



Guidebook to Success for NYC Charter Schools

Charter School Basics



What are Charter Schools?

Charter schools are independent public schools, governed by a not-for-profit Board of Trustees and managed according to the terms of a five-year contract or "charter."

Unlike traditional public schools, charter schools are held accountable to meet or exceed ambitious goals for student performance or risk the revocation of their charter to operate. In return for this strict accountability, charter schools enjoy greater freedom from state and local regulations and have the autonomy and flexibility to tailor an educational program to meet the specific needs of its student population.

Created by teachers, community leaders, parents and nonprofit organizations, charter schools promote educational innovation and excellence by bringing new ideas, resources and personnel to public education. In addition, they offer parents a greater school choice, especially for children at risk of academic failure.

Charter Schools are Public Schools

Charter schools can be mistaken for private schools or voucher programs to enroll in private schools. Although charter schools share many similarities with traditional public schools, they differ in key areas, as outlined below:

Similarities

How charter schools are similar to traditional public schools:

Open to all NYC students, regardless of income or ability

(charter schools may not discriminate and there are no admission tests)

Publicly-funded

(there are no tuition costs for NYC students)

Must meet or exceed State performance standards

(including No Child Left Behind and New York Regent student performance standards; charter schools must also administer required State exams)

Abide by federal laws

(regarding student health, safety, civil rights and student assessment)

Differences

However, charter schools differ from public schools in these key areas:

Exempt from some state and district regulations

(founders can design the curriculum that best serves their student population)

Accountable for meeting school-specific student performance goals

(charters can be revoked or not renewed if education goals are not met)

Schools of choice

(they offer parents and students an innovative alternative in public education)

Overseen by a not-for-profit Board of Trustees

(these individuals share the charter school's mission and are personally committed to helping the school achieve its performance goals)

History

Charter schools are one of the fastest growing innovations in public education, with bipartisan support on the federal, state and local level. To date, charter school laws have been signed in 40 states and Washington, DC.

The following timeline charts the progress of charter schools over the last 30 years:

1970s:

New England educator Ray Budde suggests that small groups of teachers be given contracts or "charters" by their local school boards to explore new approaches to public education.

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), promotes the idea that local boards be empowered to charter an entire school.

1980s:

Philadelphia starts a number of "schools-within-schools" and calls them "charters."

1991:

Minnesota passes the first Charter School law.

1992:

California passes its Charter School law, the second nationwide.

1995:

19 states sign laws allowing for the creation of charter schools.

The U.S. Department of Education provides \$6 million in grants to support states' charter school efforts.

1997:

President Clinton, in his State of the Union Address, calls for the creation of 3,000 charters schools by the year 2002.

1998:

The New York Charter Schools Act is passed and provides the legal basis for opening and operating charter schools in the state.

2002:

President Bush calls for \$200 million to support charter schools and another \$100 million for a new Credit Enhancement for Charter Schools Facilities Program.

2003:

Mayor Bloomberg and NYC Schools Chancellor Klein launch the **Children First** initiative, which includes the creation of 50 new charter schools in New York City over the next five years.

2004:

The **New York City Center for Charter School Excellence** is established to provide assistance, guidance and access to resources for the planning and operation of NYC charter schools.

Why Charter Schools Were Developed

Historical Purpose

Charter schools were developed to help improve public education by injecting new ideas to improve, or offer an alternative to, ineffective and underperforming public education systems.

On the federal level, the commitment to improve public education culminated in the **No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)**. Signed into law by President Bush in January, 2002, NCLB contains several measures designed to hold states and schools accountable for the academic achievement of all students.

In New York City, the Chancellor's **Children First** initiative, begun in 2003, continues the NCLB reform commitment by providing the resources and funds to create an effective school for every child in New York City, enabling students to reach their full potential.

New school development is a key component of the Chancellor's Children First reform strategy. Of the 200 new small schools to be created in New York City in the next three to five years, 50 will be charter schools.

