

Philadelphia Public School Enrollment, 2019-20 and 2020-21

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Key Findings

- **Between 2016-17 and 2020-21, District enrollment declined by 8% while Charter enrollment increased by 6%.**
- **The biggest enrollment decrease from 2019-20 to 2020-21 was in kindergarten.** However, student enrollment increased in grades 7-12 (with the exception of 9th grade).
- **Charter enrollment increased about 1% from 2019-20 to 2020-21.** All grade levels saw an increase in enrollment¹ with the exception of kindergarten and 9th grade.
- **The overall number of students attending Neighborhood, Citywide, and Special Admission high schools increased about 3% from 2019-20 to 2020-21.**
- **Even though there was an overall decrease in enrollment, the overall demographic makeup of the District student population did not change.** However, students who did not enroll in the District *for kindergarten* tended to be Black/African American students and those with special needs.

Introduction

This brief explores 2020-21 student enrollment patterns at District, Alternative, Charter, and Cyber Charter schools in Philadelphia, including by school admission type and student demographics, as well as changes in those patterns over time. The student enrollment information¹ presented in this brief is based on the October 1, 2019 snapshot for 2019-20 and on the October 1, 2020 snapshot for 2020-21.² Note that the 2019-20 snapshot occurred when SDP was holding regular in-person instruction prior to school building closures,³ while the 2020-21 enrollment snapshot occurred during virtual instruction due to the global Covid-19 pandemic.

¹ For more information on student enrollment by schools, please visit: <https://schoolprofiles.philasd.org/>

² For open data files on school-level enrollment numbers, sorted by school and grade, please visit: <https://www.philasd.org/performance/programs-services/open-data/school-information/#school-enrollment>

³ On March 13, 2020, the School District of Philadelphia closed all schools and offices and pivoted to virtual instruction in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic.

Research Questions

The following lines of inquiry guided our analyses:

1. How did student enrollment in District, Alternative, Charter, and Cyber Charter schools change from 2016-17 to 2020-21?
2. How did student grade-level enrollment in 2019-20 and 2020-21 differ by sector (District, Alternative, Charter, and Cyber Charter)?
3. How did student enrollment in 2019-20 and 2020-21 differ by high school admission type?
4. How did student enrollment in 2019-20 and 2020-21 differ by student demographics?

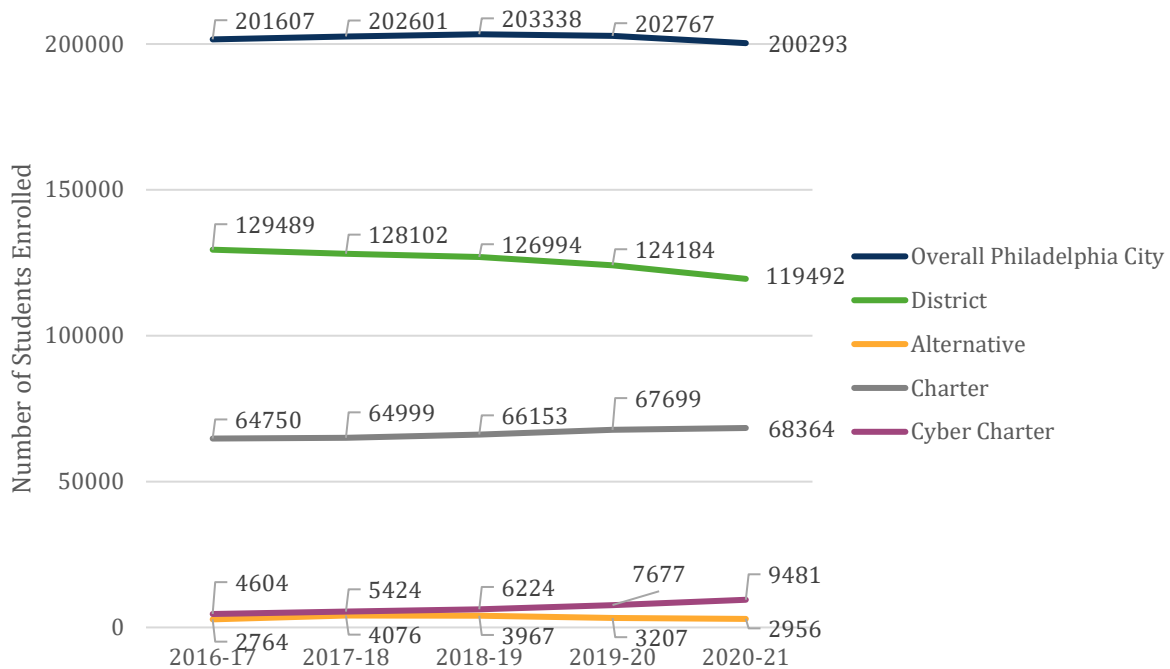
Key Findings

We first examined how student enrollment changed over the past five years in the city of Philadelphia, District, Alternative, Charter, and Cyber Charter schools from 2016-17 to 2020-21. Overall, student enrollment in the city of Philadelphia did not fluctuate much from 2016-17 to 2020-21 (Figure 1). District schools have consistently had the highest student enrollment out of the four sector types and have about twice the number of enrolled students as Charter schools. However, student enrollment in District schools has been decreasing over the past five years while Charter school enrollment has been increasing. Enrollment in District schools declined by 8% from 2016-17 to 2020-21 (Figure 1). On the other hand, enrollment in Charter schools increased by 6% from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

How did grade-level enrollment in 2019-20 and 2020-21 differ for District, Alternative, Charter, and Cyber Charter schools?

