



Charter Schools

What are charter schools?

Charter Schools are public schools that are authorized by their local school districts or the state, and are their own Local Education Agency (LEA). While school districts are responsible for periodic oversight, the Charter School Law (CSL) provides charter schools with complete autonomy in school operations and educational decisions. The state of Pennsylvania has set a standard for all public schools, including charter schools, and PPS is working towards establishing a transparent process to hold all the public schools in Pittsburgh to the same standard.

School districts are required to submit tuition remittance to charter schools based on a per-pupil subsidy which is \$17,898.09 for general education and \$42,851.39 for special education for the 2020–2021 school year. This subsidy increases annually. This amounts to over \$106 million dollars paid to charter schools from the School District of Pittsburgh.

The Office of Charter Schools is responsible for providing oversight for all City of Pittsburgh charter schools, which is limited to ensuring that they adhere to the charter agreements with the School District of Pittsburgh and the PA Charter School Law. It is our top priority to ensure that all students have the best educational opportunities, while protecting their rights and the rights of families.



**Approximately 4,000 Pittsburgh students in grades K–12 attend local charter schools.
Approximately 1000 Pittsburgh students in grades K–12 attend cyber charter schools, which are charter schools authorized by the state.**

Office of Charter Schools' Theory of Action

If charter schools are held accountable, then community members and families will have information available to make informed choices, resulting in an improved awareness of the high quality educational opportunities available for all students.

Dispelling some myths about charter schools.

Charter schools are public, not private schools. They are not “better” or “worse” than traditional public schools. And they are not necessarily the schools with the highest test scores, or the fewest number of disciplinary actions. Most importantly, charter schools must adhere to many of the same educational mandates as traditional public schools, including but not limited to:

- Health and safety of students and staff
- Special education
- Civil rights
- Student accountability
- Employee criminal history checks
- Open meetings
- Freedom of information requirements
- Generally accepted accounting principles
- Certain provisions of the Pennsylvania School Code

Charter School Requirements

As prescribed by the Pennsylvania Charter School Law, all charter schools must:

Improve student learning.

Increase learning opportunities for all students.

Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.

Create new professional opportunities for teachers.

Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.

Be accountable for meeting measurable academic standards.


Expect great things.



Academic performance counts.

Charter schools are required to participate in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams and the Keystone Exams, just as traditional public schools do. PPS monitors charter school test results annually. If a school fails to meet academic standards, they must provide a plan of action to PPS detailing how they will improve student performance. Charter schools also participate in the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS), which uses student assessment data to measure student growth.

Special Education supports and programs in charter schools.

Students **cannot** be denied entry to any charter school because of a disability. Charter schools are bound by the requirements of Chapter 711 of the Pennsylvania School Code, and are not exempt from any of the federal special education laws or regulations. As the charter authorizer, PPS provides the oversight for adherence to these requirements in order to ensure that all students are receiving the most beneficial educational opportunities.



Take a look at the academic performance of local charter schools. Visit pghschools.org/charterschools.



Charter schools must abide by state and federal regulations regarding students with disabilities. These include the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Adjustment (ADAA) and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

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School performance and progress is tracked.

Want to know more about a specific charter school? The state provides several ways that you can access details about how well charter schools prepare students for success on tests, in the classroom and for their life after high school.

Pennsylvania Department of Education Annual Reports

The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires each one to submit an annual report showing a number of factors, including financial details and budgets, state assessment results, enrollment data, attendance rates, graduation rates, teacher quality and the school's ability to close the achievement gap for historically underperforming groups of students. You can find the most recent report cards for charter schools online at www.pghschools.org/Page/5026.

Future Ready PA Index

The Future Ready PA Index is a collection of school progress measures related to school and student success. The Index includes a range of assessment, on-track and readiness indicators to more accurately report student learning, growth and success in the classroom and beyond. Future Read PA Index can be accessed online at futurereadypa.org.

Need more information?

Visit the PPS Charter Schools Division website at www.pghschools.org/Page/4916, or contact Lisa Augustin at 412-529-7334 or laugustin1@pghschools.org. For academic or enrollment records for charter school students, contact Barbara McGee at 412-529-4042 or bmcgee1@pghschools.org.

Para asistencia con este documento en español, por favor llame a la línea nueve al 412-529-6463 y seleccione la opción #1.

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