Benefits of Charter Schools

Unlike traditional public schools, charter schools are held accountable for meeting specific student performance goals as detailed in their five-year contract or "charter."

In return, charter schools are exempt from many public school regulations on curriculum, staffing and budget.

By giving educators more autonomy in return for performance accountability, charter schools can:

- Improve student academic achievement with innovative, targeted education programs and smaller classroom size.

- Increase learning opportunities for all students, especially those at risk of academic failure.

- Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods, curriculum and activities.

- Create new opportunities for teachers and school administrators while allowing entrepreneurs to bring their talent to public education.

- Provide parents and students with a greater choice of options within the public school system.

- Encourage success by tracking, measuring and meeting agreed-upon student academic performance results.

Who Can Open a Charter School

Any combination of teachers, parents, school administrators and community residents can open a charter school. Often, charter schools are opened in conjunction with a local:

- ◆ College or university
- ◆ Museum
- ◆ Educational institution
- ◆ Not-for-profit organization
- ◆ For-profit corporate entity registered to do business in the State of New York

Public School Conversions

The Charter Schools Law, Article 56 of the New York State Education Law, authorizes teachers, parents, school administrators, community residents, or any combination of these groups, to submit applications to establish charter schools. It is possible for an existing NYC public school to convert to a charter school. The school must submit an application for conversion to the New York City Board of Education for the local school district in which they are located. In addition, conversions of an existing public school to a charter school requires the affirmative vote of a majority of the parents or guardians of the students then enrolled in the existing public school.



Laws and Regulations

The question is often asked if charter schools are subject to the same regulations as other public schools.

The answer is no... but with exceptions.

The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 provides the legal basis for opening and operating charter schools in New York State. The Act states that charter schools are "independent and autonomous public schools that...operate independently of existing schools and school districts." (www.nycenet.edu/charterschools/law.htm)

Often, individual charter schools apply more exacting standards than those of traditional public schools. However, in order for their contract or "charter" to be approved, charter schools must also comply with various federal and state regulations, including:

- ◆ **Basic Requirements:** Charter schools must meet the same requirements for health and safety, civil rights and student assessment that are applicable to other New York City public schools.
- ◆ **Academic Standards:** Charter schools must design an educational program that meets or exceeds the student performance standards adopted by the New York State Board of Regents.
- ◆ **Testing:** Charter schools must administer all Regents examinations and citywide tests as required at all other public schools.
- ◆ **Accountability:** Charter schools must develop a comprehensive system of public accountability, including an annual "report card" that measures the school's academic and fiscal performance and progress toward meeting specific academic goals.
- ◆ **Audits:** Charter schools must submit to an independent financial audit, at least once annually.
- ◆ **Disabilities:** Charter schools must comply with all federal laws and regulations in regard to serving students with disabilities.
- ◆ **English Language Learners:** Charter schools must comply with federal law requiring that all students with limited English proficiency be given assistance that is "sufficient to provide an equal educational opportunity."
- ◆ **Calendars:** Charter schools must develop a school calendar and day schedule that provide at least as much instruction time as required of other public schools.



Charter School Authorizers

By law, charter schools in New York City can be created through the following three "chartering entities" or "authorizers":

1. Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education
2. New York State Board of Regents
3. State University of New York (SUNY) Board of Trustees

Each authorizer has specific policies and application procedures (see the comparison guide on the following page). Preference is given to applicants who demonstrate the capacity to provide for students identified as "at risk" of academic failure.

1. NYC Dept. of Education (NYCDOE) - Office of Charter Schools

(on behalf of the NYC Schools Chancellor)

The NYCDOE accepts applications for charter schools within the five boroughs only. For an application, go to www.nycenet.edu/OurSchools/Region84/Creation/default.htm.

The New York City Center for Charter School Excellence provides access to technical and financial assistance for applications to the NYCDOE. For more information go to www.nycchartercenter.org.

