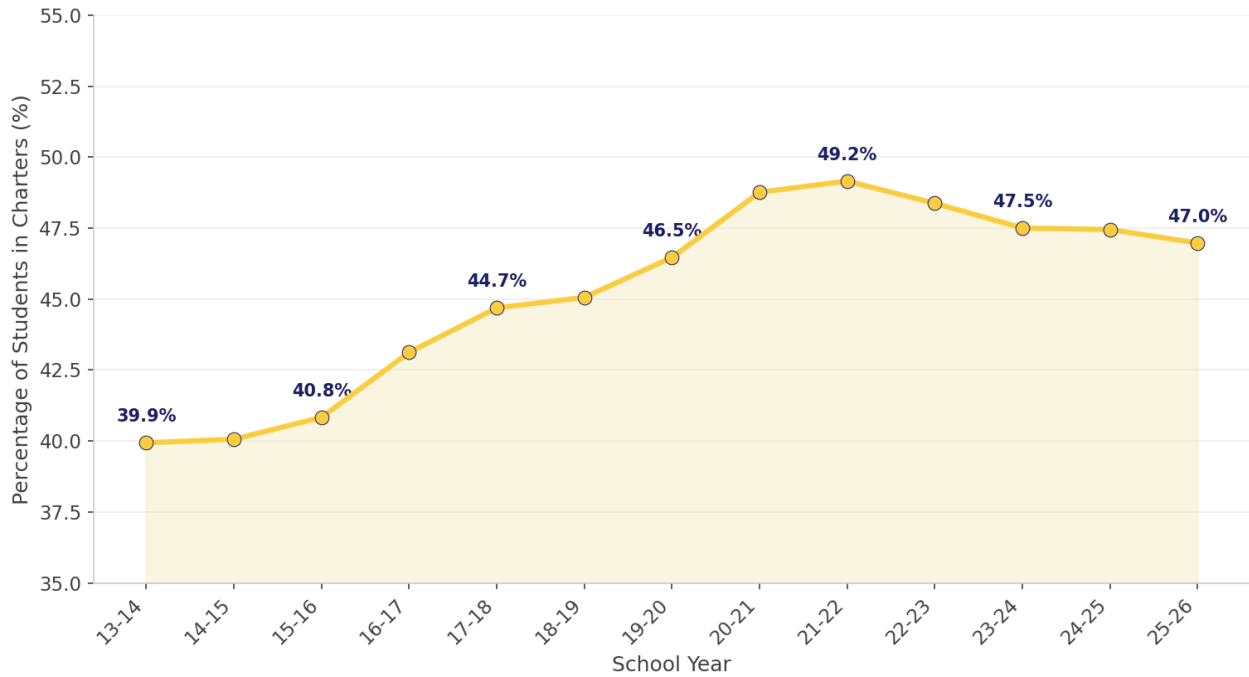
## Enrollment by Sector



Unlike St. Louis, Kansas City’s total PK-12 enrollment has grown by 12.4% since 2013-14, a striking contrast to both Missouri’s statewide decline of 2.9% and the national decline of 1.1% over a comparable period. This growth has primarily benefited charter schools, which gained 3,258 students while district enrollment remained stable. Charter schools have enrolled all new students entering the city.

