

## Public Charter Schools: Myth vs. Facts

*The following statements are common opinions and viewpoints of those who are skeptical of charter schools. It is important that we collectively set the record straight and tell the truth about public charter schools.*

→ **MYTH: Charter schools drain money from district schools.**

- ◆ **Fact:** Money raised through state and local taxes for education are dedicated funding for children, not districts. Education funding should and does stay with a child wherever they learn best.
- ◆ **Fact:** Public charter schools receive, on average, about \$4,000 less per-student funding compared to district schools. This varies from district to district.
- ◆ **Fact:** 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.

→ **MYTH: Charter schools are private, for-profit schools funded with public money.**

- ◆ **Fact:** Public charter schools do not charge tuition and are open to all. If there are more students than spaces available, charters use a random lottery for admission.
- ◆ **Fact:** The state's Department of Education has oversight of public charter schools. Public charter schools are required to follow the same laws and regulations as traditional public schools, including laws related to civil rights, testing, special education, health, and student safety.
- ◆ **Fact:** According to the state's charter school law, public charter schools in New Jersey cannot make profits.
- ◆ **Fact:** 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.

→ **MYTH: Charter schools are not accountable to the public.**

- ◆ **Fact:** Public charter schools are governed by independent boards who must comply with provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. This act gives the public the right to access the board meetings and meeting minutes. All board minutes are available on each individual public charter school website.
- ◆ **Fact:** Public charter schools can be (and have been) closed down if they do not fulfill their educational promises or function in a fiscally responsible way.
- ◆ **Fact:** Public charter schools are required to go through renewals after their first four years and then every five years after. During this rigorous review process,

the school must demonstrate its effectiveness and value to the state's education department.

- ◆ **Fact:** If parents are not happy with a public charter school, they can choose to remove the child from the school. Thus, charter schools are extremely accountable to the parents and students who attend their school.
- ◆ **Fact:** Charter schools are held to a high standard of financial accountability. They are required to submit an annual report to the State, which includes a budget summary, narrative, and cash flow statement.

→ **MYTH: Charter schools are selective and cherry pick students.**

- ◆ **FACT:** Unlike some magnet or vocational public schools, charter public schools have no eligibility requirements or tests.
- ◆ **FACT:** Charter schools are permitted to use weighted lotteries for low income students, students with special needs, and English language learners. This allows charters to increase access for vulnerable students. More than 20 charter schools are implementing weighted lotteries

→ **MYTH: The demand for charter schools has been met and there is no need to expand/provide more resources.**

- ◆ **FACT:** According to data collected by the Department of Education, there are more than 35,000 students on charter school waiting lists throughout the state.  
Top cities with waitlists:
  - Newark: 10,200
  - Jersey City: 4,650
  - Paterson: 4,645
  - Camden: 2,370
  - Trenton: 1,940