



**NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS**

## **Advocacy Day Info. Sheet**

### **What is a charter school?**

Charter schools are non-traditional **public** schools. Like traditional district schools, charter schools receive most of their funding from state and county governments. A key difference is the way they are governed. School district boards govern district schools while each charter school is governed by its own non-profit corporation board. As a result, charter schools have more flexibility in their curricula and operations. Because charter schools receive public funds, they are still required to meet state testing standards.

### **What oversees the charter school sector?**

The NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) oversees the state charter school sector, specifically the Office of Charter Schools (OCS), Charter School Advisory Board (CSAB), and State Board of Education (SBE). Charters are solely granted by the SBE and must be renewed periodically.

### **How are students enrolled into a charter school?**

Parents may apply to any charter school in NC, online or in-person, if their child is eligible to attend an NC public school. If a school receives more applications than its capacity, a lottery is conducted with exemptions for staff children and siblings of current students. Discrimination based on race, national origin, or religion is prohibited. Students cannot be picked.

### **How are charter schools funded?**

Like district schools, charter schools charge no tuition. They receive most of their funding from state and county governments while the rest is through fundraising.

<b>State</b>	Each charter school receives a per-pupil allotment based on the county in which it is located.
<b>Local Government</b>	Each charter school receives a per-pupil share of local funds based on enrollment and the districts from which parents send students to the school. Certain local funds are exempt from being shared with charters including most local education taxes.
<b>Fundraising</b>	Charter schools, like any non-profit, can raise funds. Capital fundraising (i.e. real estate & facilities) is most common because charters receive no state capital funds and local governments are prohibited from providing capital funds.

### **How are charter schools accountable for taxpayer dollars?**

First, charters must adhere to the contents of their charter granted by the SBE. There are also unscheduled school visits by OCS consultants, an annual CPA audit, and the Charter School Financial Performance Guide. Charter schools must provide documentation for the state to pay their bills. Board members receive no compensation and are subject to state open-meeting and nepotism statutes.



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## **Advocacy Day Info. Sheet (cont.)**

### **How are new charter schools created?**

A group of state citizens form a non-profit board and submit an application to the Office of Charter Schools where it is reviewed for completion. Complete applications are presented to the CSAB who vote to recommend them to the SBE for final approval. Approved schools enter the planning year during which benchmarks must be met or the charter could be delayed or rescinded. Upon completion, schools may open the upcoming academic year.

### **What flexibility do charters have that traditional schools do not?**

Start & End Dates	While each charter school must adhere to the state requirements for the number of school days, it may choose its start or end date.
Curriculum	Charter schools are not required to follow the state curriculum but must meet state testing standards.
Staff Pay	Charter schools are not required to pay staff by the state pay scale enabling them to pay better teachers & administrators more
Certification	Charter schools must have at least 50% of their teachers certified enabling them to bring other professionals to teach in their field of expertise.
Transportation & Meals	Charters are not required to provide transportation or meals. However, they must ensure no student is prevented from attending because of lack of those services.

### **Do charter schools receive funding for EC students?**

Yes. Like district schools, charter schools receive a per-pupil allotment for each EC student plus reserve funds for severe cases. EC funding is limited to 12.5% of enrolled students. Because EC student enrollment exceeds this percentage at many charter schools, this limit can be cumbersome.

### **How well do charter school perform academically?**

According to NC School Report Cards, 40% of charter schools received a school performance grade of A, A<sup>NG</sup>, or B, and 2/3 of them met or exceeded state academic growth standards.

### **Do charter schools “take” funding from traditional schools?**

No. Charter schools share the costs that would be paid solely by the district if only district schools existed. For example, districts with high growth rates must supply and maintain additional schools to accommodate the population. Since charter schools must pay for their own facilities, costs are shared between the district and charter schools in or near that district.

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