



Charter Schools 101

What is a charter school?

A *public charter school* is a publicly funded school that is typically governed by a group or organization under a legislative contract or charter with the state; the charter exempts the school from selected state or local rules and regulations. In return for funding and autonomy, the charter school must meet the accountability standards articulated in its charter. A school's charter is reviewed periodically (typically every 3 to 5 years) and can be revoked if guidelines on curriculum and management are not followed or if the standards are not met (U.S. Department of Education 2000). As of November 2010, charter schools operated in 40 states and the District of Columbia. In the following states, a charter school law has not been passed: Alabama, Kentucky, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia.

What's the difference between charter schools and other public schools?

Charter schools are public schools of choice, meaning teachers and students choose them. They operate with freedom from many regulations that apply to traditional public schools. They generally offer teachers and students more authority to make decisions than most traditional public schools. Instead of being accountable for compliance with rules and regulations, they are accountable for academic results and for upholding their charter.

When drafting charter school laws, most states explain their intent to: (1) increase opportunities for learning and access to quality education for all students, (2) create choice for parents and students within the public school system, (3) provide a system of accountability for results in public education, (4) encourage innovative teaching practices, (5) create new professional opportunities for teachers, (6) encourage community and parent involvement in public education, and (7) leverage improved public education broadly.

Who authorizes charter schools?

This varies from state to state, depending on the state's charter law. In California, for example, there are three types of authorizers: the governing board of the school districts, county boards of education, or the state board. In Pennsylvania, individuals or groups seeking to establish a charter public school must apply to the local school board of the district in which the school will be located. Generally there are four types of entities allowed to authorize charter schools: the local school board, state universities, community colleges, and the state board of education.



Who can start a charter school?

Parents, community leaders, businesses, teachers, school districts, and municipalities can submit a charter school proposal to their state's charter authorizing entity.

Who attends charter schools? Whom do they serve?

Nationwide, students in charter schools have similar demographic characteristics to students in all public schools. In some states charter schools serve significantly higher percentages of minority or economically disadvantaged students than the traditional public schools.

How are they funded?

As public schools, charters are not allowed to charge tuition, and they are funded according to enrollment. In some states, such as Alaska, Colorado, Minnesota, and New Jersey, they receive less than 100% of the funds allocated to their traditional counterparts for the operation of public schools. In other states, like California, additional funds or loans are made available to them. In most states, charters do not receive capital funds for facilities. They are entitled to federal categorical funding for which their students are eligible, such as Title I and Special Education monies. Federal legislation provides grants to help charters with start-up costs.

How many are there?

From 1999–2000 to 2008–09, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools more than tripled from 340,000 to 1.4 million students. In 2008–09, some 5 percent of all public schools were charter schools.

From 1999–2000 to 2008–09, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools more than tripled from 340,000 to 1.4 million students (see table A-3-3). During this period, the percentage of all public schools that were charter schools increased from 2 to 5 percent, comprising 4,700 schools in 2008–09 (see table A-3-1). In addition to the increase in the number of charter schools, the enrollment size of charter schools has grown over time. The percentage of charter schools with enrollments under 300 students decreased from 77 percent in 1999–2000 to 64 percent in 2008–09. Accordingly, the percentage of charter schools with enrollments of 300–499 students increased from 12 to 20 percent during this period; the percentage with 500–999 students, from 9 to 13 percent; and the percentage with 1,000 students or more, from 2 to 3 percent. Though public charter schools have grown in size of enrollment since 1999–2000, they tend to be smaller than traditional public schools, of which 30 percent had fewer than 300 students in 2008–09.

The percentage of charter schools that were high-poverty schools—where 75 percent or more of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL)—increased from

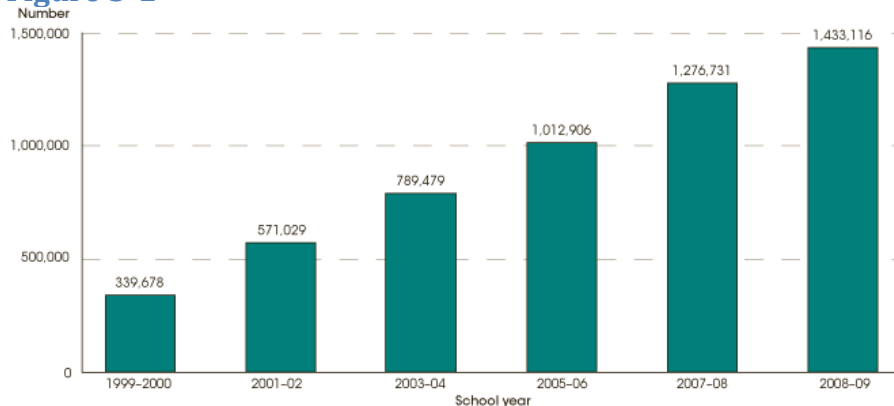


13 percent in 1999–2000 to 30 percent in 2008–09. In comparison, 19 percent of traditional public schools were considered high poverty in 2008–09 (see table A-3-2). During this time period, the percentage of charter schools that were low poverty (25 percent of students or less were eligible for FRPL) decreased from 37 to 24 percent.

