



# WASHINGTON CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Serving diverse communities

### Who are Washington's public charter school students and teachers?

- 64% are students of color as compared to 44% statewide.
- 58% qualify for free or reduced-price school meals – as compared to 44% statewide.
- Charter public schools in Washington serve many students with special education needs. Students with special education needs make up 15% of public charter school students, compared with the statewide public school average of 13.5%.
- Reflecting the diversity of the students they serve, in 2015-2016, 39% of Washington's public charter school teachers are people of color, as compared to a statewide average of just 13%.

## OVERVIEW

Charter schools are a type of public school, approved and overseen by a state or district authorizer. Like all public schools, they do not charge tuition, they are open to all students, and they are publicly funded. However, charter public schools are held more accountable than other public schools for showing improved student achievement. In exchange for greater accountability, charter public school teachers and principals are given more flexibility to customize their teaching methods and curriculum to improve student learning.

## A POPULAR PUBLIC SCHOOL OPTION

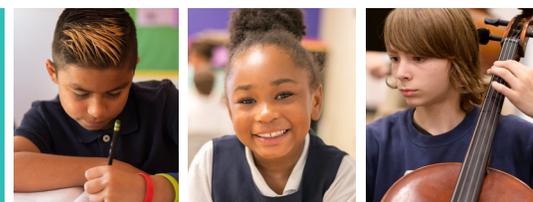
Washington's charter public schools first opened in 2014 and have grown to serve more than 1,600 students in Highline, Kent, Seattle, Spokane, and Tacoma. Charter public schools have become an integral part of Washington's public education system by offering innovative school options to families and helping to close the opportunity gap in communities across the state. The schools' popularity is evident in their growing demand, with three new charter public schools set to open in Fall 2017, and active waitlists at several existing schools. WA Charters predicts over 2,500 students will attend charter public schools in Washington during the 2017-18 school year.

The Washington State Charter Schools Association (WA Charters) believes that public education is the backbone of a successful community, economy, and civic society. Now, more than ever, we must focus on providing equitable pathways and opportunities for every student in Washington state, and charter public schools are part of an effective solution to do just that.

## CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE

- Washington's charter public schools exist under the state's Charter Schools Act, which was recently awarded a perfect score by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers based on best-practice criteria that helps ensure a consistent, high-performing charter school sector. That award followed a Department of Education grant of \$6.9 million to Washington state charter schools, a signal of the Obama administration's confidence in the state's growing and high-quality charter sector.
- Charter public schools are free from many rules and regulations that apply to traditional public schools, so that teachers and principals have more flexibility at the school level to customize learning experiences to better meet the individual needs of their students and help them succeed. This also means that parents have more options within the public school system to find the best learning environment for their children.

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## Charter public schools are making a difference

When students enter charter public schools for the first time, they often do so performing below grade level in reading and math. Washington's charter public schools are already getting results with flexible and innovative educational models specially tailored to the students they serve.

- 80% of students at Destiny Middle School entered reading below grade level. On average, students grew approximately three grade levels in reading in one year.
- Summit Sierra's founding ninth grade students outperformed the national average by 20% in reading and more than doubled the national average in math, per the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment.
- 80% of Rainier Prep's students qualified for free and reduced-price school meals; at the same time, more than 80% of sixth graders met or exceeded the grade-level achievement standard on the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment. Rainier Prep had similar results in math.

## CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE SUBJECT TO STRICT OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

■ In exchange for this flexibility, charter schools are held more accountable than other public schools for showing improved student achievement. Charter public schools must meet the same state and federal academic standards as other public schools, but they are subject to additional rigorous academic, financial, and managerial requirements as specified in their charter contract — and to ongoing monitoring to evaluate their success in improving student outcomes.

■ Just like any other Washington public school, charter public schools are overseen by the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education. Charter public schools also have to comply with the same state and federal laws regarding health, safety, civil rights, and nondiscrimination as every other public school. Teachers have to meet the same certification requirements as any other public school teachers, and students have to take the same standardized tests as their peers in traditional schools. Charter public schools are subject to the Open Public Meetings Act and the Public Records Act, just like traditional public schools.

■ The non-profit organizations that oversee charter public schools are subject to state and non-profit financial audits, and have to answer to the community. Since families choose their charter schools, those schools are directly accountable to parents and must ensure they are meeting parents' standards and expectations.

## OUR SCHOOLS

The Washington State Charter School Association (WA Charters) is working with communities, nonprofit organizations, and families to grow high-quality public charter school options in Washington state.

