

Charter School Myth & Facts

Charter schools are publicly funded independent schools established by teachers, parents, or community groups under the terms of a charter with an authorizer. Public charter schools are born out of community needs and focused on community prosperity. There are currently 300 charter schools, enrolling 10% of all students in Michigan.

MYTH: Charter schools are for-profit.

No. Charter schools are organized by law under the Michigan Non-Profit Corporation Act. They are all non-profit public schools, however, they can like traditional public schools, contract with for-profit companies to provide goods and services to the school. Charter schools, like all Michigan schools, can contract with providers for services, both for-profit and non-profit. In fact 70% of Michigan's schools contract for services. Furthermore, charter schools operated by for-profit operators in Michigan are the highest-performing schools in the state. The top four school districts on the M-STEP list are all charter schools that are operated by for-profit operators. The No. 1 open-enrollment high school in the state is a charter school operated by a for-profit operator.

MYTH: Charter schools do not academically perform any better than traditional schools.

- By any metric, research and data show that charter public school students are more likely to be proficient, more likely to graduate and more likely to succeed after high school than their traditional school counterparts.
- In Detroit, the top EIGHT high schools in terms of college enrollment are all charter schools. The No. 1 high school in the state when it comes to college enrollment is a charter school.
- A disproportionate share of the top performing schools in Michigan are charter public schools, including the top four school districts on the M-STEP list.
- Research consistently shows that charter public schools out-perform their peer schools, providing two additional months of learning for every year a student is enrolled in their charter school. In Detroit, it's an additional three months of learning every year.

MYTH: Charter Schools cherry pick their students.

By law, charter schools are open to all students. Charter schools must accept every student who applies, and they aren't allowed to require any kind of test before admission. When the number of student applicants exceeds the number of available seats, a random selection lottery is held to determine which students will be enrolled. It is also worth pointing out that Michigan charter schools actually enroll a much higher proportion of poor and minority students than traditional public schools. Charter schools serve students with the greatest need for a quality education.

MYTH: Charter schools steal public dollars from traditional schools.

Charter schools receive money from the state, in the same way, that traditional public districts do. On average, charter public schools receive about \$500 less per student than traditional public schools. Parents, taxpayers themselves, decide which public school that money will go to, based on the needs of their student. Parents and taxpayers want to fund schools that work for kids. When any public school - charter or traditional - loses a pupil, the school also loses money. The opposite is also true: when a school gains a pupil, the school gains money. Parents decide what's best; the funding is for their student. All public schools, including charter public schools, determine for themselves how to spend the funding they receive to best serve their students. In fact, charter public schools have to pay for their facilities out of their per-pupil funding, when traditional public schools can raise local property taxes to cover that expense. Charter schools many times provide transportation, offer second language instruction at the lowest grade levels, have sports programs, before and after-school programs, and do it all on a lower per-pupil dollar amount from the State of Michigan. AND charter schools consistently outperform their peer schools.

MYTH: Charter schools expand segregation.

Enrollment at a charter public school reflects the community in which they are located. By law charter schools are open to all students. When the number of student applicants exceeds the number of available seats, a random selection lottery is held to determine which students will be enrolled. It is also worth pointing out that Michigan charter schools actually enroll a higher proportion of poor, and minority students than traditional public schools. Charter schools serve students with the greatest need for a quality education. Parents of all races ought to be able to send their children to any public school of their choice. In 1997, the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement, Rosa Parks, was planning to create the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development in Detroit. She believed that charter schools should be an option for all parents. Offering the same free education available to all parents, regardless of race, income or their zip code.

MYTH: Charter schools don't offer high schools, and they don't offer sports.

Fifty percent of Michigan's charter schools offer high school grades, and those are among the highest-performing high schools in the state. The No. 1 high school in Michigan according to U.S. News & World Report is a charter school. The No. 1 high school in terms of college enrollment is a charter school. The top EIGHT high schools in Detroit in terms of college enrollment are charter schools. A majority of charter high schools offers sports, and they're among the best athletic programs in the state and country. There are Michigan charter school students playing in the NFL and NBA, and a Michigan charter school this year became just the fifth school in state history to win a state championship in both boys and girls basketball.

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MYTH: Charter schools do not offer special education.

Yes. Charter schools must provide special education services to any student who requires them. Charter public schools have the nearly identical percentage of special education students, according to information from the Michigan Department of Education. Parents would tolerate nothing less. Charter schools are not allowed to turn any student away based on any special needs or requirements they might have. In fact, not only do charter schools educate special education students; in many instances, they also have more innovative approaches to achieving success/results with special need students. There are, in fact, some charter schools in Michigan whose sole mission is to educate special-needs students. o Charter schools in Michigan have implemented early intervention strategies that help schools effectively address the individual needs of students.

MYTH: Charter schools do not employ certified teachers.

Yes. Every charter school teacher must be state-certified, the same as at traditional public schools. In many cases, charter school teachers are even MORE certified. If a charter school has a specific educational focus – for example, Montessori – the teachers will in many cases have an additional certification for that educational model. Research shows charter public school students are more likely to be proficient, more likely to graduate and more likely to succeed after high school, and they could only do that with the highest quality teachers meeting the needs of charter school students. Not only do charter schools use certified and highly qualified staff, they also submit to periodic audits by their authorizers and the state to ensure their compliance. That's not usually the case with traditional public schools.

MYTH: Charter schools are not accountable to laws and regulations.

Charter schools in Michigan must comply with the same legal and regulatory requirements as all other K-12 public schools, including federal and state accountability programs and special education laws. Every dime that a charter schools spends is publicly reported. The salary of every teacher and administrator – even if the school has a management company – is publicly reported. All charter school board meetings are open to the public, and charter schools are fully subjected to the Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act requirements. In fact, charter public schools have an additional level of accountability not found in other Michigan public schools – they have an authorizer, typically a public university, that gives direct oversight as an agent of the State of Michigan.

ABOUT

MAPSA, Michigan's charter school association, represents the collective action of Michigan charter school stakeholders communicating through the media, advocating at the Capitol, and standing up for the 150,000 students enrolled in a charter school who are realizing their bright future.

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