Overall enrollment in public schools in the city of Philadelphia decreased by 1% (2,474 students) from 2019-20 to 2020-21. Philadelphia city-wide public enrollment in 2020-21 was 200,293, compared to 202,767 in 2019-20. District enrollment decreased by 4%, from 124,184 students in 2019-20 to 119,492 students in 2020-21. Alternative school enrollment also decreased by 8%, from 3,207 students in 2019-20 to 2,956 students in 2020-21. However, both Charter and Cyber Charter schools experienced increased enrollment from 2019-20 to 2020-21. Charter school enrollment increased by 1%, from 67,699 students in 2019-20 to 68,364 students in 2020-21, and Cyber Charter enrollment increased by 23%, from 7,677 students in 2019-20 to 9,481 students in 2020-21 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of students enrolled in public schools in Philadelphia (Overall, District, Alternative, Charter, and Cyber Charter) from 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

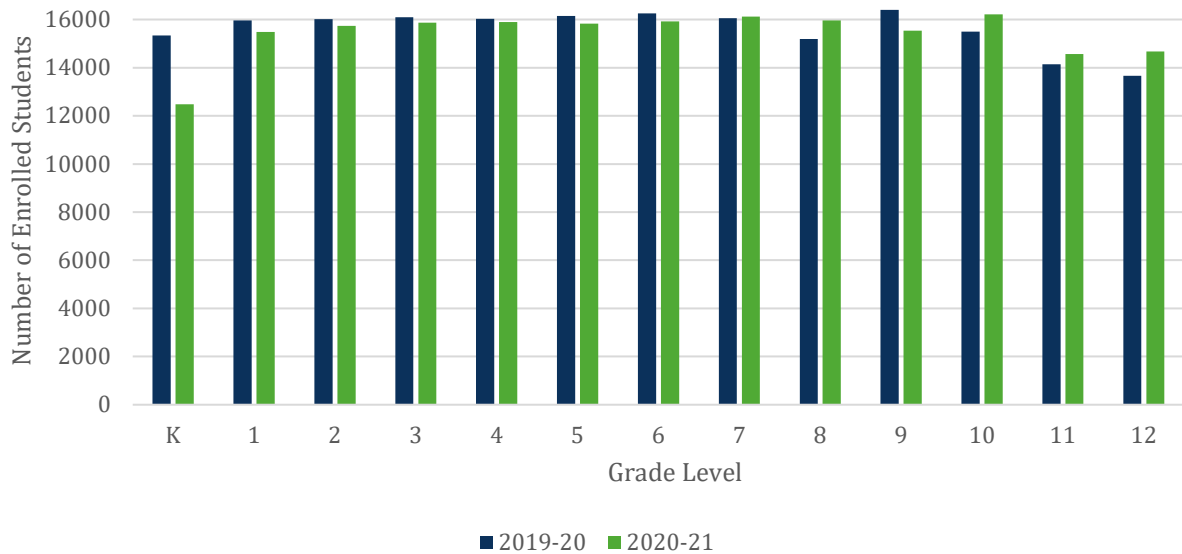
Note: The vertical axis indicates total number of students enrolled in each of the five categories for 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21. This data is based on the October 1st snapshot.

Overall Philadelphia City Enrollment for 2019-20 and 2020-21

The biggest decrease in overall student enrollment was for kindergarten⁴: there were 15,332 kindergarteners enrolled in 2019-20, but the number dropped to 12,478 in 2020-21, which is a decrease of about 19% (Figure 2 & Table 1). In general, enrollment declined in grades 1-6, but the decline was smaller than for kindergarten from 2019-20 to 2020-21. On the other hand, student enrollment increased in grades 7-12 (with the exception of 9th grade). Twelfth grade saw the biggest increase in student enrollment (7%, or 1,004 students) (Figure 2 & Table 1).

⁴ It is possible that parents are choosing to enroll their children in 2021-22 instead of having their children start kindergarten in an all-virtual environment in 2020-21.

Figure 2. Number of students enrolled in public schools in Philadelphia in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade level



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Notes: Public schools in Philadelphia include District, Alternative, Charter, and Cyber Charter schools.

How to read this figure: The vertical axis indicates total number of students enrolled in each grade in 2019-20 (blue bar) and 2020-21 (green bar). The number of all enrolled students was 202,767 in 2019-20 and 200,293 in 2020-21. For the number of students enrolled by grade level, please refer to Table 1 below. This data is based on the October 1st snapshot.

