

Quick Facts: Public Charter Schools in Connecticut

Charter schools are non-profit, tuition-free, public schools of choice under Connecticut law. They are approved by the State Board of Education and are subject to renewal every five years.

Student Enrollment

- There are currently **24 public charter schools serving more than 9,300 students**; about 1.5% of the all public school students in Connecticut attend public charter schools.
- Charter schools **cannot restrict student enrollment in any way**. If demand is higher than the number of seats available, enrollment is determined through a random lottery.
- Charter schools serve predominantly low-income and minority populations. More than 85% of students in Connecticut's charter schools are African American or Hispanic, more than 70% reported as low-income, 9% qualify for special education and 5% are English Language Learners.

Funding

- This current funding system is **outdated, inequitable, and unfair** to our state's families and students.
- Connecticut uses 11 different funding systems that **have little relationship to student need** resulting in drastic variations in funding across similar districts and even the type of school.
- State charter schools receive \$11,000 per student from the state which is **nearly \$4,000 less per student than their host districts**, even though they educate students with similar levels of need.
- State charter schools are funded entirely by the state. While district schools receive considerable local financial support, **local support for charter schools is voluntary, minimal, and inconsistent**.
- Connecticut's **charter law is among the most outdated and lowest rated in the U.S.**, ranking 31st out of 43 states that have charter laws. Connecticut is one of only two states where charter schools are funded through a separate item in the state budget that must be approved every year.

Demand and Growth

- Parent **demand for public charter schools in Connecticut is high**. In 2014-15, more than 3,000 students were on waiting lists for charter schools.
- Charter growth has not kept pace with parent demand. Between 2009 and 2015, the number of total charter school seats available increased by 54%, while the number of students on waiting lists for charter schools only decreased by 28%.
- Prior to the approval of seven charter schools between 2013 and 2014, **Connecticut had not expanded charter school growth for five years**. In the 2015-2016 school year, the last of these seven schools opened: Capital Prep Harbor in Bridgeport and Stamford Charter School for Excellence.
- These new charter schools continue to **serve our highest-need students**. All state charter schools are located within the state's lowest-performing districts. Some charter schools have a specialized focus for underserved student populations, including English Language Learners and over-aged, under-credited youth.

Performance

- Charter schools **provide high-quality options** for minority and high-need students: 73% (Math) and 81% (ELA) of charter schools with available data outperformed their host district on the 2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC).
- Many charter schools fall within the top performing public schools overall in their host districts: Achievement First Bridgeport is the **highest-performing charter school in Bridgeport** and the **second highest-performing public school in the city overall** based on the 2015 SBAC.
- A number of charter high schools report college acceptance rates between 90 and 100%, with similarly high college persistence rates.

For the full version with notes and sources, visit <http://www.conncan.org/research-and-policy/quickfacts>.