



Frequently Asked Questions about Public Charter Schools



What is a Charter School? Is it a public school?

Yes, charter schools are public schools that are allowed the freedom to be more innovative while being held accountable for advancing student achievement.

How many students are attending in public charter schools in South Carolina?

There are nearly 26,000 students enrolled in South Carolina's 66 public charter schools. There are 35 public charter schools sponsored by 16 local districts, and 31 public charter schools in the South Carolina Public Charter School District. SC State will open the first Institute of Higher Education sponsored charter school for the 2015-16 school year.

How many "for profit" public charter schools are there?

Zero. Public charter schools must be organized as nonprofit corporations in South Carolina governed by a board of directors. Public charter schools, similar to districts, purchase goods and contract for services based on the needs of their students. All of SC's Public Charter Schools must have an annual independent audit submitted to their sponsor and the SCDE, along with a 990 filed with the IRS.



Can charter schools have admissions tests or have other requirements to enroll?

No, entrance exams are not allowed for admission to any public charter school in South Carolina. By law, charter schools must have a fair and open admission process, conducting outreach and recruitment to all segments of the community they serve. The SC Charter Act requires schools to hold a lottery if there are more applications than open slots. Public charter schools are nondiscriminatory in admission and employment practices.



Can charters hire non-certified teachers?

Yes, start-up charter schools may hire up to 25% of non-certified faculty and conversion charters can hire 10%. However, these teachers must still meet the "highly qualified designations" of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Many of the non-certified teachers are university professors or teachers certified in other states.



Do charters take the state assessments and teach the SC adopted standards?

Yes, charter school students must take the same state assessments based on the state adopted standards. Much of the innovation of charters lies within the delivery methods of the standards and instructional strategies implemented, along with the overall culture of the schools.

Can conversion charter schools decide to serve fewer students than they currently serve?

No, a converted public school must enroll the students they are currently serving, but may add additional grades if approved in their charter application.



What is the role of a Charter School's Governing Board?

The Governing Board of a Public charter school is not like a PTA or School Improvement Council. A Charter School's Governing Board is ultimately responsible for advancing the mission of the school, implementing the charter with a relentless focus on student achievement, and being excellent stewards of public funds.