Table 1. Number of students enrolled in public schools in Philadelphia in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade level

Grade	Number of Students in 2019-20 (Oct 1 snapshot)	Number of Students in 2020-21 (Oct 1 snapshot)
Kindergarten	15,332	12,478
1	15,958	15,487
2	16,012	15,736
3	16,097	15,868
4	16,021	15,896
5	16,147	15,833
6	16,248	15,920
7	16,056	16,120
8	15,190	15,967
9	16,406	15,541
10	15,495	16,217
11	14,140	14,561
12	13,665	14,669
Total	202,767	200,293

Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021

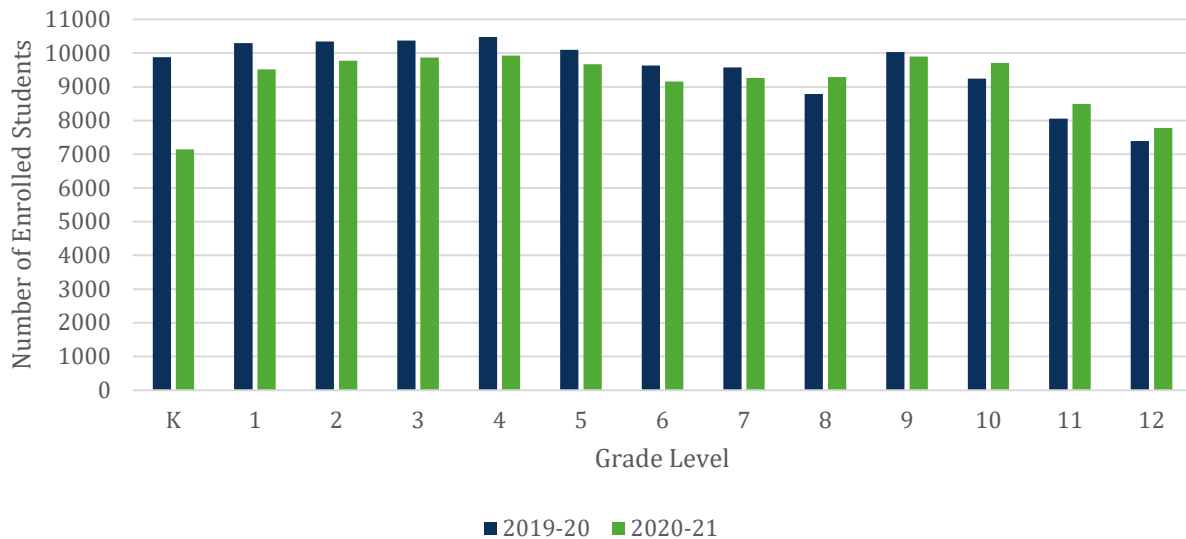
School District of Philadelphia Enrollment

This section explores 2020-21 enrollment trends in District and alternative schools and analyzes enrollment changes in these sectors from 2019-20 to 2020-21.

District Enrollment for 2019-20 and 2020-21

Among District students, grade-level enrollment patterns were similar to those found across Philadelphia public schools overall: There was higher student enrollment in 2019-20 (124,184 students) compared to in 2020-21 (119,492 students). Kindergarten enrollment had the largest decrease, from 9,881 students in 2019-20 to 7,143 students in 2020-21 (a 28% decline). Grades 1-7 also had lower enrollment in 2020-21 than in 2019-20 (Figure 3 & Table 2). However, there were higher numbers of students enrolled in grades 10 to 12 in 2020-21 compared to in 2019-20 (Figure 3 & Table 2).

Figure 3. Number of students enrolled in District schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade level



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Note: The vertical axis indicates the total number of students enrolled in each grade in 2019-20 (blue bar) and 2020-21 (green bar). The number of all enrolled students was 124,184 for 2019-20 and 119,492 for 2020-21. For the number of students enrolled by grade level, please refer to Table 2 below. This data is based on the October 1st snapshot.

Table 2. Number of students enrolled in District schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade level

Grade	Number of Students in 2019-20 (Oct 1 snapshot)	Number of Students in 2020-21 (Oct 1 snapshot)
Kindergarten	9,881	7,143
1	10,299	9,515
2	10,345	9,771
3	10,373	9,872
4	10,473	9,925
5	10,093	9,672
6	9,631	9,156

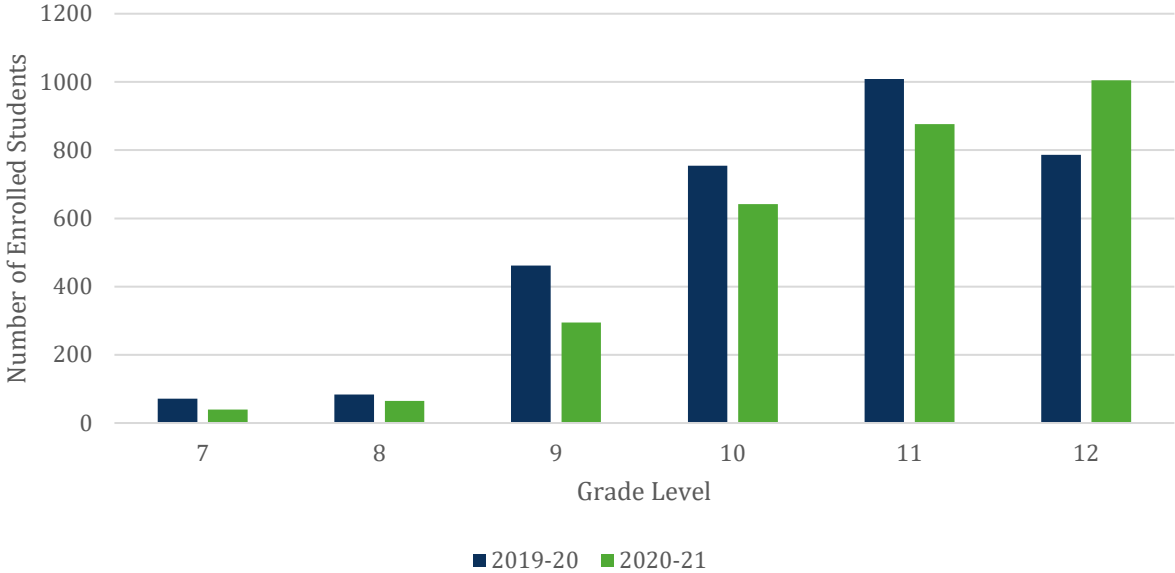
Grade	Number of Students in 2019-20 (Oct 1 snapshot)	Number of Students in 2020-21 (Oct 1 snapshot)
7	9,578	9,265
8	8,789	9,294
9	10,033	9,895
10	9,242	9,709
11	8,054	8,494
12	7,393	7,781
Total	124,184	119,492

Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Alternative School Enrollment in 2019-20 and 2020-21

Enrollment in Alternative⁵ schools decreased about 8%, from 3,207 students in 2019-20 to 2,956 students in 2020-21 (Figure 4). The largest decline was in 9th grade (-36%: from 462 9th grade students in 2019-20 to 295 9th grade students in 2020-21) (Figure 4). However, 12th grade student enrollment increased by 28%, from 786 students in 2019-20 to 1,005 students in 2020-21.

Figure 4. Number of students enrolled in Alternative schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade level



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Note: The vertical axis indicates the total number of students enrolled in each grade in 2019-20 (blue bar) and 2020-21 (green bar). The number of all enrolled students in grades 3-12 was 3,207 in 2019-20 and 2,956 in 2020-21. Student enrollment counts for grades K-6 were omitted from Figure 4 due to sample sizes being less than 20. This data is based on the October 1st snapshot.

⁵ Within the Alternative school sector, there are two categories: schools that are run by the District and schools that are run by contracted partnerships. In this brief, both District-run and contract-run alternative schools are included in the *Alternative* category. For more information, please visit <https://www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/alternative-education-progress-reports/>

Table 3. Number of students enrolled in Alternative schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade

Grade	Number of Students in 2019-20 (Oct 1 snapshot)	Number of Students in 2020-21 (Oct 1 snapshot)
7	71	39
8	84	65
9	462	295
10	754	642
11	1,009	876
12	786	1,005
Total	3,207	2,956

Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Note: Student enrollment counts grades K-6 were omitted from Table 3 due to sample sizes being less than 20. The total student enrollment numbers in 2019-20 and 2020-21 include the number of enrolled students in grades K-6.

Enrollment in Charter Schools

In this brief, we examined enrollment data for two types of Charter schools: brick-and-mortar and cyber charter schools. The vast majority of charter school enrollment is comprised of Philadelphia students. All cyber charters⁶ are virtual charter schools and are examined separately from brick-and-mortar charter schools⁷ in this brief.

Charter School Enrollment for 2019-20 and 2020-21

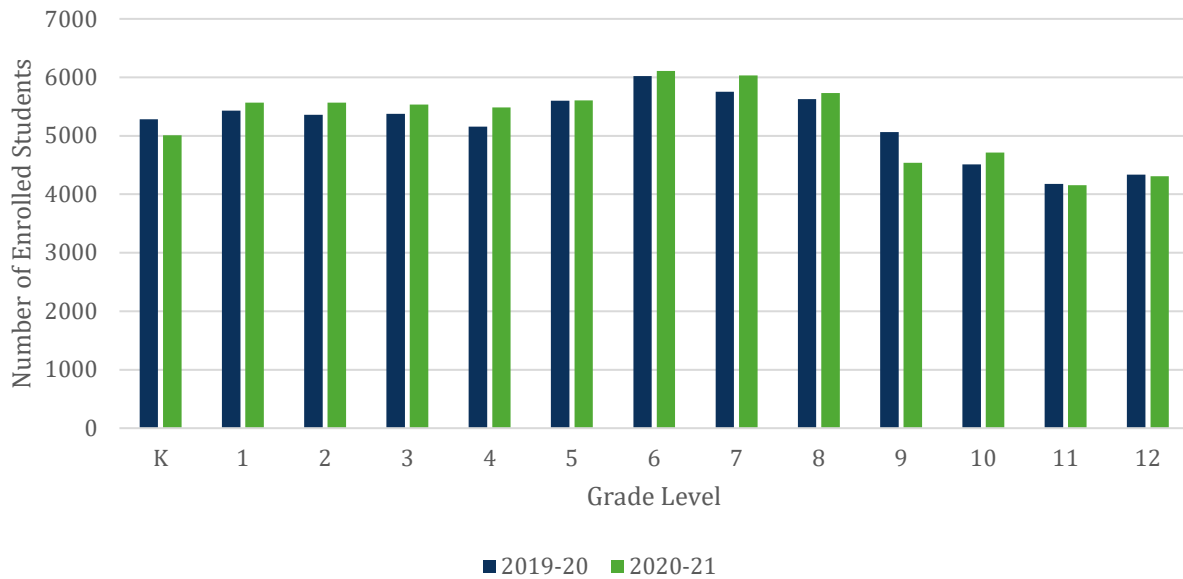
Unlike District and Alternative student enrollment patterns, Charter enrollment increased about 1% from 2019-20 to 2020-21. There were 67,699 students enrolled in Charter schools in 2019-20, compared to 68,364 in 2020-21 (Figure 5). All grade levels saw an increase in student enrollment from 2019-20 to 2020-21,⁸ with the exception of kindergarten and 9th grade (Figure 5 & Table 3).

