



What is a Charter School?

Public charter schools are an important part of America's public education system and have been meeting the unique needs of students for more than 30 years. Charter schools are **always** free, public, and open to all students.

Charter schools are given flexibility and autonomy to design classroom instruction to best serve their community's needs in exchange for rigorous accountability to the state, the authorizer, taxpayers and the parents and community they serve.

Charter School Quick Facts

**3.7 MILLION
STUDENTS**

(7.6% of all public
school students)

**251,000
TEACHERS
WORK AT
A CHARTER
SCHOOL**

**8,150
CHARTER SCHOOLS**

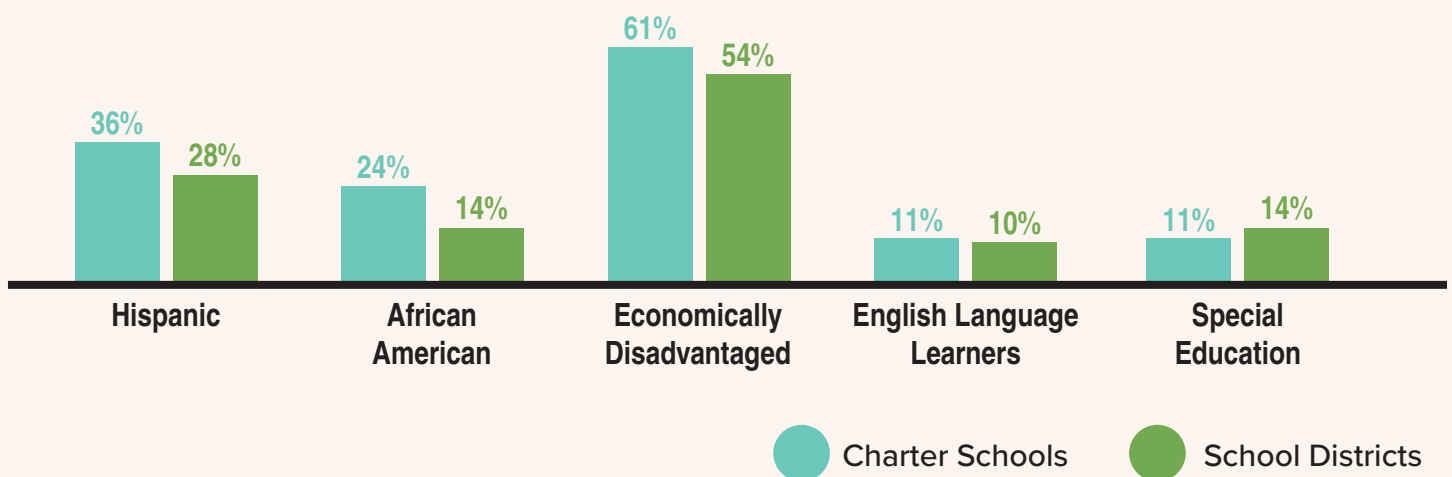
(8.1% of all public schools)

Charter schools serve
students in **44 states**,
Guam, Puerto Rico and
Washington, D.C. 47 states
have passed legislation
allowing charter schools
to open

**12% INCREASE IN
CHARTER SCHOOL
ENROLLMENT OVER
THE LAST 5 YEARS**

58% of charter schools
are located in urban areas,
25% in suburban areas,
6% in towns, and
11% in rural areas

Charter School Student Demographics Compared to Traditional Public Schools



Source: State and Federal Government Data



How Do Charter Schools Work?

Authorization & Accountability

Charter schools are approved and monitored by authorizers, which are typically public agencies, such as local school districts or state departments of education. Authorizers approve, oversee, renew or close charter schools based on academic, financial and operational performance.

Leadership

Most charter schools (62%) are single-site schools; the remaining are part of larger charter school networks.

Funding

Public schools—both district and charter—have three primary sources of funding: federal, state, and local. On average, charter schools receive 75 cents for every dollar a traditional district receives. This gap is largely driven by the fact that most charter schools do not receive local tax funding for school facilities.

How Do Charter School Students Perform?

Charter Schools Work

Public charter school students gain an average of 16 additional days of learning in reading and six extra days of learning in math each school year. The gains are even more significant for students of color: Black students in charter schools gain an additional 35 days of learning in reading and 29 days of learning in math, while Hispanic students gain an additional 30 days of growth in reading and 19 more days in math.

Source: 2023 CREDO Study

A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats

When charter schools open, students in traditional school districts also thrive. Research shows that students in both charter and traditional public schools do better in school in communities where charter schools exist. This is true in both urban and rural districts.

Source 1: 2024 Progressive Policy Institute
Source 2: 2024 Fordham Institute

Parents Want More Public School Options

Over the last five years, charter school enrollment increased by 12% while traditional public school enrollment decreased by 4%. In addition polling shows that, 84% of parents agree that charter schools should be available to families who want to choose them.

Source 1: The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
Source 2: 2022 Harris Poll

Visit a school near you.

Please reach out to visitcharters@publiccharters.org to meet teachers and students, and discover the difference of a charter school firsthand.