

FAQs about Charter Schools

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools open to all students. They operate under an independent contract or “charter” administered by a non-profit organization, government agency, or university. Charter schools have the freedom to design classrooms that meet their students’ unique needs.

Charters schools are subject to fewer state laws than other public schools, however they are subject to the same curriculum requirements, state monitoring, and accreditation requirements that apply to all school districts. Charter school students must meet the same graduation and STAAR testing requirements as well as participate in many of the same programs as other public school students.

Charter schools have five purposes:

1. Improve student learning,
2. Increase learning opportunity choices,
3. Create opportunities to attract new teachers,
4. Establish new ways to hold public schools accountable, and
5. Encourage new and innovative learning methods.

How do charter schools serve special education students?

Charter schools are required to serve special education students the same as any public school district. Federal and state regulations must be followed and implemented to ensure all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). An ARD committee is responsible for determining appropriate accommodations and supports for the student.

What are the admissions requirements for charter schools?

Overall the admission policy for each charter school is based on what was approved in the initial charter. Charter schools have an open enrollment period when parents can submit an application. In most cases, charter schools must accept all students within the approved geographic boundaries and grade levels



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for the charter. Charter schools may however limit enrollment when demand exceeds space available. In cases where space is limited, admission may be based on a blind lottery or geographic proximity to the school to determine which students are admitted.

Admission requirements must prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, academic ability, or the district the student would otherwise attend. The school may only ask for basic information such as name, age, and address during the application process. Once a student is admitted and has registered and enrolled, the enrollment process begins. It is only then that the school may request information about past academic achievement, medical history, etc.

Do charter schools charge tuition?

An open-enrollment charter school may not charge tuition (except for certain prekindergarten classes). A charter school may only charge the same fees that a traditional public school may charge.

When can a charter school dismiss or expel a student?

Students may not be dismissed or expelled from their charter school due to a lack of academic progress. Charter schools may only expel students when they commit an expellable offense per the student code of conduct. Charter schools are required to notify the student's home district within three business days of the student's dismissal or withdrawal from the charter school.

What should be considered when choosing a charter school?

Familiarize yourself with the focus, objectives, and rules of the specific charter school you are considering. Reasons for choosing a specific charter school are just as unique as each student. Some focus on college prep, some follow a specific curriculum, and others integrate art into each subject. Some charter schools require uniforms, others have year round calendars or longer school days, and some teach their entire curriculum in two languages. Charter schools aim to provide a range of options so parents can choose the school that best fits their child. Consider how the school matches your child's individual needs compared to other charter schools or their home school district.

What are the staff requirements for charter schools?

All teachers must have at least a baccalaureate degree. Special education and bilingual education/ESL teachers are required to have state certification. Each charter may set higher standards than required by state law. Charter schools are not required to have a school nurse on staff. Each charter school is responsible for describing personnel qualifications in their charter.

For additional information on charter schools in Texas, visit the Texas Education Agency website at <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/texas-schools-charter-schools/charter-schools>.



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