## Kansas City Charter Enrollment Percentage Growth

**Kansas City Percentage of Students in Charter Schools  
PK-12: 2014-2026**



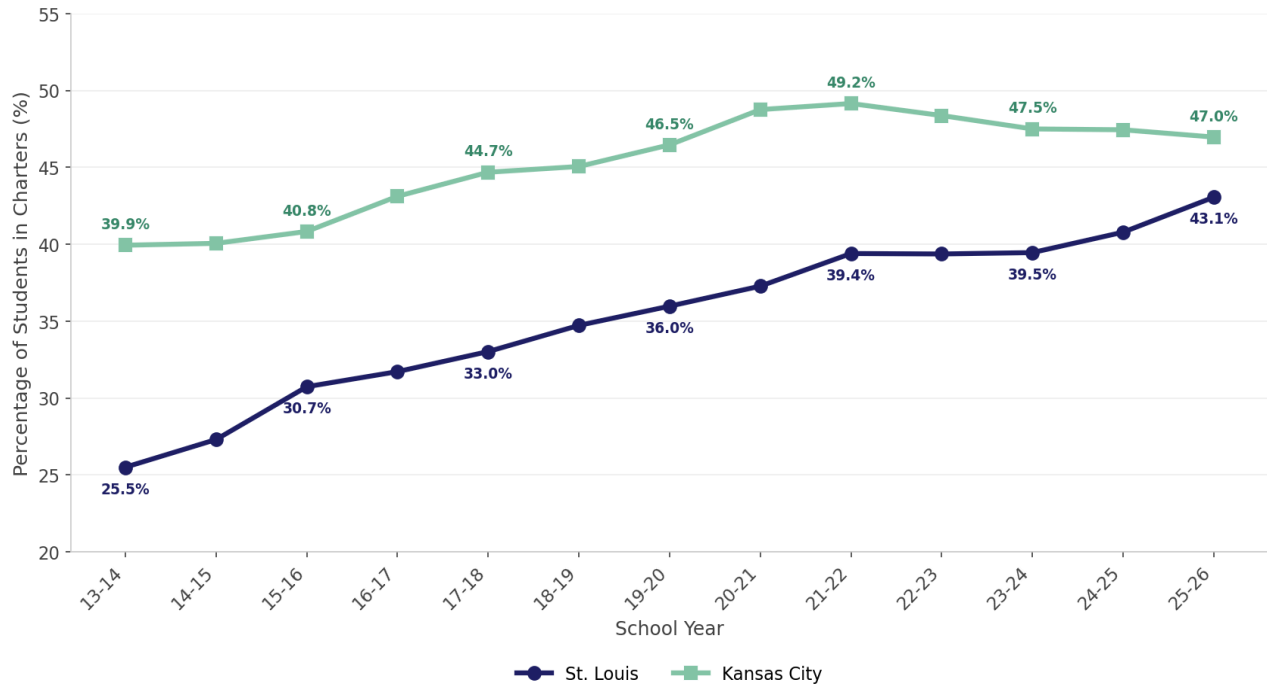
Kansas City PK-12 percentage of students in charter schools has grown from 39.9% in 2013-14 to 47.0% in 2025-26. This demonstrates the strong and sustained demand for charter options in Kansas City across all grade levels.

## Comparing St Louis and Kansas City

While both cities have seen charter growth, their trajectories reflect different underlying dynamics. St. Louis has experienced rapid charter enrollment growth amid population decline, with particularly dramatic gains at the high school level. Kansas City's more established charter sector shows steady, incremental gains and has achieved majority charter enrollment in middle school grades.

## Charter Enrollment Percentage Comparison

**Percentage of Students in Charter Schools: St. Louis vs. Kansas City  
PK-12: 2014-2026**



St. Louis PK-12 charter enrollment percentage has been converging toward Kansas City levels, narrowing the gap from 14.4 percentage points in 2013-14 to just 3.9 percentage points in 2025-26. Both cities are now approaching equilibrium near the 45-47% mark, suggesting strong family demand for school choice options in Missouri's urban areas across the full PK-12 spectrum.

## Grade-Level Enrollment Analysis

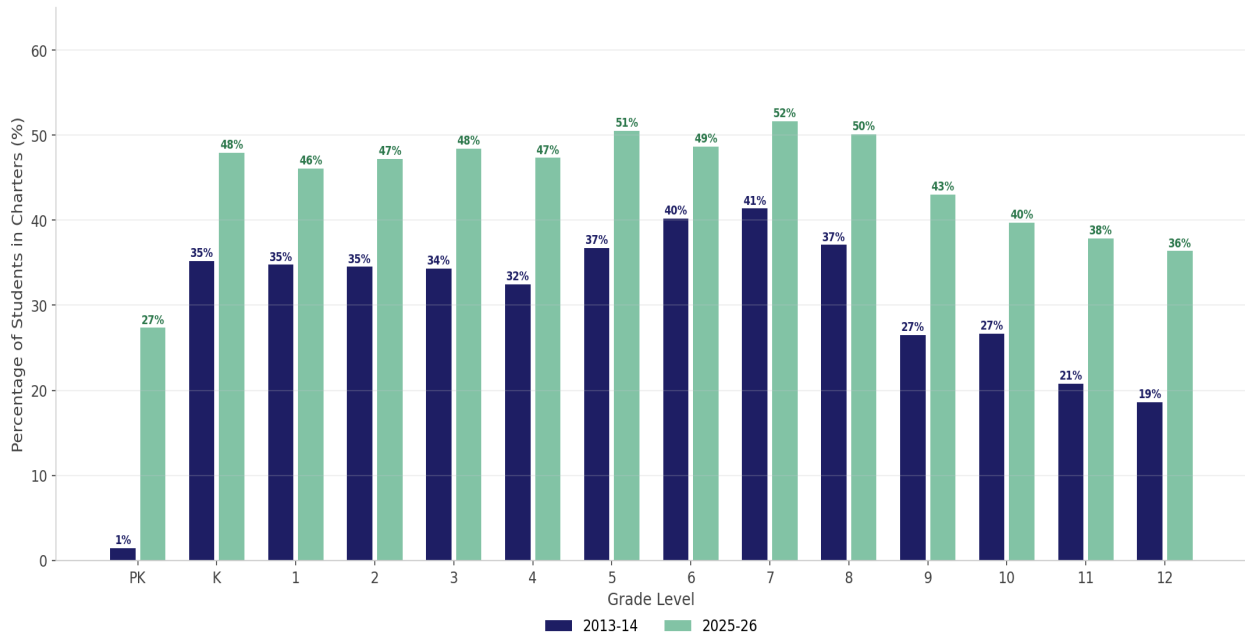
Examining the percentage of students in charter schools by grade level reveals important patterns in how families engage with school choice at various stages of their children's education. Both St. Louis and Kansas City show distinct trends across Pre-K, elementary, middle, and high school grades, with Pre-K showing the most dramatic growth in both cities.