⁶ All Cyber charter schools are approved and managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

⁷ We excluded non-Philadelphia Charters from our analysis as non-Philadelphia Charter schools operate outside of SDP oversight. The number of Philadelphia students enrolled in non-Philadelphia Charter schools was 1,085 in 2019-20 and 1,556 in 2020-21.

⁸ We are unsure whether students left District schools to enroll in Charter schools or if these students left to enroll in private schools or schools outside of the city of Philadelphia.

Figure 5. Number of students enrolled in Charter schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade level



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Note: The vertical axis indicates the total number of students enrolled in each grade for 2019-20 (blue bar) and 2020-21 (green bar). The overall number of enrolled students was 67,699 for 2019-20 and 68,304 for 2020-21. For the number of students enrolled by grade level, please refer to Table 4 below. This data is based on the October 1st snapshot.

Table 4. Number of students enrolled in Charter schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade

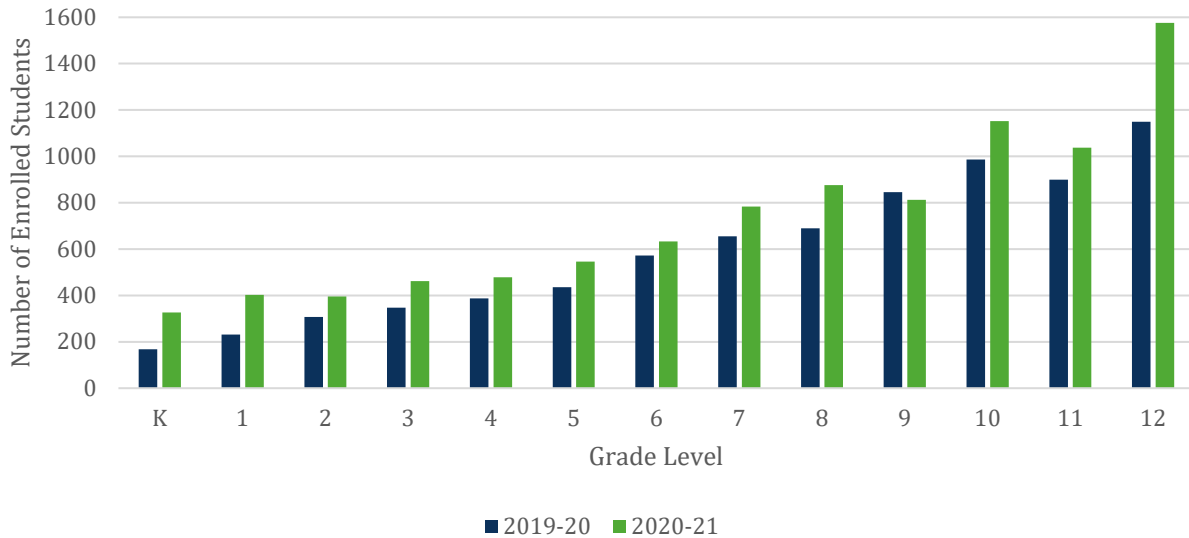
Grade	Number of Students in 2019-20 (Oct 1 snapshot)	Number of Students in 2020-21 (Oct 1 snapshot)
Kindergarten	5,283	5,009
1	5,428	5,569
2	5,360	5,569
3	5,374	5,534
4	5,157	5,485
5	5,602	5,608
6	6,024	6,112
7	5,752	6,033
8	5,627	5,732
9	5,065	4,539
10	4,513	4,714
11	4,177	4,153
12	4,337	4,307
Total	67,699	68,364

Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021

Cyber Charter Enrollment for 2019-20 and 2020-21

Cyber Charter schools also saw an increase in total student enrollment, from 7,677 students in 2019-20 to 9,481 students in 2020-21 (a 23% increase; see Figure 6). Every grade from K-12 saw an increase in student enrollment with the exception of 9th grade (Figure 6 & Table 4). The biggest increase in student enrollment was seen in 12th grade (1,149 students in 2019-20 to 1,576 students in 2020-21, a 37% increase).

Figure 6. Number of students enrolled in Cyber charter schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Note: The vertical axis indicates the total number of students enrolled in each grade for 2019-20 (blue bar) and 2020-21 (green bar). The overall number of enrolled students was 7,677 for 2019-20 and 9,481 for 2020-21. Cyber Charters operate as fully virtual learning environments. For the number of students enrolled by grade level, please refer to Table 5 below. This data is based on the October 1st snapshot.