2. New York State Education Department (SED)

(on behalf of the New York State Board of Regents)

Although their focus is primarily on upstate New York and Long Island, SED can also approve charter schools in New York City. An application and technical assistance advisory is available at www.emsc.nysed.gov/psc/Application/app_guide.html

Public School Choice Programs (www.emsc.nysed.gov/psc/home.html) reviews and recommends the approval or denial of charter school applications for SED and provides technical assistance to charter schools. For questions about charter schools in New York State, call (518) 474-1762.

3. The Charter School Institute (CSI)

(on behalf of the State University of New York [SUNY] Board of Trustees)

CSI can approve charter schools in New York City. An Application Kit is available online at www.newyorkcharters.org/howto/index.html.

CSI oversees the application process, provides contact information for charter school technical assistance providers and conducts research for charter schools. For more information, call CSI at (518) 433-8277, or visit their website at www.newyorkcharters.org.

Selecting an Authorizer

Charter school applicants are not obliged to apply to any of the three authorizers except for reasons of location (i.e., schools outside the five boroughs cannot apply to the NYCDOE). Nonetheless, charter school planners should examine each authorizer's application process and perspectives on chartering new schools to determine which would be the "best fit" and most likely to approve the application.

Note that applications must **not** be submitted simultaneously and only be sent to one authorizer at a time.

Charter Authorizer Comparison Chart

While certain information is required for all applications - i.e., fingerprints, an executive summary, detailed description of the educational program, etc. - each authorizer has specific requirements in terms of formats and application procedures. As these can change yearly, check with each authorizer before beginning the application process.

	NYCDOE	SED	SUNY CSI
Application Deadline	Submit Applications in two sections. Sections I,II & III due in November. Complete application (Sections 1-6) due in January.	Can submit any time. Applications received before October will be decided on the following January.	Submit application in three phases. Phase One due by September for action by the following January. Phase One due by March for action in May or June.

Oversight

All of the charter school authorizers review annually and give a 5-year review to each school. This review determines whether the school can renew for a 5-year term. The Charter Schools Act requires that a school applying for renewal must report academic success based on achievement of the educational goals established in the charter.



Academic Accountability

In addition to its own specific standards, each charter school must satisfy the academic and accountability standards of the State, New York City and federal No Child Left Behind legislation, as summarized below:

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

The purpose of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is to improve education for all children nationwide by holding schools responsible for academic achievement. Under NCLB, schools that receive federal Title I funds (which help educators improve learning for students in economically disadvantaged communities) must follow prescribed accountability and student academic standards, as outlined below:



- ◆ **Academic Standards:** NCLB requires each state to set academic standards and each school is expected to make adequate yearly progress to achieve these standards.
- ◆ **Adequate Yearly Progress:** NCLB's goal is that all children should be at their state's proficiency level in reading, language arts, math and science by 2014.
- ◆ **Testing:** Schools must administer tests to measure how well students are learning and also to identify which schools need to do better. By 2005-2006, NCLB will require every state to test students in English Language Arts (ELA) and math in grades 3-8 and in high school. By 2007-2008, students will be tested in science in grades 4, 8, and in high school.

(Currently, New York elementary and middle school students take state achievement tests in (ELA) and math in grades 4 and 8. In high school, students take the Regent's examinations in English, math, social studies and science. New York State already meets the NCLB requirements for testing in science.)

- ◆ **School Report Cards:** NCLB requires states to publish school report cards that show how well students are doing and if there are achievement gaps among different student groups based on economic background, race, ethnic group, English language proficiency and disabilities. School report cards also identify schools in need of improvement, high school graduation rates and teacher qualifications.

New York State Regents

By law, charter schools must "meet or exceed student performance standards adopted by the New York State Board of Regents for other public schools." In 2003, the Board of Regents updated its "System of Accountability for Student Success" (SASS) to meet the requirements of NCLB and ensure that all students reach, at a minimum, proficiency on State academic achievement assessments. New York State performance assessment is defined at four levels.