In 2008–09, over half (54 percent) of charter schools were elementary schools, while secondary and combined schools accounted for 27 and 19 percent of charter schools, respectively. The distribution was different at traditional public schools: 71 percent were elementary schools, 24 percent were secondary schools, and 5 percent were combined schools (see table A-3-2). In 2008–09, about 55 percent of charter schools were located in cities, 21 percent were in suburban areas, 8 percent were in towns, and 16 percent were in rural areas. In contrast, 25 percent of traditional public schools were in cities, 28 percent were in suburban areas, 14 percent were in towns, and 33 percent were in rural areas.

The proportion of public school students enrolled in charter schools varied by region and state. For example, in 2008–09, seven states and the District of Columbia enrolled five or more percent of public school students in charter schools. Four of these states were in the West (Arizona, Colorado, California and Utah), two were in the South (Delaware and the District of Columbia) and two were in the Midwest (Michigan and Ohio). California enrolled the most students in charter schools with about 285,000 enrolled and the District of Columbia enrolled the highest percentage of public school students in charter schools—35 percent, representing some 24,000 students.

Figure 3-1



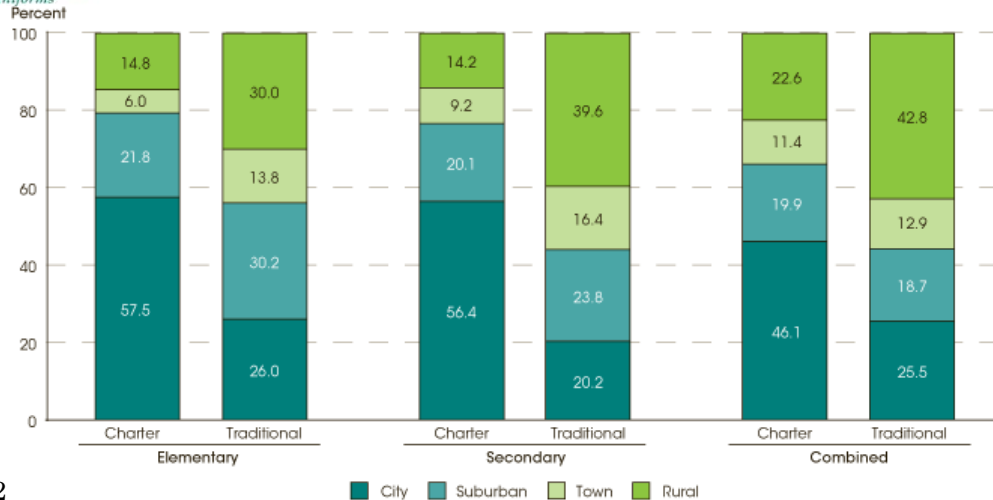


Figure 3-2

Source: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cse.asp

Which states have charter schools?

Please see attached 2011 scorecard for individual school rankings.

Do charter schools have admissions policies?

By law, charter schools must have a fair and open admissions process, conducting outreach and recruitment to all segments of the community they serve. When more students apply than can be accommodated, many charters use a lottery to randomly determine which students are accepted. Many charter schools also have waiting lists.

How can I find a charter school in my area?

For information about public charter schools in your area, visit charterschools.org or see the list provided by Classroom School Uniforms.



School Uniforms 101

Where do students wear school uniforms/standardized dress to school?

For over ten years, public school students have been wearing school uniforms to school. In fact, over 30% of the public schools in the country have school uniforms or standardized dress code programs. These students are in elementary, middle and high school and live in areas such as New York NY, Los Angeles CA, Chicago IL, San Antonio TX, Springfield MA and Toledo OH. School uniform programs first began in the urban areas, but are now used in suburban and rural schools as well.

Please see Classroom's 2011 School Uniform Survey for more information.

Why do schools consider school uniform programs?

After implementing a uniform policy in their schools, many schools have experienced improved attendance and academic achievement, greater sense of school spirit, increased school safety, fewer disciplinary procedures and reduced peer pressure. Many parents also enjoy school uniform programs as they are cost effective. A year's worth of **logo free** Classroom School Uniforms costs about \$100-\$150, depending upon style selection.

What does a school uniform look like?

School Uniforms are about choices. Some schools choose specific colors such as a navy, white and khaki and ask that their students to wear non-logoed clothing within that color palette. Students may wear navy top and khaki bottom, or white top and navy or khaki bottom. Classroom's uniforms are available in a wide variety of styles and colors to allow schools to choose the colors they want and families to choose the styling they want. Our uniforms are available in sizes Pre-School to Adult, so no child needs to worry about finding their size. To see students in uniforms, check out classroomuniforms.com.