Table 5. Number of students enrolled in Cyber charter schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by grade

Grade	Number of Students in 2019-20 (Oct 1 snapshot)	Number of Students in 2020-21 (Oct 1 snapshot)
Kindergarten	168	326
1	231	403
2	307	396
3	348	462
4	388	478
5	436	546
6	573	633
7	655	783
8	690	876
9	846	812
10	986	1,152
11	900	1,038
12	1,149	1,576

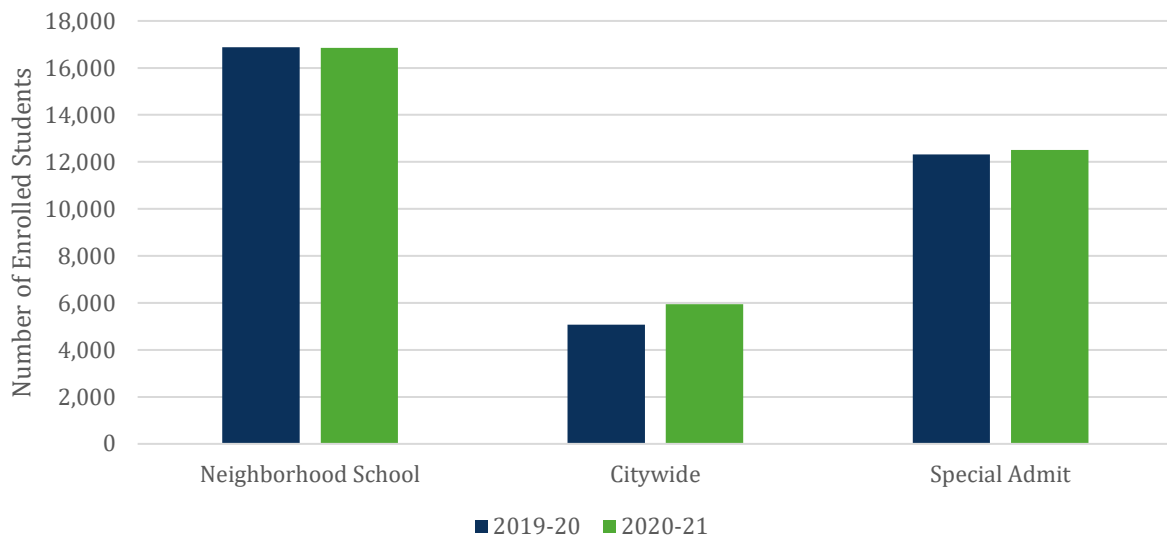
Grade	Number of Students in 2019-20 (Oct 1 snapshot)	Number of Students in 2020-21 (Oct 1 snapshot)
Total	7,677	9,481

Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021

How did enrollment in 2019-20 and 2020-21 differ by high school admission type?

The overall number of students attending Neighborhood, Citywide, and Special Admission high schools increased about 3%, from 34,722 students in 2019-20 to 35,879 students in 2020-21. Citywide high schools saw the biggest enrollment increase (17%), from 5,071 students in 2019-20 to 5,943 students in 2020-21. Special Admission high schools also saw a 2% increase, from 12,320 in 2019-20 to 12,513 in 2020-21 (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Number of District high school students enrolled in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by high school admission type



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Note: The vertical axis indicates total number of high school students enrolled in each admission category for 2019-20 (blue bar) and 2020-21 (green bar). The number of all enrolled students was 34,273 for 2019-20 and 35,315 for 2020-21. This chart only includes District students. This data is based on the October 1st snapshot.

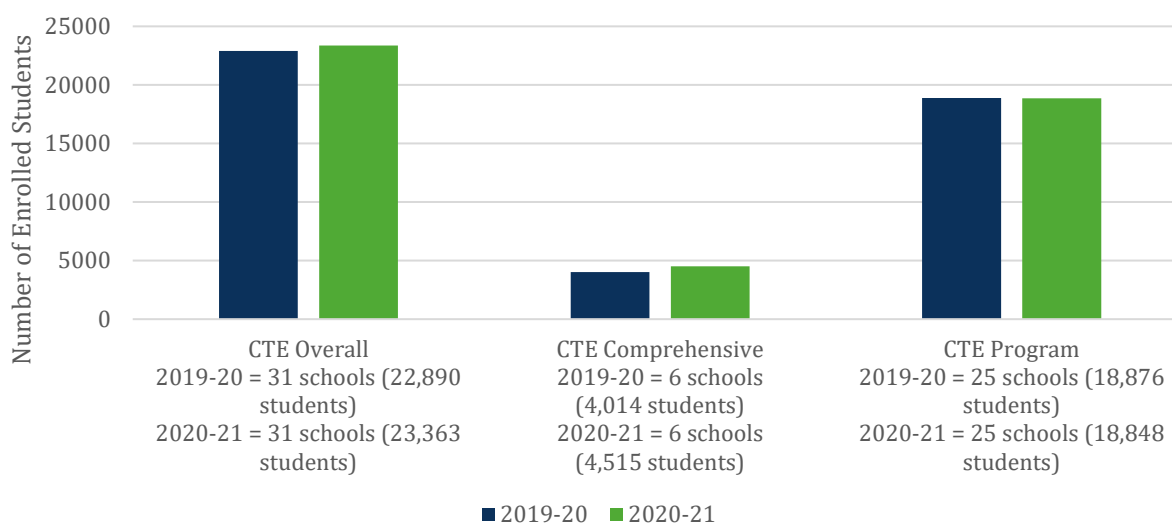
Table 6. Number of District high school students enrolled in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by high school admission type