New York City Department of Education

The NYCDOE Performance Standards set specific expectations for student performance at the elementary, middle and high school level, define the quality of performance and establish levels of proficiency at benchmarked grades. New York City Performance Standards are available in the areas of Applied Learning, English Language Arts, Primary Literacy, Mathematics and Science. Performance standards are aligned with NY state standards.

School standards are set at a level of performance equivalent to approximately the end of 4th grade for elementary school, 8th grade for middle school and 10th grade for high school.

NYC Performance Standards

Applied Learning:

1. Problem Solving
2. Communication Tools & Techniques
3. Information Tools & Techniques
4. Learning & Self-Management Tools & Techniques
5. Tools & Techniques for Working with Others

English Language Arts

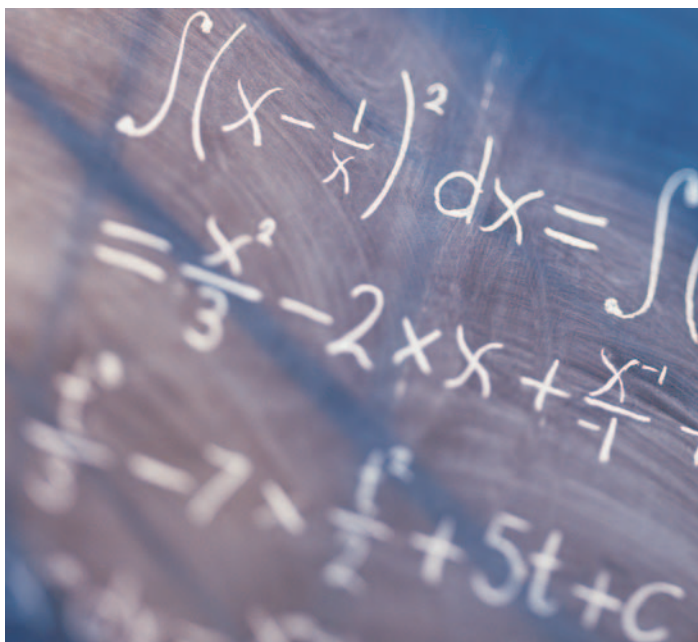
1. Reading
2. Writing
3. Speaking, Listening, Viewing
4. Conventions, Grammar & Use of the English Language
5. Literature

Mathematics

1. Numbers & Operation Concepts
2. Geometry & Measurement Concepts
3. Function & Algebra Concepts
4. Statistics & Probability Concepts
5. Problem Solving & Reasoning
6. Mathematics Skills & Tools
7. Mathematics Communications
8. Putting Mathematics to Work

Science:

1. Physical Sciences Concepts
2. Life Sciences Concepts
3. Earth & Space Sciences Concepts
4. Scientific Connections & Applications
5. Scientific Thinking
6. Scientific Tools & Techniques
7. Scientific Communications
8. Scientific Investigation



Primary Literacy

Specifies the reading and writing knowledge and skills students should demonstrate from kindergarten through third grade.

Reading

1. Reading Habits
2. Getting the Meaning
3. Understanding the Print-Sound Code

Writing

1. Habits & Processes
2. Writing Purposes & Resulting Genres
3. Language Use & Conventions

More detailed information on the New York City Performance Standards is found online at www.nycenet.edu/teachlearn/standards/nycstandards.html.

Are You Ready to Start A Charter School?

Preparing an application for a new charter school is a demanding task but can be done successfully if planned and executed properly. Before beginning the application process, charter school planners should first decide on the school's Mission Statement and assemble various "teams" who will be essential for the creation of the application and of the operation of the school itself.

