



New York State Charter Schools At-A-Glance

Prepared by the SUNY Charter Schools Institute

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Opening a Charter School

Applicants

- The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended) gives teachers, parents and community members the opportunity to apply to open a new charter school.

Authorizers

- The Act named three “chartering entities,” or authorizers, to receive and review applications for new charter schools. Each authorizer has ongoing responsibility for oversight and evaluation of the schools they authorize, including review of each school’s application for charter renewal. They are:
 1. the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York;
The State University Trustees created the Charter Schools Institute in 1999 to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities under the Act. The Institute makes recommendations to the Board’s Committee on Charter Schools.
 2. the New York State Board of Regents; and
The Board of Regents rely on State Education Department staff in Albany and New York City to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities as a charter authorizer as well as their overarching oversight responsibility for all charter schools (the Act gave the Board of Regents joint oversight responsibility, with the school’s authorizer, of all charter schools.)
 3. local boards of education.
To date, only the Buffalo City School District and the New York City Department of Education have taken advantage of this option. In New York City (by nature of it having a population of one million or more), the authority is given to the Chancellor of the New York City school system. Note: The Charter Schools Act designates how many charters each authorizer may award. Charters awarded to districts are deducted from the total available to the New York State Board of Regents. Note that existing traditional district-operated schools also can seek to convert to charter status through their governing boards of education. There is no limit on the number of conversion schools.

Number of Charter Schools Operating in New York State

- Charter schools comprise less than 2% of all public schools in the state.

- There are currently 115 charter schools operating in New York serving nearly 35,000 students.
- As part of budget legislation enacted on April 1, 2007, the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 was amended, increasing the cap on new charter schools allowed to open in the state from 100 to 200. Of the 100 new charters, 50 charters have been given to the SUNY Board of Trustees to award and 50 to the New York State Board of Regents. Note that *at least* 50 charters have been reserved for New York City.

Key Elements of a Charter in New York State

- A charter is a contract between the school's board of trustees and its authorizer that spells out what a school agrees to do and defines how it will be accountable for achieving those goals.
- An initial charter is awarded for a period of only five years.
- Charter schools are given the freedom to develop their own curriculum, choose staff, set the length of the school day and year, and establish their own standards for student behavior. In exchange for these freedoms, a charter school must demonstrate that it has raised student achievement within its five year charter period.
- Charters are not automatically renewed. Every charter school must apply for renewal at the end of each charter cycle.

Quick Facts about Charter Schools in New York State

1. Charter schools are public schools;
2. They cannot teach religion;
3. They cannot charge tuition;
4. They cannot base admissions decisions on ability;
5. Charter schools are non-profit organizations;
6. They are governed by their own board of trustees;
7. Charter schools must comply with laws regarding health, safety, civil rights and special education (the Open Meetings Law and the Freedom of Information Act specifically apply to charter schools);
8. They must comply with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act;
9. They must administer all the same state tests as district schools; and
10. They must meet all the state's performance requirements.

Test Results for Charter Schools in New York State

English language arts

85% of NYS charter schools outperformed their local district on the 2007-08 state assessment in English language arts

Mathematics

74% of NYS charter schools outperformed their local district on the 2007-08 state assessment in mathematics

Accountability

- When one considers the legislatively mandated oversight of each charter school by its own board of trustees, its charter authorizer, and the New York State Board of Regents, and the critical fact that a charter is granted for a period of five years only—and that authorizers have the option to not renew, i.e., close a charter school for failing to meet rigorous academic outcomes, legal and fiscal requirements, it becomes clear that accountability is more than a goal for charter schools, it is a non-negotiable requirement.

SUNY Authorized Charter Schools and Accountability

- The Charter Schools Act requires all charter schools to describe the student achievement goals they have set for their education program as well as the chosen methods for evaluating that students have attained the skills and knowledge specified in those goals. The SUNY Board has formalized a process for evaluating the extent to which schools are in fact meeting these goals.
- Each charter school that the State University Board of Trustees authorizes is required to enter into an accountability agreement, known as the Accountability Plan, which ultimately becomes part of its charter. SUNY requires certain common elements across all plans including the high achievement bar that the school have 75% of its students who have been enrolled for at least two years score at levels 3 or 4 on state assessments (at proficiency or above).
- SUNY authorized charter schools performed slightly better than the state average on the 2006-07 state assessments: 76% outperformed their local district on the state assessment in English language arts, 92% of SUNY authorized charter schools outperformed their local districts on the state assessment in mathematics.
- Over the course of its first five years, in considering the renewal applications of 21 schools, the SUNY Charter Schools Institute has made the difficult recommendation of non-renewal five times. And true to its commitment to accountability and the highest possible standards, the State University Board of Trustees has supported those recommendations.

Funding

- The foundation of charter school funding is the per pupil payments charter schools receive from the district of residence of the student attending the charter school.
- The payment is based on student enrollment, so if the student only attends the charter school for one half the year, the district only pays for one half of the per pupil amount.
- SED sets the per-pupil amount for each school district based on its expenses and enrollment. The formula deducts certain revenues and strips out transportation, debt service and other expenses.

The enrollment includes additional weightings for more expensive students (secondary students and students with disabilities). An inflation factor is then added to use the historical data prospectively. Because of the deductions from operating expenses, and the additional weightings applied to enrollment, the per pupil amount is significantly smaller than if you simply took the district's revenue and divided it by its enrollment.

Support Organizations

- The New York Charter School Association (NYCSA), www.nysca.org, is a state-wide member services association. NYSCA's mission is to promote effective, efficient, and accountable charter schools by: providing services that dramatically increase academic performance and ensure financial stability; and, creating a social and political climate that fosters the establishment and expansion of public school choice.
- The New York City Charter School Center, www.nycchartercenter.org, is an independent, not-for-profit organization launched in 2004 as a partnership between New York City and the philanthropic community to support New York City based charter schools. The Center is supported by The Robertson Foundation, The Robin Hood Foundation, The Pumpkin Foundation and The Clark Foundation. Its mission is to "stimulate the supply of high quality charter schools and support ongoing student excellence in all New York City based charter schools, impacting the effectiveness of public education..."

For additional information on New York State Charter Schools and SUNY's role as a charter school authorizer, visit the Institute's website at: www.newyorkcharters.org