High School Admission Type	Number of Students in 2019-20 (Oct 1 snapshot)	Number of Students in 2020-21 (Oct 1 snapshot)
Neighborhood Schools	16,882	16,859
Citywide Schools	5,071	5,943
Special Admit Schools	12,320	12,513
Total	34,722	35,879

Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools⁹ include high schools that either have CTE components in their curriculum (CTE program schools) or high schools that are completely rooted in CTE curriculum (CTE comprehensive). There was a 2% increase in overall student enrollment for all CTE schools (including both CTE program and comprehensive schools), from 24,665 in 2019-20 to 25,225 in 2020-21 (Figure 9). Student enrollment in both the CTE comprehensive and program schools increased from 2019-20 to 2020-21. Student enrollment at CTE comprehensive schools increased by 11%, from 4,549 in 2019-20 to 5,068 in 2020-21, while student enrollment at CTE program schools increased by about 1%, from 20,116 in 2019-20 to 20,157 in 2020-21 (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Number of District high school students enrolled in Career & Technical Education high schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

Note: The vertical axis indicates the total number of high school students enrolled in each category for 2019-20 (blue bar) and 2020-21 (green bar). The number of high school students enrolled in CTE overall was 24,665 for 2019-20 and 25,225 for 2020-21. This chart only includes District students and is based on the October 1st snapshot.

Table 7. Number of District high school students enrolled in Career & Technical Education high schools in 2019-20 and 2020-21

CTE Type	Number of Students in 2019-20 (Oct 1 snapshot)	Number of Students in 2020-21 (Oct 1 snapshot)
CTE Comprehensive Schools	4,014	4,515
CTE Program Schools	18,876	18,848
Total (CTE Overall)	22,890	23,363

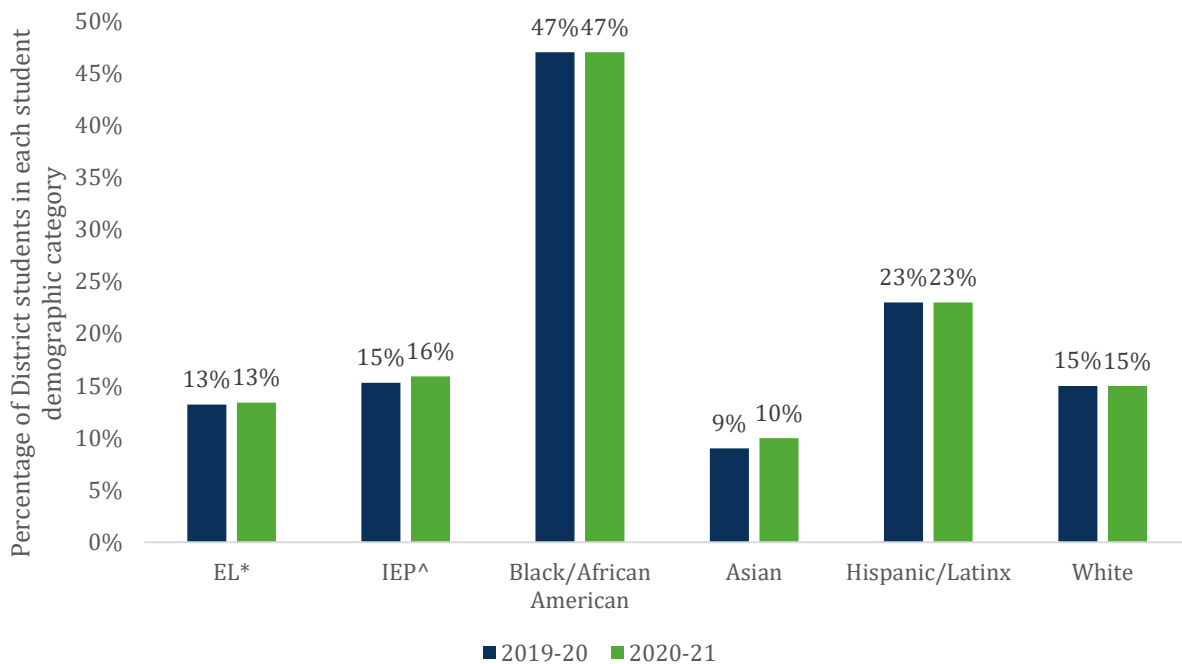
Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

⁹ CTE schools can be Neighborhood, Special Admission, Citywide, Alternative, or virtual schools. CTE schools were 100% virtual when the student enrollment data snapshot was taken.

How did enrollment in 2019-20 and 2020-21 differ by student demographics?

Even though there was an overall decrease in student enrollment from 2019-20 to 2020-21, the demographic makeup of the District student population did not change (Figure 9). For both 2019-20 and 2020-21, the share of English Learners (13%), Black/African American students (47%), Hispanic/Latinx students (23%), and white students (15%) stayed the same (Figure 9). In 2020-21, there was a 1-point increase in the percentage of students with special needs (15% in 2019-20 to 16% in 2020-21) and in the percentage of Asian students (9% in 2019-20 and 10% in 2020-21) (Figure 9). Hence, the students who left the District were demographically proportional and did not skew towards a particular subgroup.

