

# The Truth About Massachusetts Charter Public Schools



**Myth:** Charter schools are private schools.

**FACT:** Charter public schools are just that – public. They are authorized by the state, open to any student who wants to enroll, and do not charge tuition. Like school committees, charter public school boards are public boards, subject to the open meeting law, conflict of interest law, and public records requirements. Charter public schools are an important and valuable part of the education system in Massachusetts, as we know a one-size-fits-all model of education does not work.

**Myth:** Charter public schools cherry pick the best students.

**FACT:** Charter public schools cannot select their students, and there are no eligibility requirements or tests for admission. Admission is via an unbiased public lottery.

Charter public schools serve higher rates of students from communities that have been historically underserved by the public education system. Today, the percentage of students with special needs in charter public schools is only slightly lower than that in districts statewide, while the percentages of Black and Latinx students, English Language Learners, and low-income students are all significantly higher in charter public schools.

**Myth:** Charter public schools are not accountable.

**FACT:** Charter public schools are held to the highest accountability standards of any public school in the Commonwealth. Charter public schools are authorized by and accountable to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. They undergo extensive annual review and are subject to renewal – or closure – every five years.

Charter public schools must regularly report on progress toward performance objectives, student demographics, staff turnover, professional development, discipline, finances, and more. Additionally, every charter public school is subject to an external financial audit every year.

**Myth:** Charter public schools drain funding from district public schools.

**FACT:** Our public school resources don't belong to the education bureaucracy – they belong to our kids. Every child deserves to get a great public education at a school that's right for them. Whether that's a district public school, a vocational technical public school, or a charter public school, our kids are entitled to the same share of public funds for their public education.

Unlike when parents decide to move to another district or to enroll their child in a private or parochial school, when a parent decides to enroll their child in a charter public school, the district, while no longer educating the student, is not left empty handed. The state – recognizing that districts need time to adjust to decreased enrollment – provides three years of additional local aid to districts that lose students to charter public schools. Every penny of that student's educational funding is reimbursed to the district the first year, 60 percent the second year, and 40 percent the third year.

**Myth:** Charter public schools teach to the test.

**FACT:** Massachusetts charter public schools are dynamic learning environments. A study conducted for Massachusetts' Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by the American Institutes for Research found that charter public schools actually spend less time on test preparation than traditional public schools.

**Myth:** Charter public schools harm the sending districts.

**FACT:** Studies have shown that charter public schools have beneficial impacts on their sending districts. In particular, research has shown that charter public schools increase per-pupil spending in sending districts and shift spending toward instruction. Additionally, charter public schools have been shown to result in a more qualified pool of teachers for local district schools over time.