

# FLORIDA'S PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS IN 2020...THE REAL STORY

## Florida's public charter schools by the numbers

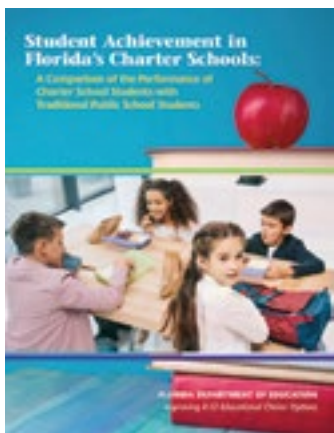
**674**  
Schools operating

**329,216**  
Students enrolled

**47**  
Florida counties where charter schools operate

**1996**  
The year the first Florida charter school opened in Miami

**11.5%**  
The percentage of Florida's public school students attending charter schools



*\*Florida Department of Education, Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools: A Comparison of the Performance of Charter School Students with Traditional Public School Students, March 2019.*

## What are public charter schools?

Charter schools are non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations that have a contract or charter to provide the same educational services to students as district public schools. They are non-sectarian public schools that operate with freedom from many of the regulations that apply to traditional public schools. Charter schools must hire certified teachers, just like traditional district schools.

## What types of students attend charter schools?

Parents of every economic, social and ethnic group choose to send their children to local charter schools. Florida charter schools serve a diverse population of students similar to that of district public schools.

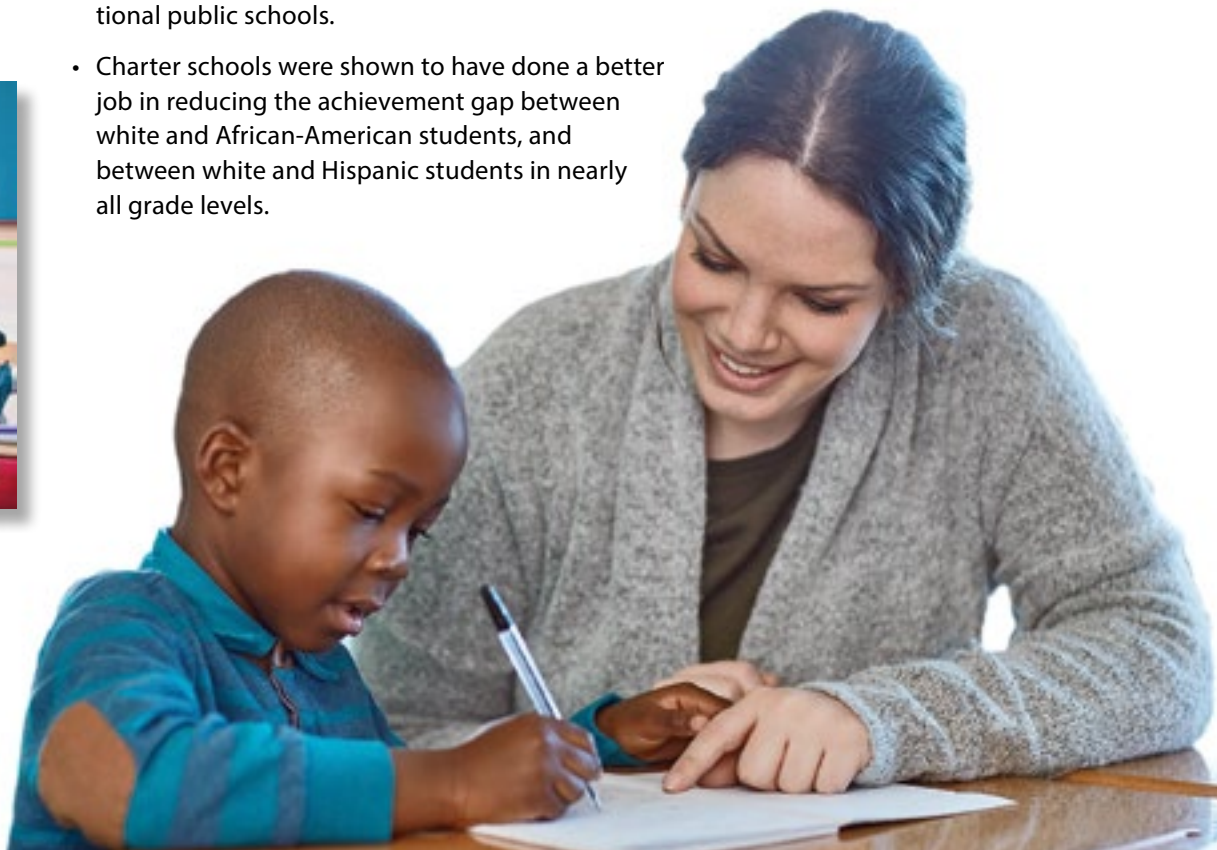
## How are charter schools funded?

