

# MYTHS vs. FACTS

## Separating fact from fiction when it comes to understanding PENNSYLVANIA'S PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

**MYTH:** Charter schools are not public schools.

**FACT:** Charter schools are public schools.

PUBLIC  
CHARTER  
SCHOOLS



TRADITIONAL  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS



Tuition free for families



Publicly funded



Non-sectarian



Nondiscriminatory Enrollment



Accountable to state and federal regulations



Governed by Board of Directors who are public officials



**MYTH:** Charter schools take funding away from traditional public schools.

**FACT:** Charter schools do not take funding away from traditional public schools.



Charter schools do not take money, the money follows the student from their home school district to a public charter school when a parent makes a choice for their child's public-school education to take place in a charter school.

**MYTH:** Charter schools 'cherry-pick' the best students from traditional public schools.

**FACT:** Charter schools serve all students.



- ★ Charter schools have no selective enrollment requirements.
- ★ Charter schools must accept all students, including English learners and students with special needs.
- ★ They hold lotteries to enroll students if there are not enough seats to meet demand.

**MYTH:** Charter schools do not answer to the public since their boards are not elected.

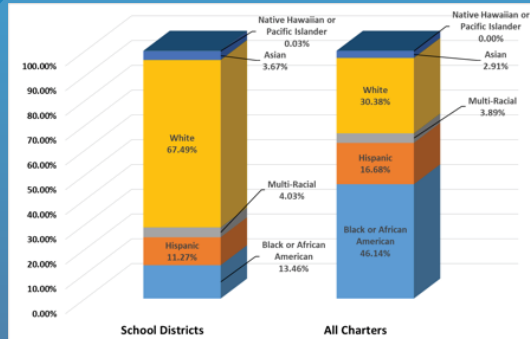
**FACT:** Charter schools are directly accountable to the authorizing school board or the Pennsylvania Department of Education who have the authority to renew or not renew a school's charter.



Once appointed, a charter school board member, just like a traditional school board member, is a public official who must comply with the PA Ethics Act and file an annual statement of Financial Interest Form. Also, the board must comply with the PA Sunshine Law regarding open meetings.

**MYTH:** Charter schools segregate students based on race.

**FACT:** Charter schools in Pennsylvania are very diversified. In fact, charter schools serve higher percentages of African American and Hispanic students than district run schools.



Pennsylvania Department of Education (2017) Enrollment Reports and Projections 2016-2017. Available from [www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov)

**MYTH:** Charter schools are not accountable.

**FACT:** Charter schools are the most accountable public-school systems in Pennsylvania with the threat of closure as the ultimate accountability.



Both public and charter schools have:

- State Exams
- Periodic Review
- Financial Audits
- Annual Reporting

Charter schools **ALSO** have:

- Closure Process
- Parental Choice



**MYTH:** Charter schools are large for-profit companies.

**FACT:** Pennsylvania requires all brick and mortar and cyber charter schools to be organized as public, non-profit corporations.

**MYTH:** Charter schools get more money than other public schools.

**FACT:** Charter schools receive less funding than traditional public schools.



In the 2015-2016 school year charter schools across Pennsylvania received approximately 75% of the funding that traditional public schools received. This means that charter schools operate with less public funding than traditional public schools.

**MYTH:** Charter schools do not enroll special education students.

**FACT:** Charter schools enroll a similar ratio of special education students as public schools.



In the 2016-2017 school year, 17.61% of charter school enrollment was special education students, while traditional public schools had enrollment of 16.37% special education students.

Source: Special Education and Total Enrollment by LEA:2012-2016 (Excel). Available from <https://penndata.hbg.psu.edu/AdditionalReports/tabid/2543/Default.aspx>

**MYTH:** My child will not be challenged academically in a cyber charter school.

**FACT:** Cyber charter schools offer the same rigorous coursework as traditional brick and mortar schools.



Working on assignments through a computer does not mean coursework is any less challenging. Students are expected to check into each subject area regularly to show progress and understanding. Further, cyber charter schools offer Honors, Gifted, and Advanced Placement (AP) coursework, just like traditional schools.