### Statewide Charter Enrollment Percentage by Grade

When combining both St. Louis and Kansas City, clear patterns emerge across grade levels. Pre-K has seen the most dramatic growth (+25.9 pts), followed by high school grades, which have grown from an average of 23.1% to 39.2%. Middle school grades now exceed 50% charter enrollment statewide.

### Statewide Charter Enrollment Percentage by Grade: 2013-14 vs. 2025-26

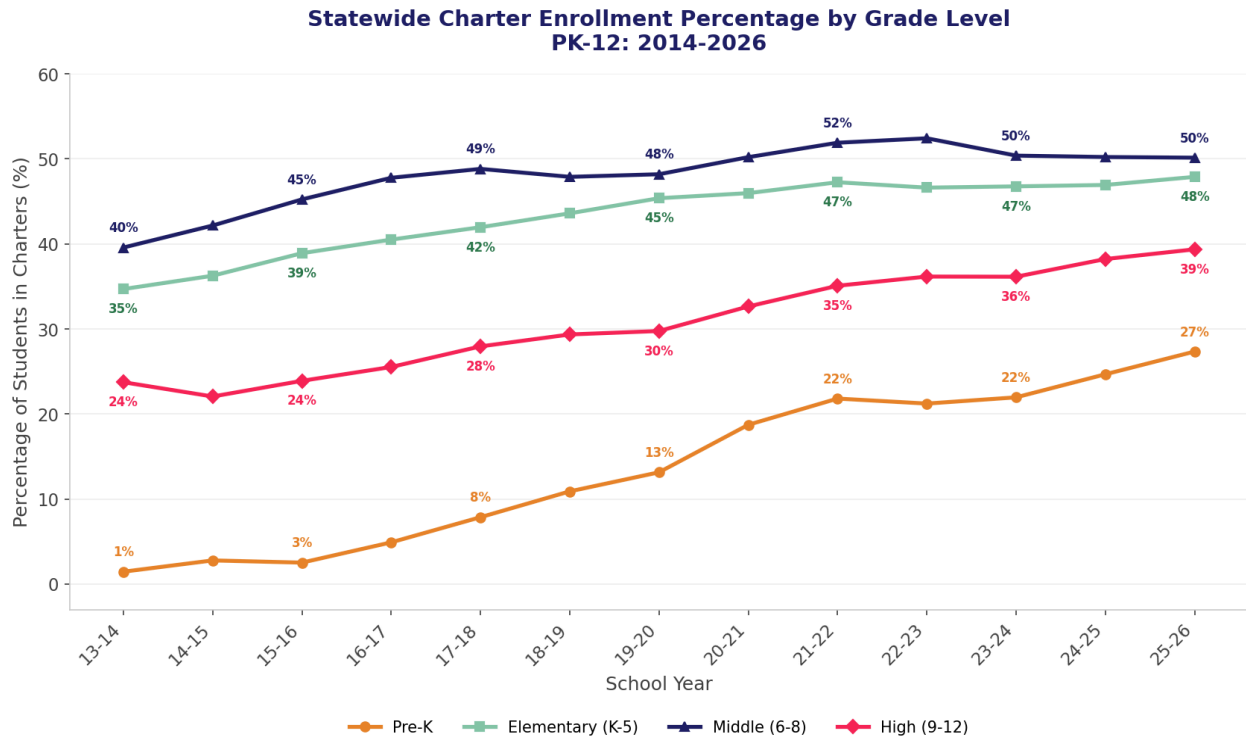
**Statewide Percentage of Students in Charter Schools by Grade: 2013-14 vs. 2025-26  
(St. Louis + Kansas City Combined)**



**Key observations from statewide grade-level data:**

- Pre-K experienced the largest gain: 1.5% to 27.3% (+25.9 percentage points)
- Grade 5 now has the highest charter enrollment percentage at 50.5%, followed by Grade 7 at 51.7%
- High school grades (9-12) showed strong growth, with Grade 12 gaining 17.8 percentage points
- Every grade level now exceeds 27% percentage of students in charter schools, up from single digits for Pre-K in 2013-14

