

Increasingly popular among D.C. parents and children



District public charter schools now educate 38 percent of public school children in Washington, D.C.— a higher share than any other big city except New Orleans.

The first D.C. public charter schools enrolled 160 students in 1996. Today, nearly 28,000 students are enrolled at 99 campuses.

Charter schools are independent public schools that are free to innovate and are held accountable for improved student performance.



The Knowledge Is Power Program has seven schools in D.C. KIPP Key Academy is the highest-performing middle school in D.C.

Free to innovate...

Charter schools are public schools, just a different kind. Publicly funded, tuition free and nonsectarian—like traditional public schools—they are open to all D.C. resident children and receive public funds according to how many students they enroll.

Public charter schools have additional freedoms and responsibilities that have enabled them to get ahead of the curve in improving public education in the District. Free to determine their own school policies and programs, charters are held accountable for improving student achievement by D.C.'s Public Charter School Board. Innovations include longer school days and years, more intimate learning environments, and preparing children for college from the earliest age.

D.C. public charter schools have closed the citywide student achievement gap between black and white students by 25 percent in three years.



... and held accountable for improved student performance.

Free from city bureaucracy and political control, public charter schools are required to follow civil rights and health and safety laws and federal No Child Left Behind mandates. Public charter schools are accountable to the D.C. Public Charter School Board, whose members are recommended by the U.S. Secretary of Education and appointed by the mayor of Washington, D.C.

A nationally renowned model of accountability, the PCSB rejects two public charter school applications for every one it accepts. PCSB monitors every public charter school to guarantee its academic achievement, managerial competence and financial health, and conducts a “high stakes review” every five years. One in four public charter schools has lost its charter following an unsatisfactory review. All such schools underperformed academically, proving that the D.C. public charter school reform represents real public education accountability for schools, parents and children.

Charter schools are unique public schools that foster a partnership among parents, teachers and students to create an environment in which parents can be more involved, teachers are given the freedom to innovate, and students are provided the structure they need to learn.



85 percent of high school graduates in D.C. public charter schools are accepted into college.

Children enrolled in D.C. public charter middle and high schools with a majority of economically disadvantaged students are nearly twice as likely to be proficient in reading and math as their peers in D.C.'s city-run schools.

The high-school graduation rate for D.C. public charter schools is 24 percentage points higher than at regular D.C. public schools. The graduation rate is eight percentage points higher than the U.S. national average.

D.C.'s public charter school students are 88 percent African-American, eight percent Latino and 80 percent economically disadvantaged. D.C. public charter schools have higher shares of African-American and economically disadvantaged students than the city-run public schools.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan at DC Prep Academy Public Charter School in Northeast D.C.



Fairness for every D.C. child



Located in Anacostia, where one in two adults is functionally illiterate, Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School is the highest-performing nonselective high school in D.C.

Against all the odds, D.C.'s public charter schools are raising the bar for public education in the District. But charters receive fewer public funds per student than D.C.'s traditional public schools. That's unfair. Charters are public schools and should receive the same level of public funding as the city-run public schools.

D.C. public charter schools receive less than half the facilities funding that city-run schools receive on a per-student basis.

D.C. law says public charter schools have the first right of refusal to negotiate to buy or lease public school buildings no longer needed by the school system. Sadly, the D.C. government continually prevents charters from acquiring surplus public school buildings. Instead it sells school buildings to developers who turn them into luxury condominiums, boutique hotels, chic health clubs and high-end retail space or lets the buildings become derelict. As a result, many D.C. public charter schools occupy unsuitable warehouse, retail and office space or church annexes and basements, often lacking playgrounds, playing fields, gymnasiums, cafeterias and auditoriums.

To learn more about how D.C. children in public charter schools deserve a fair public funding deal, visit www.BeFairDC.org

Visit Friends of Choice in Urban Schools at www.focusdc.org. You can become a fan of FOCUS on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

***"An example of how all our schools should be."
— President Obama visiting Capital City Public Charter School.
(front cover photo)***

D.C.'s Public Charter Schools



A school reform that works for D.C.'s most underserved children