

### How do I apply?

You must apply directly to the charter school. Most schools take applications from December to early spring, but you should contact the charter school(s) in which you're interested for specific information.

### What transportation is available to charter school students?

The school district in which you live is required to provide the same transportation for charter school students as it does for students attending nonpublic schools. Some charter schools make their own arrangements for transporting students. Ask the charter school in which you are interested what transportation, if any, would be available. You can also check with your home district to find out what you need to do to receive transportation.

### Do charter schools offer special education services?

Yes, charter schools offer special education services and they cannot discriminate against students who receive those services. Charter schools are required to provide the services outlined in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of a student with disabilities.

The charter school may provide special education services itself, arrange for them through the local school district, or contract with an outside provider. If your child's IEP requires a level of service greater than the charter school is equipped to provide, you may wish to consider whether the IEP should be reviewed by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) of your home school district, which issues the IEP. Charter schools cannot change an IEP.

### What is the Charter Schools Institute and why is the SUNY Board of Trustees involved?

Under the law, the SUNY Trustees have the authority to decide whether a charter school is created, and after it is operating, whether the charter is renewed. The Charter Schools Institute provides recommendations to the SUNY Board to help them make these decisions.

### Can the SUNY Trustees manage a charter school?

As charter schools are independent, the law does not allow the SUNY Trustees and the Institute to manage charter schools or control their operations. For example, the Institute cannot tell a charter school how to organize its classes, nor can it fire the principal – only the charter school's board of trustees can do that. However, the Institute does monitor charter schools to make sure they are abiding by the law and their charter as well as periodically review with schools whether they are fulfilling the promises they made to parents, students and their communities.

When the Institute's monitoring identifies a problem, the Institute works with the school's board or principal to help point them towards a solution. If a charter school is found to be violating the law or its charter, the Institute can also recommend that the school be placed on probation.

To find out more about charter schools in New York State, visit our website, [www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org), or call 1-866-433-8278.

### Questions about charter schools?

Call the Charter Schools Institute:

**1-866-433-8278**

or e-mail us at:

**[charters@suny.edu](mailto:charters@suny.edu)**

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*This brochure was prepared for parents of children attending or applying to charter schools authorized by the Trustees of the State University of New York. The Board of Regents and local school districts can also approve charter schools, but all charter schools operate under the same laws and regulations. If you would like to contact the authorizer, but not sure who that is, your charter school will know. Or visit the school's profile on the Institute website: [www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org)*

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**Charter Schools Institute**  
**State University of New York**

[www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org)

# The Charter School Choice



[www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org)



**Charter Schools Institute**  
**State University of New York**



## WHAT ARE CHARTER SCHOOLS?

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools created by parents, educators, and community leaders that are open to all students and operate under a five-year contract, or “charter.” While most charter schools are new, they can also be district schools that convert to charter school status. Charter school students are required to take all state tests, and the schools must comply with laws regarding health, safety, civil rights and special education.

### How are charter schools different?

Charter schools are independent and do not answer to your local school district superintendent or your board of education. Instead, a charter school is run by its own board of trustees, which is responsible for overseeing the school and ensuring that it is a success.

Because charter schools are not bound by many of the state laws and regulations governing public education, they are free to develop their own curriculum, choose staff, set educational goals, offer a longer school day and school year, and establish their own standards for student behavior.

In return for these freedoms, a charter school must show within its five-year charter period that it has raised student achievement. Only if the school raises achievement will its charter be renewed. ***If the school fails, the charter school may lose its charter, which means it will have no license to operate and would close. If a school continually violates the law, it may have its charter revoked.***

### Where are charter schools located?

Charter schools are located across New York State. Most are in cities. For the charter schools in your area, visit our website, [www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org).

### Who can attend charter schools?

Any child may attend. There are no entry requirements, no admissions tests and no residence restrictions – your child does not have to live in the district where the charter school is located to apply. Charter schools do not charge tuition.

### How are children selected to attend charter schools?

Each charter school has a limited number of spaces for students. If a charter school has more applicants than open seats, it holds a lottery. Charter schools are required to give an enrollment preference to students already attending the school, their siblings, and students who live in the district in which the charter school is located.

### Is a charter school right for my child?

Every charter school is independently operated and takes a different approach to education. You can learn more about charter schools by going to our website, [www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org). There you will find information on each charter school, including reports on school progress, grades offered, brief descriptions, addresses and phone numbers.

### What questions should I ask when thinking of choosing a charter school?

- What are the school’s goals?
- Is the school meeting its goals?
- What does the school expect from every student?
- Is the school doing better academically than the district school my child would attend?
- What year of its charter is the school in?
- Do you think the school’s charter will be renewed? Why?
- How do parents know if the school is doing well?
- How will the charter school help my child to succeed?
- What role do parents play at the school?
- How long is the school day? The school year?
- How many students are in each class?

You can and should ask to see the school’s annual reports, as well as reports issued by the Charter Schools Institute to help you decide if the school is right for your child. ***If at all possible, you should visit the school to see first-hand the ability of the teachers, the quality of student work, and what the school is doing to achieve its mission.***



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