

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT MINNESOTA'S CHARTER SCHOOLS

MYTH: Charter schools are private schools.

FACT: Charter schools are public schools. According to Minnesota statute, “A charter school is a public school and is part of the state’s system of public education.” Charters:

- must be nonsectarian and tuition-free;
- may not require entrance exams;
- must accept all students up to capacity;
- are subject to the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act and the Minnesota Public School Fee Law; and
- have the same financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as traditional districts.

MYTH: Charter school teachers do not need to be licensed.

FACT: Public charter school teachers must hold a valid Minnesota license to perform the particular services for which they are employed. State aid may be reduced if schools employ a teacher who is not appropriately licensed or approved by the MN Board of Teaching.

MYTH: Charter schools only serve gifted students.

FACT: Public charter schools may not limit admission to pupils on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, or athletic ability. Charter schools are open to all and may not require entrance exams.

MYTH: Charter schools are for “troubled” students.

FACT: Public charter schools are for all students. Charter schools are not alternative schools. Charter schools are very diverse in the programs they offer, their missions, and in the populations they serve. Students may choose to attend charters for a multitude of reasons: more individualized attention, program variety, more rigorous programs, project-based curriculum, or other reasons.

MYTH: Charter schools do not provide special education services.

FACT: Public charter public schools must follow the same federal and state requirements to provide special education services as other public district schools. *

** For more information about how special education services are provided, please contact Innovative Special Education Services of MN at 1-800-281-9980.*

MYTH: Charter schools are “stealing money” from the public school system.

FACT: Charter schools are public schools, therefore the money that follows the students who choose to attend charters remains in the public education system.

MYTH: Charter schools receive more state money than traditional public district schools.

FACT: No public charter receives more funding than a traditional school district. General education revenue must be paid to a charter school just as though it were a district. Charters may not levy property taxes, which are additional sources of revenue to district schools.

MYTH: Charter public schools do not have to meet the same educational standards as traditional public district schools.

FACT: Public charter school programs must meet or exceed the outcomes adopted by the MN Commissioner of Education and the outcomes stated in the school’s contract with its authorizer. Charters are also subject to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

MYTH: Charter schools endanger the public school system.

FACT: Charter schools are public schools. The entire public school system is strengthened when choices and options such as charter schools are available to students and families. When families are empowered to make decisions about their child’s education, the family’s ownership and involvement in the education process increases, as does the school’s accountability to parents.

MYTH: Charter school teachers do not have significant ownership or interest in their schools.

FACT: Public charter school teachers have a significant stake, ownership, and interest in their schools. Teachers may be founders of charter schools. The charter law requires at least one teacher on the school’s Board of Directors.