## Statewide Charter Enrollment Trends by Grade



## Statewide Grade Level Summary

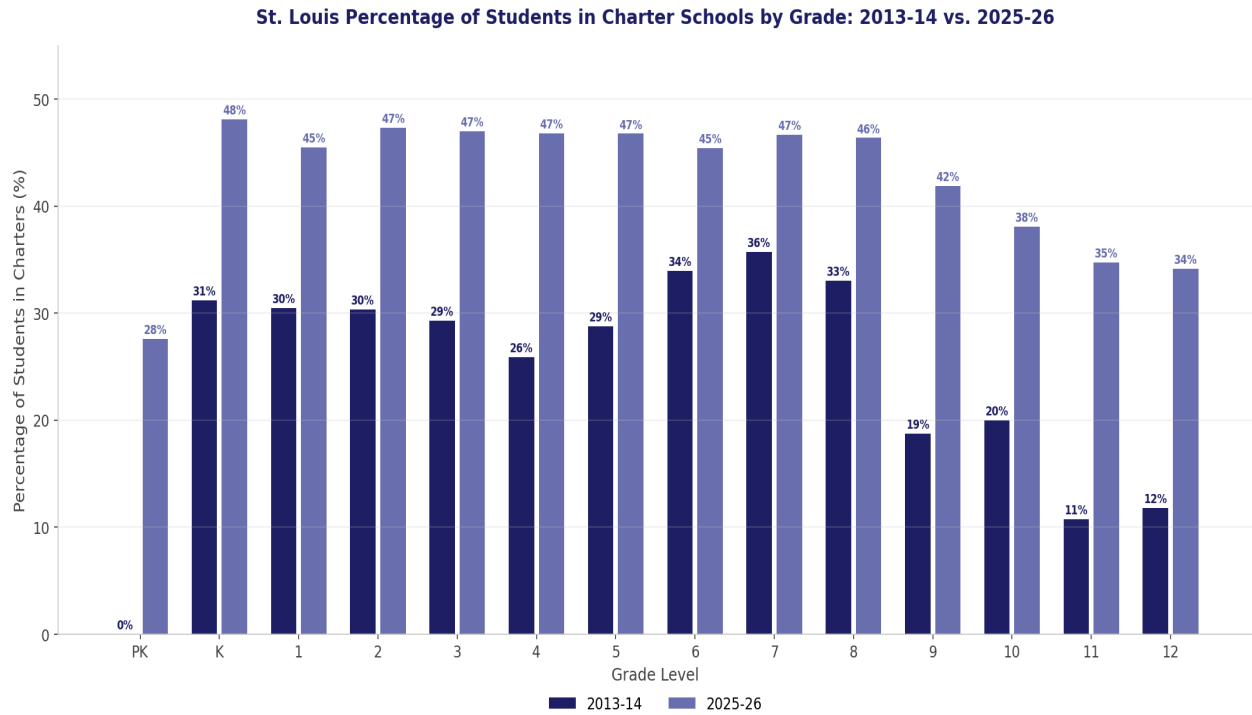
Grade Level	2013-14	2025-26	Change
Pre-K	1.5%	27.3%	+25.9 pts
Elementary (K-5)	34.7%	47.9%	+13.3 pts
Middle (6-8)	39.6%	50.2%	+10.6 pts
High (9-12)	23.1%	39.2%	+16.1 pts

Statewide data shows that middle school grades have crossed the 50% threshold, meaning most middle schoolers in Missouri's charter school sectors now attend charter schools. Pre-K represents the fastest-growing segment, while high school grades have shown the second-largest gains as charter high school options have expanded.

### St. Louis Grade-Level Trends

St. Louis has seen dramatic growth in the percentage of students in charter schools across all grade levels, with the most remarkable gains in Pre-K (from 0% to 27.6%) and high school grades. The high school grades (9-12) showed a 21.9 percentage point increase, growing from an average of 15.3% in 2013-14 to 37.2% in 2025-26.

