

## CHARTER SCHOOL FAQs

### **1. What are Charter Schools?**

Charter schools are independently operated public schools. These schools are established to provide children with more opportunities for academic success. Charters are non-profit and non-sectarian organizations that are authorized by the local Board of Education (The chartering school District). Each charter school has its own Board of Trustees and administrative staff and operates as a separate, independent educational institution from the local school district. The Pennsylvania Charter School Law Act 22 of 1997 set up charters to operate free of many of the local and state requirements that apply to traditional public schools. Charter schools operate free from many educational mandates, except for those concerning nondiscrimination, health and safety and accountability.

Charter schools hire their own teachers, design the academic program, select textbooks and other instructional materials, determine the length of the school day and of the school year, decide on the number and kind of extra curricular activities and many, many other issues.

### **2. How do I enroll my child in a charter school?**

Since charter schools operate independently of the School District of Philadelphia and of each other, with a few exceptions, you must contact the charter school directly. A listing of the charter schools is included here.

### **3. How can I transfer my child from one charter school to another?**

You cannot. Each charter school is a separate LEA (Local Education Agency); each charter is independent from the School District of Philadelphia as well as from every other charter, *with the exception* of those schools operated by the same charter school operator. There is no charter school "System" in Philadelphia.

Parents must apply to each charter school in which they are interested. You may consult the charter directory for school contact information. The Office of Charter Schools does not facilitate admissions to charter schools.

### **4. Who is responsible for the actions of a charter school and its employees the charter school or the School District of Philadelphia?**

As an independent, publicly funded school, each charter school has its own Board of Trustees. According to the charter law (Act 22 of 1997), the school is a non-profit, non-sectarian corporation and is "solely liable for any and all damages of any kind resulting from any legal challenges involving operation of a charter school."

**5. The Board of Trustees of the charter school holds monthly meetings. Are the meetings open to the public?**

Yes. The goal of many charter schools is to bring the school closer to the parents and community it serves and to welcome community participation. Since the charter school is a public institution that is funded by tax dollars it is subject to a law known as the Sunshine Law. That law (Which applies to all public institutions) states that all citizens have the right to be notified and to attend meetings when the Board is conducting business. The Sunshine Law also gives all citizens the right to comment at open meetings of the Board of a charter school.

If you are interested in attending or commenting at a meeting, you can contact the charter school for a schedule of Board meetings; each charter school should have the meetings for the year posted at the school. You may also obtain a listing of charter schools board members by contacting the charter school.

**6. The charter school has asked me to attend monthly parent meetings during the school day. What if I can't make the meetings?**

Many charter schools offer opportunities for parent and community involvement in the operation of the school. However, charters may not impose requirements on parents that might be construed as tuition or payment for basic education services (e.g., a requirement that the parent "Volunteer" a certain number of hours at the school as a condition of his/her child's admission or continued enrollment). If you have questions about policies of the charter school your child attends, you should address them to the charter school CEO and/or the charter's Board of Trustees.

**7. Why do I see School District teachers in charter schools?**

School District of Philadelphia teachers may take a leave of absence to work in a charter school. These teachers must meet the selection criteria of the charter school, however, before they can work in that charter school.

**8. How do I enroll my child in a cyber charter school?**

Parents should view the listing of cyber charters, then contact the individual cyber for additional information. If there are still questions about enrollment procedures, contact Marlene Kanuck at 717-783-9294.

**9. What happens if my school doesn't offer a sport that I want to play ?**

You may still be able to play at a local District school. The Charter School Law ( Act 22 of 1997 ) allows for the participation of charter students in extracurricular activities. You have to try out for the team that you are interested in and otherwise satisfy the conditions of participation ( practice schedule, traveling to games, etc. ). The District's policies determine if you can play on the team of the school closest to your charter school or the

team of your neighborhood school. There may also be fees assessed for participation in the extracurricular activity.

**10. Will there be a prom at a charter school?**

Probably. Charter schools set their own calendars, academic programs and student activities. Most high school programs provide for a range of student activities - many traditional ones and many new ones.

**11. Are charter students able to sing in the All City Chorus or play in the All City Orchestra?**

Yes, if you pass the auditions. Again, charter school students are allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities.

**12. Will I be able to attend a Special Admit high school if I attend a charter school?**

Yes, if you meet the selection criteria. Charter school students are encouraged to attend the High School EXPO when they are in 7th & 8th grades. Charter school counselors receive multiple copies of the High School booklet and applications. Charter school students are free to apply to any public school - a charter school, to a District high school or to a cyber charter school ( authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education)

**13. Will attending a charter school affect my child's chances of getting into a good college.**

Attending a charter school, in and of itself, does not guarantee college admission. Each charter school and each student will be measured by a variety of factors 1) rigor of the academic record, 2) SAT scores , 3) extent of extra curricular activities, 3) quality of student writing and 4) strength of the staff recommendations to mention a few.

**More questions?** Contact us at [charters@phila.k12.pa.us](mailto:charters@phila.k12.pa.us)