Figure 9. Percentage of District students enrolled in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by student demographics



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

* An EL student is a student who is an English learner.

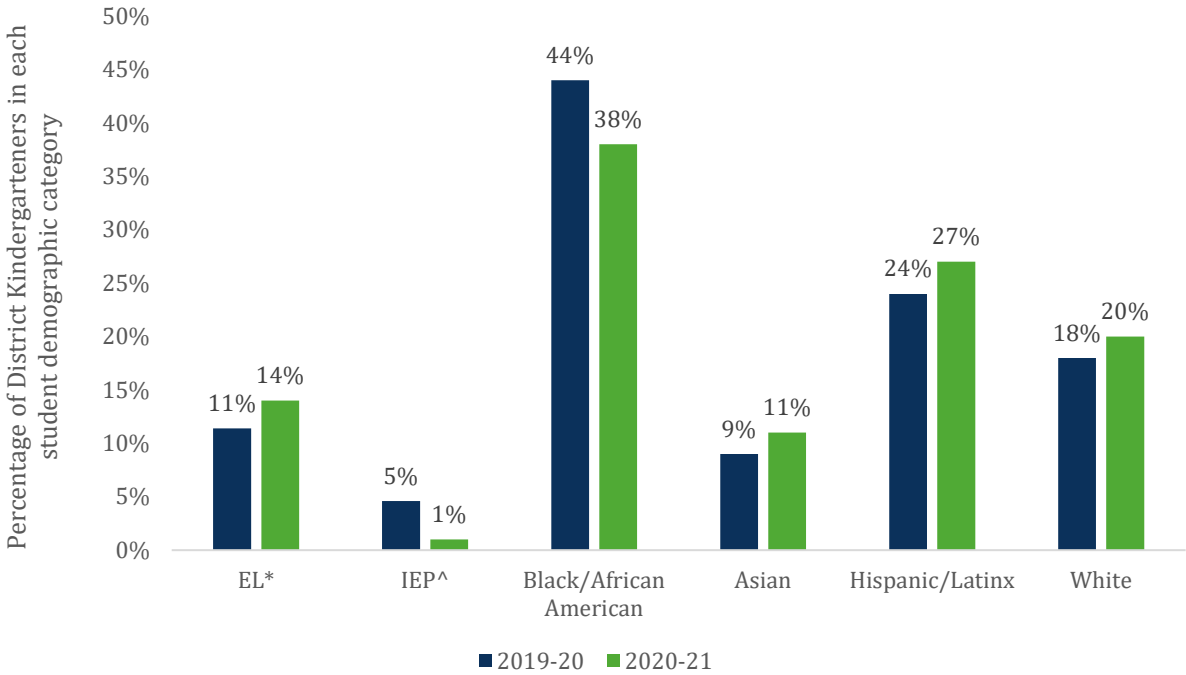
^ An IEP student is a student with an individualized education plan.

Note: The vertical axis indicates the percentage of students in each demographic category for 2019-20 (blue bar) and 2020-21 (green bar). This chart only includes District students and is based on the October 1st snapshot.

We also examined the demographics for District kindergarteners, as kindergarten experienced the largest enrollment decrease from 2019-20 to 2020-21. **While the overall District student demographic makeup did not change much, we found some noticeable changes to the demographics of District kindergarteners from 2019-20 to 2020-21.** The share of Black/African American kindergarteners decreased six points, from 44% in 2019-20 to 38% in 2020-21. In contrast, the share of Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, and white kindergarteners all increased

by 2-3 points. The share of English Learners increased by 3 percentage points, from 11% in 2019-20 to 14% in 2020-21, while the share of kindergartners with special needs decreased, from 5% in 2019-20 to 1% in 2020-21. Hence, the students who did not enroll in the District for kindergarten grade tended to be Black/African American students and students with special needs.

Figure 10. Percentage of District kindergartners enrolled in 2019-20 and 2020-21, by student demographics



Source: Qlik Enrollment App: Enrollment Subgroup Comparison Sheet, retrieved on April 29, 2021.

* An EL student is a student who is an English learner.

^ An IEP student is a student with an individualized education plan.

Note: The vertical axis indicates the percentage of kindergartners in each demographic category for 2019-20 (blue bar) and 2020-21 (green bar). This chart only includes District students and is based on the October 1st snapshot.

Conclusion

Overall enrollment in Philadelphia public schools (District, Alternative, Charter, and Cyber Charter) decreased by 1% from 2019-20 to 2020-21. District enrollment decreased by 4% and Alternative enrollment decreased by 8%. However, District enrollment at Neighborhood, Special Admission, and Citywide high schools increased (3%), as did enrollment at Charter and Cyber Charter schools (1% and 23%, respectively).

While the analysis showed a slight decrease in overall student enrollment, trends varied by grade level and admission type. Across the District, Charter, and Cyber Charter sectors, enrollment in grades K-6 decreased, while enrollment in grades 10-12 increased. In Alternative schools, 12th grade student enrollment increased by 28%. Among high schools of different admission types, neighborhood high schools experienced the largest decline in student enrollment (5%), but overall CTE student enrollment increased.

We did not find any significant changes in the demographic make-up of the District student body between 2019-20 and 2020-21. However, we did find that the students who did not enroll in the District for kindergarten in 2020-21 tended to be Black/African American students and students with special needs.