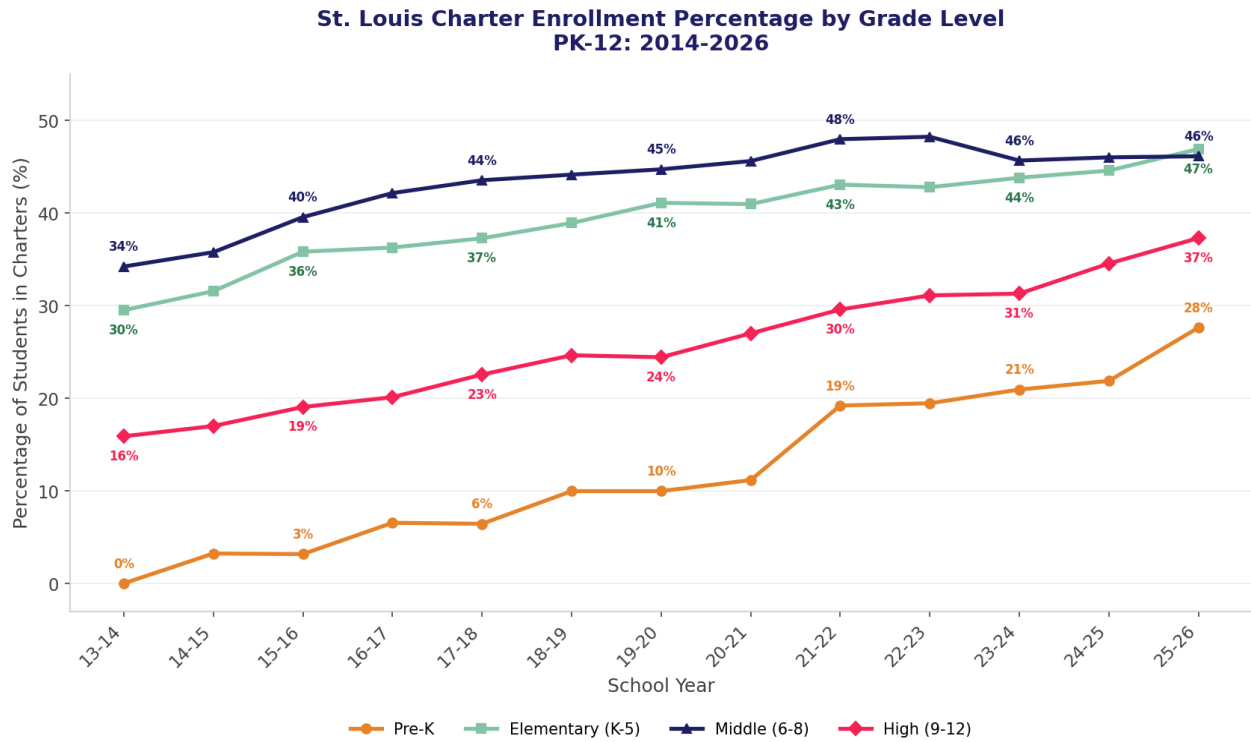
## Charter Enrollment Percentage by Grade: 2013-14 vs. 2025-26



### Key observations from St. Louis grade-level data:

- Pre-K saw the largest gain, growing from 0% to 27.6% percentage of students in charter schools (+27.6 pts)
- High school grades (9-12) more than doubled, with Grade 11 increasing from 10.8% to 34.7%
- Elementary grades (K-5) now average 46.9% percentage of students in charter schools, up from 29.3%

## Charter Enrollment Trends by Grade Level



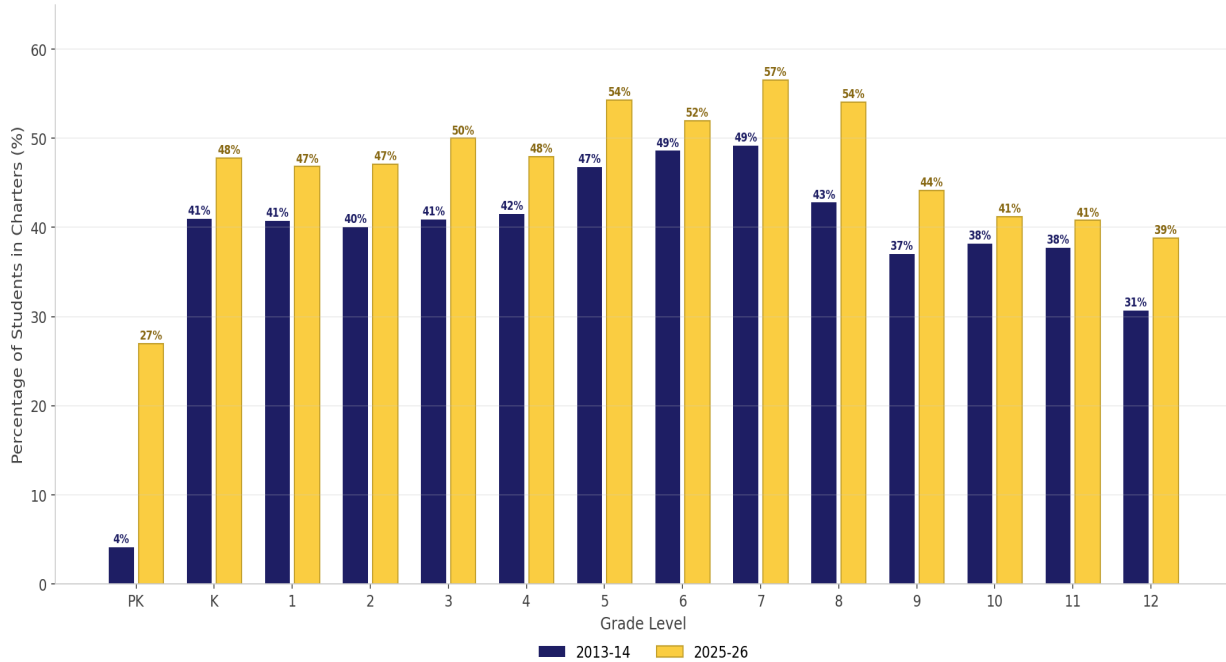
The grade level analysis shows convergence over time, with Pre-K showing the steepest growth trajectory. While elementary and middle school charter enrollment percentages were always higher than high school, the gap has narrowed significantly as high school charter options have expanded and matured.

