



OHIO CHARTER SCHOOL FACT SHEET

AUGUST 2014

What is a charter school? Charter schools, also known as “community schools,” are public, nonprofit, nonsectarian schools. They operate autonomously with an independent governing board, but are under a contract with an authorizer approved by the state. Charter schools are open-enrollment, schools of choice, and they are tuition-free for any student residing in Ohio.

When were charter schools established in Ohio? The state legislature enacted legislation allowing for charter schools in 1997; the first schools opened in 1998.

How many charter schools are there? There are 372 charter schools in Ohio, of which 25 are e-schools that deliver instruction online. Brick-and-mortar charter schools are primarily located in urban areas and many serve predominately disadvantaged students. In Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Toledo over 20 percent of public-school students attend a charter school.

What types of charter schools are there? Ohio has a diversity of charters with different missions and educational priorities. Some charters are “No Excuses” schools, with a laser-like focus on readying disadvantaged students to attend college. Other schools focus on helping struggling adolescents: 76 charters, for example, enroll students who have dropped out or are at-risk of it. Meanwhile, 38 charters are majority special-needs, and one school educates mainly gifted students.

How many students attend a charter school? In the 2013-14 school year, roughly 124,000 students attended a charter school. Most charter students were economically disadvantaged (76 percent) and 52 percent were black or Hispanic. Fifteen percent of charter students were identified as special-needs.

What are charter-school authorizers? Also known as “sponsors,” these entities approve charter schools to open and are responsible for monitoring a school’s academic performance, financial operations, and compliance with laws and regulations. A school’s authorizer makes decisions regarding contract renewals. There are 68 authorizers: 59 are school districts or regional educational providers, 7 are nonprofits, one is a university, and one is the state department of education.

How are charter schools held accountable? Charters are accountable to their authorizer, to parents, and to the state. Authorizers hold the contract that allows them to open and to operate on a continuing basis. Additionally, parents keep charter schools accountable; without parents who choose to send their child to the school, the school would cease to exist. In the same way as traditional district schools, charters are given academic ratings by the state and they must annually submit an independently audited financial report to the Auditor of State. State law requires the closure of a persistently low-performing school.

Are charter-school students tested? Charter-school students must take the state assessments, just as students in traditional district do. Likewise, charter students are required to pass the state's reading exam for promotion into fourth grade under the state's Third Grade Reading Guarantee law; and, charter students must meet the state requirements for high-school graduation.

How do charters perform? Students attending a charter school typically achieve at similar levels on state exams relative to their public-school peers. The highest-performing charter schools give high-need students the opportunity to succeed academically and attain success later in life. In 2013, ten charter schools earned the Ohio Department of Education's School of Honor or School of Promise award.

How are charter schools funded? Charter schools receive funding based on the number of students they enroll each month. The majority of their funding comes from the state, which provides a core per-pupil amount of \$5,800, while supplying additional funding for students with special needs or other characteristics. In addition, charters receive federal funds. However, with only a few exceptions, charters do not receive revenue raised through local property taxes, leading to funding disparities between charters and district schools. Some of Ohio's charters receive philanthropic support.