



Florida's Public Charter Schools – Representing the Voice of Parents

Parents of more than 360,000 children have found a Florida charter school that is a good fit for their child.

The charter school movement in Florida has grown tremendously since its beginnings in 1996, thanks to the interest of Florida families. This year, 702 public charter schools serving 361,939 students in K-12 are operating in 47 Florida counties. Florida has more students attending public charter schools than all but two other states in the U.S.

The numbers make it clear that Florida families of every economic, social and ethnic group are happy with charter schools. Charter schools are essentially a parent-controlled educational option, unlike traditional public schools. Without satisfied parents to enroll their children, a charter school can't survive.

A closer look at the numbers

702 charter schools are now operating in Florida. 16 new charter schools opened in 2021-22, bringing new educational options to parents in Broward, Collier, Miami-Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Okaloosa, Osceola, Pasco, Polk, St. Lucie, Santa Rosa, Sarasota and Seminole Counties.

361,939 students enrolled in Florida charter schools, representing 12.8% of the total K-12 public school enrollment.

47 Florida counties offer charter school options to parents.

What are public charter schools?

Charter schools are non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations that have a contract or charter to provide the same educational services to students as district public schools.

Charter schools are nonsectarian public schools that operate with freedom from many of the regulations that apply to traditional public schools.

Charter schools must hire certified teachers and students must take all Florida statewide assessments, just like traditional district schools.

How are charter schools funded?

Charter schools receive funding from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) using the same FTE formula applied to district schools. Charter schools must also pay an administrative fee to their district sponsors that cannot exceed 5% of their total FTE funding.

A History of Outperforming Traditional Public Schools

The Florida Department of Education has measured the academic performance of students attending public charter schools for many years. In its most recent annual report on charter school student achievement, the Florida Department of Education found that charter school students outperformed their peers in traditional public schools in almost all subject areas.*

**Florida Department of Education, Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools: A Comparison of the Performance of Charter School Students with Traditional Public School Students, March 2019.*



Myths Versus the Truth about Charter Schools

MYTH: Charter schools are private schools.

TRUTH: Charter schools are NOT private schools. They are tuition-free public schools that are part of the state's public education system. They operate with contracts (charters) issued by the local public school districts. They receive the same per pupil funding as district public schools, minus a five percent administrative fee paid to the districts.

MYTH: Charter schools are for profit entities run by big corporations.

TRUTH: By law, Florida charter schools must be organized as nonprofit organizations governed by volunteer community-based boards of directors. About 20 percent of the charter schools in Florida contract with charter management companies for back-office services but they still operate as nonprofits under the governance of a volunteer board of directors.

MYTH: Charter schools have little or no oversight.

TRUTH: This is completely false. Charter schools are closely monitored by their district sponsors and the state. They are required to file several reports a year detailing their financial and operational status. Charter school students take the same state assessments as students in traditional public schools. Charter schools are evaluated and assigned a school grade using the same standards

and criteria as traditional public schools.

If a charter school receives two consecutive school grades of "F," the district sponsor has the authority to close the school. No traditional public school operated by a Florida school district has ever been closed for poor performance. (Since 1997, 320 charter schools have been closed.)

MYTH: Charter schools siphon money from school districts.

TRUTH: Charter schools serve the same public school students who would have otherwise been enrolled in traditional public schools. We believe that educational funding should be used for the benefit of students, whether they attend a district school or a charter school. In fact, charter schools actually serve public school students at a lower cost per student than traditional public schools.

MYTH: Charter schools cherry pick only the best students.

TRUTH: Parents are the ones who choose charter schools for their children, not the other way around. The doors of charter schools are open to everyone, pending space limitations. To help avoid over-enrollment, charter schools utilize a lottery system for the fairest selection process.

ABOUT THE FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

FCPCS is the voice of the Florida charter school movement, with a membership representing 75% of charter schools in Florida. It is one of the oldest and largest charter school membership associations in the nation. Founded in 1999 by a grassroots group of charter school operators, it provides advocacy, support, resources, and networking opportunities to new and existing charter schools, parents, teachers and students. FCPCS also promotes the establishment and operation of high quality public charter schools throughout the state.

FLORIDA STATUTES AND RULES ADDRESSING CHARTER SCHOOLS

- s. 1002.33, Charter schools
- s. 1013.62, Charter schools capital outlay funding
- s. 218.39(1), Annual financial audit reports
- State Board of Education Rule 6A.6.0784, Charter School Governance Training





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PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Florida's Charter Support Organization Since 1999

FORT LAUDERDALE

1225 SE 2nd Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33316
Phone: 954-463-9595 • Fax: 904-212-0300

info@floridacharterschools.org

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