- 1. Develop a School Mission Statement:** The Mission Statement should be the first step in the charter school creation process as it will be used to elicit support for the school's planning team members, trustees and partners. The Mission Statement should capture in one paragraph why the charter school is being created and what its students will accomplish academically.
- 2. Form a Founders Team:** The next step is to sign up dedicated individuals, with varying but complementary talents, who share a common vision of what the charter school will be. This Founders Team will contribute their expertise and share in the responsibilities of developing a well-run charter school and a clearly-defined application.
- 3. Establish a Board of Trustees:** This is a very important step as charter school authorizers request the names and backgrounds of perspective Trustee members in the application. The charter school Board will be instrumental in operating the school, once it is approved, so it is very important to appoint individuals who share the school's mission and goals.
- 4. Consider Partnerships:** At this point in the planning stage, charter school applicants should determine how they plan to create and operate the school. There are three basic options available: 1) develop partnerships with community-based organizations for specific services, 2) contract with a professional educational management company or 3) create and operate the school independently.
- 5. Identify a Curriculum:** The importance of a well-designed school curriculum cannot be overstated. Charter school planners must ensure that the school's curriculum achieves clearly-stated outcomes on a grade-by-grade, subject-by-subject basis and that the curriculum meets established State and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) learning standards.

About The New York City Center for Charter School Excellence

Launched in 2004, the New York City Center for Charter School Excellence is an independent, not-for-profit organization created to provide the guidance, resources and information needed to open, operate and sustain successful charter schools. The Center is integral to the Children First reform agenda's ambitious plan to open 50 new charter schools in New York City in the next three to five years.

The Center is a partnership between New York City and the philanthropic community, with generous support from The Robertson Foundation, The Robin Hood Foundation, The Pumpkin Foundation and The Clark Foundation. It is a central source for the information needed to plan, develop and submit a successful charter school application.

Resources: The Center provides technical assistance, training and support for charter schools.

Grants: The Center provides and facilitates Planning and Implementation Grants to help charter schools get started, operate successfully and achieve academic excellence.

Best Practices: The center identifies and promotes best practices and models of excellence to charter schools.

We welcome interested founders, supporters and donors for individual charter schools. Just contact the NYC Center for Charter School Excellence.

New York City Charter Schools 2004-2005

Amber Charter School
220 E. 106th St., New York, NY
10029
Tel: 212-534-9667
Grades Served: K-5

Beginning with Children Charter School
11 Bartlett Street, Brooklyn, NY 11206
Tel: 718-388-8847
Grades Served: K-8

Brooklyn Charter School
545 Willoughby Avenue,
Brooklyn, NY 11233
Tel: 718-302-2085
Grades Served: K-5
(Planned Total Grades: K-8)

Brooklyn Excelsior Charter School
856 Quincy St., Brooklyn, NY 11221
Tel: 718-246-5681
Grades Served: K-5
(Planned Total Grades: K-8)

Bronx Charter for Better Learning
3740 Baychester Avenue (Annex),
Bronx, NY 10466
Tel: 718-655-6660
Grades Served: 1-2
(Planned Total Grades: K-4)

Bronx Charter School for Children, The
388 Willis Avenue, Bronx, NY 10455
Tel: 718-402-3300
Grades Served: K-1
(Planned Total Grades: K-5)

Bronx Charter School for Excellence
1508 Webster Ave, Bronx NY 10457
Tel: 718-294-1497
Grades Served: K-1
(Planned Total Grades: K-4)

Bronx Charter School for the Arts
950 Longfellow Ave., Bronx, NY 10459
Tel: 718-893-1042
Grades Served: K-4
(Planned Total Grades: K-5)

Bronx Lighthouse Charter School, The
977 Fox Street, Bronx, NY 10459
Tel: 718-860-4124
Grades Served: K-2
(Planned Total Grades: K-4)

Bronx Preparatory Charter School
3872 3rd Avenue, Bronx, NY 10457
Tel: 718-294-0841
Grades Served: 5-10

Community Partnership Charter School
241 Emerson Pl., Brooklyn, NY 11205
Tel: 718-399-1495
Grades Served: K-8

East Harlem Village Academy
Charter School
413 E. 120th St., New York, NY 10035
Tel: 212-369-3319
Grades Served: 5-6
(Planned Total Grades: 5-12)

Excellence Charter School of
Bedford-Stuyvesant
600 Lafayette Avenue,
Brooklyn, NY 11216
Tel: 718-638-8830
Grades Served: K-1
(Planned Total Grades: K-5)