## Kansas City Grade-Level Trends

Kansas City's charter school sector was already more mature in 2013-14, with a higher baseline percentage of students in charter schools across most grades. Growth has been steady across all grade levels, with Pre-K showing the largest gains (+22.8 pts) and middle school grades now exceeding 50% of students in charter schools.

## Charter Enrollment Percentage by Grade: 2013-14 vs. 2025-26

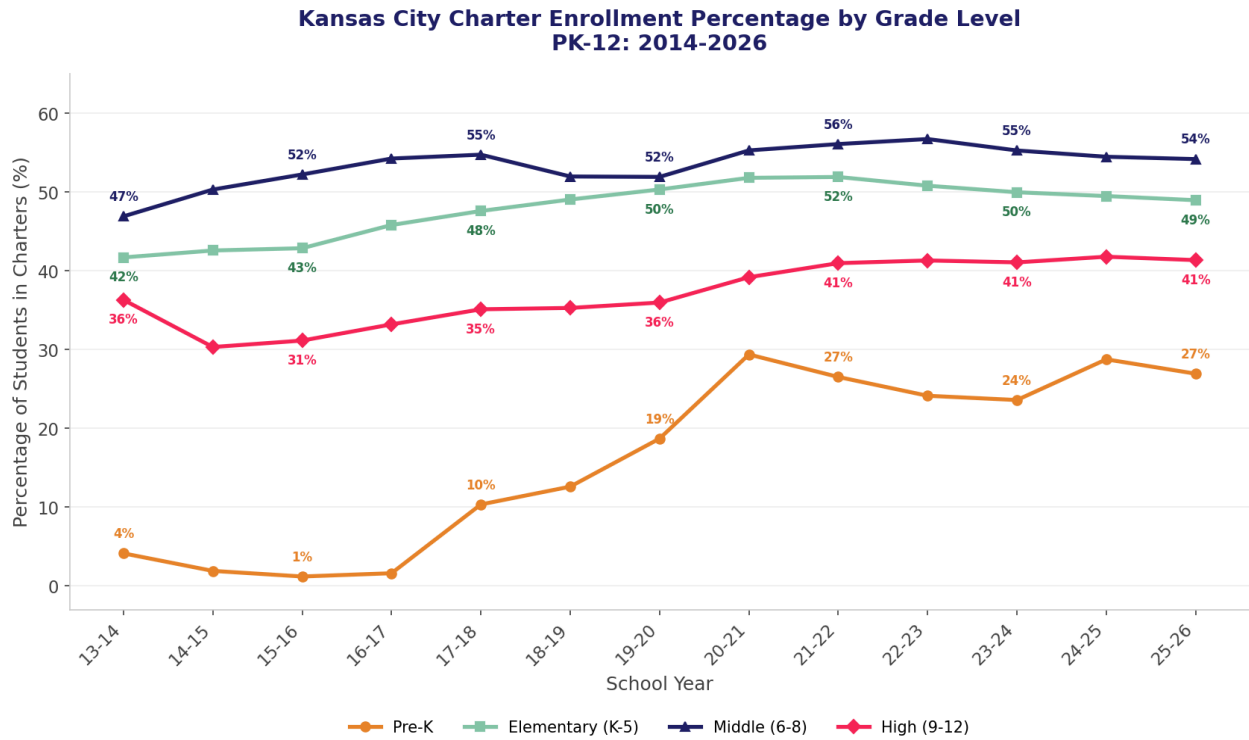
Kansas City Percentage of Students in Charter Schools by Grade: 2013-14 vs. 2025-26



### Key observations from Kansas City grade-level data:

- Pre-K grew from 4.1% to 26.9% percentage of students in charter schools (+22.8 pts), the largest gain of any grade band
- Middle school grades (6-8) now average 54.2% percentage of students in charter schools—majority charter
- Grade 7 has the highest charter enrollment percentage at 56.5%, with elementary grades averaging 49.0%

## Charter Enrollment Trends by Grade Level



Kansas City's Pre-K shows the steepest growth trajectory, while middle school grades have consistently led in percentage of students in charter schools. Elementary follows closely, and the high school grades, while lower, have shown steady growth and now average over 41% charter enrollment.

