



NEW JERSEY CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

CHARTER SCHOOL MYTHS

Myth #1: Charter schools are private schools funded with public dollars.

- Charter schools are unique public schools founded by parents, teachers, educational institutions, and community organizations that are dedicated to providing high quality public education options to all students, regardless of where they live.
- Charter schools are authorized by the state Department of Education and are required to follow the same laws and regulations as traditional public schools, including assessment and testing, special education, health and safety, due process for expulsion and tenure.
- Charter schools do not charge a fee or tuition.
- Any child may enroll in a charter school. If there are more students than there are spaces available, the charter school must select students using a lottery process.
- Each school is governed by its board of trustees, thus allowing for the decisions that need to be made for the schools as close to classroom as possible.

Myth #2: Charter schools do not represent the demographics of their districts

- Charter schools are not magnet or selective enrollment schools and cannot pick who opts to attend.
- In some cases, parents of children with special needs may not feel that a charter school with limited resources is the right choice for their children.
- In other cases, parents who have worked with a traditional public school to obtain an IEP may not want to move their children out of the school.
- In some communities, there is also a misperception that charters do not serve special education students so it is possible that fewer parents of special education students explore charter school options.

Myth # 3: Charter schools simply expel students they don't want.

- Both traditional district schools and charter schools can expel students. Charter school students have the same rights to due process as traditional public school students, including the right to a hearing.

Myth #4: Charter schools aren't accountable to the public.

- Charter schools are required to undergo charter renewal after their first four years and then every five years thereafter. During the renewal process, the school must demonstrate its effectiveness and value to the DOE, as well as local school districts and parents. No other type of public school has this rigorous review.

- Charter schools are accountable for providing an excellent education that fulfills the school's mission; the school can be closed down if it does not fulfill its educational promises or function in an economically responsible way.
- Each school is held financially accountable. Schools are required to submit an annual report to the DOE, which includes a budget summary, narrative, and cash flow statement. These reports are available on the DOE website.
- Because they are schools of choice, charter schools are accountable to the parents and students who attend their school. If parents are not happy with the school they can choose to remove the child from the school.

Myth #5: Charter schools take money from school districts.

- The funds raised through state and local taxpayers for education are dedicated to children, not districts.
- Charter schools are the only public schools that don't receive any public funding for facilities. They must pay for their buildings from their operating budgets, taking dollars away from students.
- Charter schools receive, on average, about 70 percent of the per pupil funding expended by district schools. This varies from district to district.

Myth #6: Local communities don't have a say in whether a charter school opens in their district.

- Charter schools reject the notion of one-size-fits-all when it comes to education; rather they are designed to fill the needs as determined by members of the community.
- If enough people in the community decide they want a charter school, then the law gives them an opportunity to start a public school as long as they can prove a need.
- Based on waiting lists throughout the state, there is a demand for these kind of innovative education programs that charter schools offer.

Myth #7: Schools with a unique academic focus, so called boutique schools, have no place in public education.

- Charter schools are designed to give teachers the freedom to innovate, try new ways to improve student achievement and develop successful new teaching models that work for all students in all communities. By doing so, they can raise the bar even higher in districts where the bar is already set high.
- Now, more than ever, the children of today will have to compete in an interconnected world where having language skills and a deep appreciation of culture will be in high demand. New Jersey charter schools are responding to that need now.

The New Jersey Charter Schools Association works to advance educational choice for New Jersey's children through quality public charter schools. The Association is a membership association representing operating and pre-operational charter schools in New Jersey. The Association has effectively advocated on behalf of charter schools since 1999, and is recognized as a balanced and reliable source.

For more information, visit our website at: njcharters.org