Explore Charter School
15 Snyder Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11226
Tel: 718-703-4484
Grades Served: K-5
(Planned Total Grades: K-8)

Family Life Charter School
14 W. 170th Street, Bronx, NY 10452
Tel: 718-410-8100
Grades Served: K-4
(Planned Total Grades: K-5)

Grand Concourse Charter School
116-18 E. 169th St., Bronx, NY 10452
Tel: 718-772-7956
Grades Served: K-4

Harbor Sciences and Arts Charter School
1 E. 104th Street, Suite 603,
New York, NY 10029
Tel: 212-427-2244 X 627
Grades Served: 1-8
(Total Planned Grades: 5-8)

Harlem Children's Zone/
Promise Academy Charter School
175 W. 134th St., New York, NY
10030
Tel: 212-234-6200
Grades Served: K-6
(Total Planned Grades: K-12)

Harlem Day Charter School
240 E. 123rd St, New York, NY 10035
Tel: 212-876-9953
Grades Served: K-4
(Total Planned Grades: K-5)

Harriet Tubman Charter School
3565 Third Avenue, Bronx NY 10456
Tel: 718-537-9912
Grades Served: K-6

Icahn Charter School
1525 Brook Avenue, Bronx, NY 10457
Tel: 718-716-8105
Grades Served: K-5

Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)
Academy Charter School
250 E. 156th Street, Bronx, NY 10451
Tel: 718-655-3555
Grades Served: 5-8

Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)
S.T.A.R. College Prep Charter School
433 W. 123rd St.,
New York, NY 10027
Tel: 212-769-7615
Grades Served: 5-6
(Total Planned Grades: 5-8)

Merrick Academy/
Queens Public Charter School
207-01 Jamaica Avenue,
Queens Village, NY 11428
Tel: 718-479-3753
Grades Served: K-6
(Planned Total Grades: K-10)

Opportunity Charter School, The
222 W. 134th Street, 3rd Floor,
New York, NY 10030
Tel: 212-283-0670
Grades Served: 6-7
(Total Planned Grades: 6-12)

Our World Neighborhood
Charter School
36-12 35th Avenue, Astoria, NY 11106
Tel: 718-392-3405
Grades Served: K-7
(Planned Total Grades: K-8)

Peninsula Preparatory Academy
Charter School
10-45 Nameoke Street,
Far Rockaway, NY 11691
Tel: 718-471-7220
Grades Served: K-2
(Planned Total Grades: K-5)

Readnet Bronx Charter School
429 E. 148th Street, Bronx, NY 10455
Tel: 718-292-3474
Grades Served: K-2
(Planned Total Grades: K-8)

Renaissance Charter School
35-59 81st Street,
Jackson Heights, NY 11372
Tel: 718-803-0060
Grades Served: K-12

Sisulu Children's Academy/
Harlem Public Charter School
125 W. 115th Street and
441 Manhattan Avenue
New York, NY 10026
Tel: 212-663-8216
Grades Served: K-6

Wildcat Academy Charter School
17 Battery Place, New York, NY 10004
Tel: 212-209-6036
Grades Served: 8-12

Williamsburg Charter School
424 Leonard Street, 4th Floor,
Brooklyn, NY 11222
Tel: 718-782-9830
Grades Served: 9
(Planned Total Grades: 9-12)

Mission:

The mission of the **New York City Center for Charter School Excellence** is to stimulate the supply of high quality charter schools and support ongoing student excellence in all NYC charter schools, impacting the effectiveness of public education. As an independent nonprofit, the Charter Center is an advocate, bridge and catalyst for the achievement of academic and operational success and sustainability of all NYC charter schools for each young person.

New York City Center for Charter School Excellence
111 Broadway, Suite 604
New York, NY 10006
Phone: 212-437-8300
Email: info@nycchartercenter.org
www.nycchartercenter.org

For more information about the New York City Center for Charter School Excellence, email the Center at info@nycchartercenter.org or visit our website at www.nycchartercenter.org.