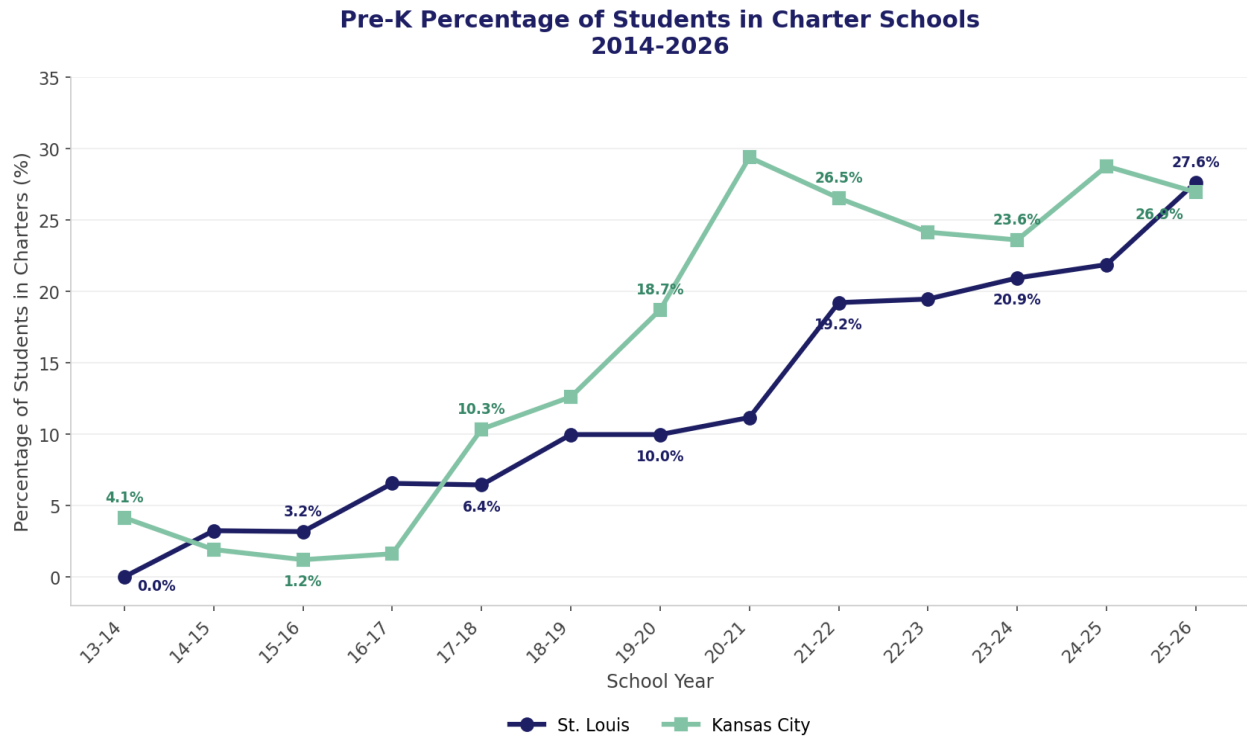
### Grade level Summary: Both Markets

Grade Level	STL 2013-14	STL 2025-26	STL Change	KC 2013-14	KC 2025-26	KC Change
Pre-K	0.0%	27.6%	+27.6 pts	4.1%	26.9%	+22.8 pts
Elementary (K-5)	29.3%	46.9%	+17.6 pts	41.8%	49.0%	+7.2 pts
Middle (6-8)	34.2%	46.1%	+11.9 pts	46.9%	54.2%	+7.3 pts
High (9-12)	15.3%	37.2%	+21.9 pts	35.9%	41.2%	+5.3 pts

### Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment Trends

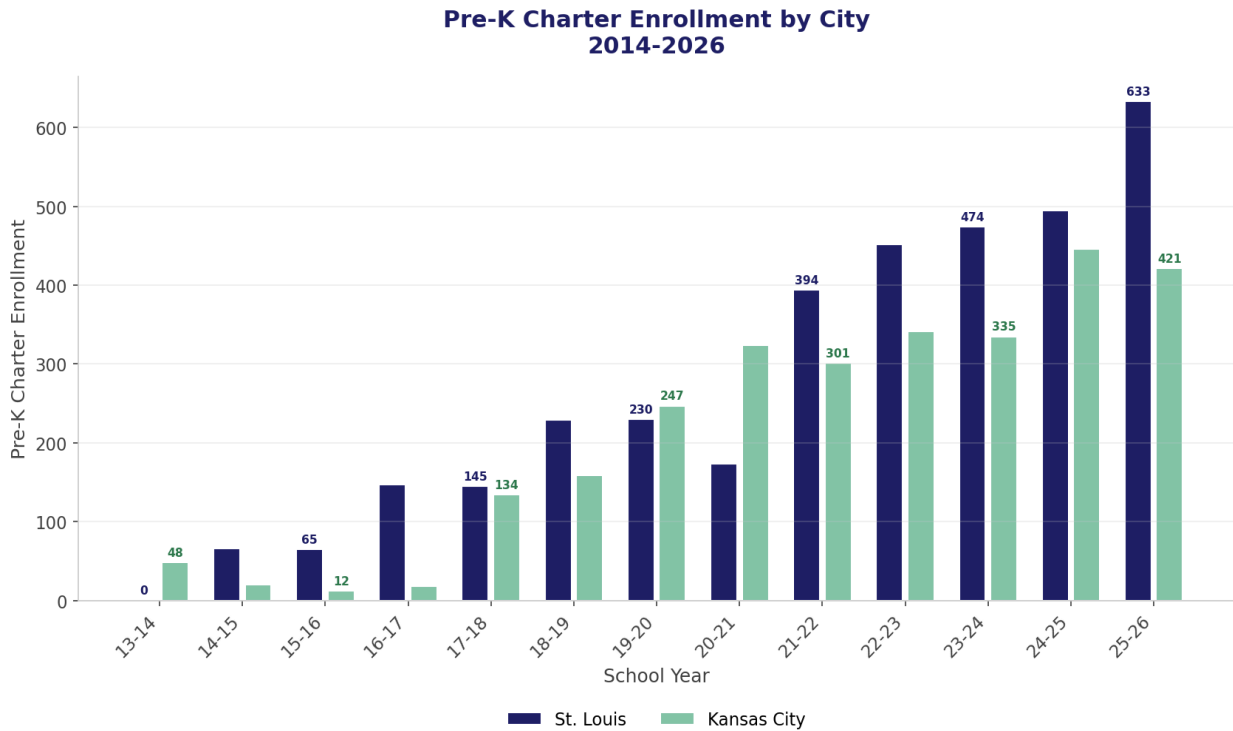
Pre-Kindergarten represents one of the fastest-growing segments of the charter sector in both St. Louis and Kansas City. Charter Pre-K programs have expanded dramatically over the past thirteen years, providing families with early childhood education options that can serve as a pipeline into charter elementary schools.

### Pre-K Charter Enrollment Percentage Growth



St. Louis charter Pre-K has seen extraordinary growth, rising from 0% percent of students in charter schools in 2013-14 (when no charter Pre-K programs existed) to 27.6% in 2025-26. Kansas City's charter Pre-K percentage of students in charter schools grew from 4.1% to 26.9% over the same period, with both cities now serving one-quarter of all Pre-K students in charter programs.

Pre-K Charter Enrollment by City



Key observations from Pre-K enrollment data:

- St. Louis charter Pre-K grew from zero students in 2013-14 to 633 students in 2025-26
- Kansas City charter Pre-K grew from forty-eight students to 421 students over the same period
- Combined, over 1,050 Pre-K students now attend charter programs across both cities

The rapid expansion of charter Pre-K programs represents an important development in Missouri's school choice landscape. These programs provide families with an earlier entry point into the charter sector and can help establish relationships with charter schools before children reach kindergarten.

## Conclusion

Missouri's charter school sector continues to demonstrate strong growth and family demand. Over the thirteen years from 2013-14 to 2025-26, charter schools have:

- Added over 7,000 PK-12 students statewide, even as Missouri's total public enrollment fell 2.9% and national enrollment declined 1.1%
- Increased PK-12 percentage of students in charter schools by 13.6 percentage points to 45% of all students

- Achieved the majority percentage of students in charter schools in Kansas City middle schools (54.2%)
- Built Pre-K programs from nearly zero to over 1,050 students (27% percentage of students in charter schools in both cities)
- More than doubled the high school percentage of students in charter schools in St. Louis (15.3% to 37.2%)

The grade-level analysis reveals that charter growth is occurring across all Pre-K through 12th grades, with Pre-K showing the most dramatic expansion. The emergence of charter Pre-K programs provides families with an earlier entry point into the charter sector, while high school expansion ensures options throughout a student's educational journey. At a time when both national and Missouri public school enrollment continues to decline, Missouri's charter sector stands as a vital and growing component of the state's public education landscape, serving families who are actively choosing these schools for their children at every stage of their education.