



Oregon Charter School FAQs

Charter schools are an important part of the state's public school system, providing a space for innovation, educational opportunity and unique curriculum options. Charter schools have been reinventing public education in Oregon for nearly 18 years.

What are Charter Schools?

Charter schools are public, independently-operated schools. All charter schools operate under a contract with a charter school authorizer – usually a nonprofit organization, government agency, or university – that holds them accountable to the high standards outlined in their “charter.” Charter schools are allowed some flexibilities from various state laws (see additional questions below.)

How do charter schools work?

Charter schools are public schools operating under an independent contract or “charter” with an authorizing agency—typically a school district or the Oregon State Board of Education. The charter provides the school with operational autonomy to pursue specific educational objectives regarding curriculum, staff, and budget. It also holds them accountable to the same standards of their district public school peers.

Are charter schools public schools?

Yes, charter schools are independently-operated, public schools.

How are charter schools funded?

Oregon’s charter schools are funded through the State School Fund (SSF). Our K - 8 grade charter schools are required, by Oregon state law, to receive at least 80% of the SSF dollars allocated to public schools, per pupil. Our high school grades are required to receive at least 95% of the SSF dollars allocated to public schools, per pupil.

However, district run schools also receive funding from federal funds, state grant funds, local school levies, and other locally raised dollars. Because district run schools receive these additional funding sources, charter schools **actually receive 58%** the per pupil amount of money that a district run school receives.

How are students admitted to public charter schools?

By law, charter schools must have a fair and open admission process, conducting outreach and recruitment to all segments of the community they serve. They are public schools and therefore cannot “choose” which students attend, cannot have admission requirements or entrance exams, and students are admitted by lottery. Like other public schools, charter schools are nonsectarian and nondiscriminatory in admission and employment practices

Are charter schools run by for-profit corporations?

No, Oregon charter schools are required by law to be run by non-profit organizations. Oregon is unique in that all of the brick & mortar charter schools operating in the state are locally run.

Are charter school teachers certified?

Oregon law requires that 50% of charter school educators are traditionally licensed by the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC.) In addition to hiring the same certified teachers as traditional public schools, charter schools can hire qualified individuals that often have significant professional experience in their subject area, but may not be traditionally credentialed. These charter school educators must be registered with TSPC under the “Charter Educator registry.” This allows many charter schools to offer an education infused with real-world experience.

How can I start a charter school?

Charter schools can be started by any interested party, including parents, community members, and teachers. It is common to see charter schools led by former teachers who wanted to take the lessons they learned in the classroom and scale to an entire school community. It is helpful to first identify a unique need in the community that the charter school would serve and connect with a local charter school authorizer. You can learn more about the charter school authorizers in your state on the National Association of Charter School Authorizers website.

What are some questions to ask when I'm choosing a charter school?

As a parent, make sure you are familiar with the individual objectives and rules affiliated with the specific charter school that you are considering before you enroll your child. The reasons that parents choose charter schools for their children are just as unique as the students themselves. They choose their child's school for a variety of reasons including strong, dedicated teachers, the school's focus matches their child's needs, or simply because their child was struggling in their zoned-public school and needed to try something new. Charter schools provide families with options in public education, allowing parents to take a more active role in their child's education.

How do I enroll my child in a charter school?

Most charter schools have an enrollment period when parents can submit applications for the school. If there are more applications submitted than seats available, they will hold a randomized blind lottery. To learn more about applying to a charter school in Oregon, visit the [Oregon Department of Education](#).

Do charter schools have attendance boundaries?

Charter schools do not have traditional school boundaries like district schools, which allows many charter schools to attract a diverse student body. Charter schools are restricted by state limits and some have city limits as well.

Do charter schools charge tuition?

No, charter schools are tuition-free, public schools.