Charter schools receive funding from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) using the same FTE formula applied to district schools. Charter schools must also pay an administrative fee to their district sponsors that cannot exceed 5% of their total FTE funding.

## Report shows that most students do better in Florida's charter schools

In its annual report on charter school student achievement, the Florida Department of Education found that charter school students outperformed their peers in traditional public schools in almost all achievement areas.\*

- A higher percentage of charter school students scored a level three or above on the state-wide assessments in English Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies.
- A higher percentage of charter school students made learning gains than students in traditional public schools.
- Charter schools were shown to have done a better job in reducing the achievement gap between white and African-American students, and between white and Hispanic students in nearly all grade levels.



# MYTHS VERSUS THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS

## MYTH:

Charter schools are private schools.

## TRUTH:

**Charter schools are NOT private schools.**

They are tuition-free public schools that are part of the state's public education system. They operate with contracts (charters) issued by the local public school districts. They receive the same per pupil funding as district public schools, minus a five percent administrative fee paid to the districts.

## MYTH:

Charter schools are for-profit entities run by big corporations.

## TRUTH:

**By law, all Florida charter schools must be organized as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations managed by volunteer community-based boards of directors.**

About 20 percent of the charter schools in Florida contract with charter management companies for back-office services but they still operate as nonprofits under the governance of a volunteer board of directors.

## MYTH:

Charter schools have little or no oversight.

## TRUTH:

**This is completely false.**

Charter schools are closely monitored by their district sponsors and the state. They are required to file several reports a year to their district sponsors and state detailing their financial and operational status. Charter school students take the same state assessments as other traditional public school students. Charter schools are evaluated and assigned a school grade using the same standards and criteria as traditional public schools.

If a charter school receives two consecutive grades of "F," the district sponsor may close the school. No public school operated by a Florida school district has ever been closed for similar poor performance, while 316 charter schools have been closed since 1997.

## MYTH:

Charter schools siphon money from School Districts.

## TRUTH:

**Charter schools serve the same public school students who would have otherwise been enrolled in traditional public schools.**

We believe that educational funding should be used for the benefit of students, whether they attend district or charter schools. Charter schools actually serve public school students at a lower cost per student than traditional public schools.

## MYTH:

Charter schools cherry pick only the best students.

## TRUTH:

**Parents are the ones who choose charter schools for their children, not the other way around.**

The doors of charter schools are open to everyone, pending space limitations. To help avoid over-enrollment, charter schools utilize a lottery system for the fairest selection process.

## FLORIDA STATUTES AND RULES ADDRESSING CHARTER SCHOOLS

### s. 1002.33

Charter schools

### s. 1013.62

Charter schools capital outlay funding

### s. 218.39(1)

Annual financial audit reports

State Board of Education  
Rule 6A.6.0784  
Charter School  
Governance Training

## ABOUT THE FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

FCPCS is the voice of the Florida charter school movement, with more than 400 charter school members. It is one of the oldest and largest charter school membership associations in the nation. Founded in 1999 by a grassroots group of charter school operators, it provides advocacy, support, resources, and networking opportunities to new and existing charter schools, parents, and students. FCPCS also promotes the establishment and operation of high quality public charter schools throughout the state.



FLORIDA CONSORTIUM *of*  
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Florida's Charter Support Organization Since 1999

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