



WASHINGTON PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS Legislative Information Packet

Washington's public charter schools are a vital part of public education in our state and are already making a real difference for many families, particularly families from underserved communities of color and communities struggling with poverty.





WASHINGTON PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS – AT A GLANCE

A popular public school option

- Washington’s public charter schools currently serve more than 1100 students in Highline, Kent, Seattle, Spokane, and Tacoma.
- Every charter school started the school year fully enrolled. Most public charter schools started the year with a waitlist of students, and some still have active waitlists.
- Families in Tri-Cities, Yakima, Walla Walla, West Seattle, South Seattle and from other communities without public charter schools have called for access to high-quality public school choices and were planning new public charter schools before the Supreme Court’s ruling.

Serving diverse communities

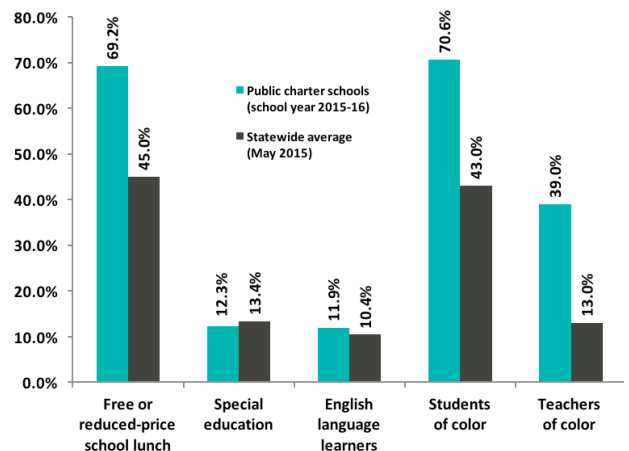
- Who are Washington’s public charter school students and teachers?
 - More than 70 percent are students of color.
 - More than two-thirds qualify for free or reduced-price school meals – at three of the schools the number exceeds 75 percent.
 - More than 30 percent of students at one school, and more than 10 percent at three other schools, are English language learners.
 - Public charter schools in Washington serve many students with special education needs. Students with special education needs make up 12 percent of public charter school students, nearly matching the statewide public school average of 13 percent.
 - Reflecting the diversity of the students they serve, 39 percent of Washington’s public charter school teachers are people of color, as compared to a statewide average of just 13 percent.

Part of the solution for public schools

- Washington’s public charter schools are a needed addition to public education in our state.
 - Traditional public schools are serving many students well, but not all.
 - A one-size-fits-all approach to education does not work for all students. Families want more high-quality public school options - not fewer - and public charter schools are part of the solution.
 - Washington’s public charter schools are helping to close an equity gap, and the lessons learned can be shared with all of our public schools.

Making a difference

- Despite a majority of students starting the school year below their grade level – often times by three and four years – in reading and math, Washington’s public charter schools are already getting results with flexible and innovative educational models specially tailored to the students they serve.
 - Every middle school student at Excel Public Charter School in Kent is simultaneously learning to code and playing an instrument in the school’s orchestra. Mid-year assessment results show students are on track to make one and a half years of growth in reading this school year.
 - At Destiny Middle School in Tacoma, more than a third of students grew one to two grade levels in reading and met their annual growth goal, surpassing the national average in just three months.
 - At Spokane International Academy, only 2 percent of K-1 students arrived on track to be reading at grade level by the end of the school year, according to the Lexia adaptive reading program. Today, more than 60 percent are on track.
 - At Rainier Prep in Highline, students gained one year of progress in reading in just half a school year, according to the STAR Reading Test, the most widely used national reading assessment in K-12 schools.
 - Students at Summit Sierra in Seattle outperformed the national average in reading by 40 percent, and more than doubled the national average in math, according to the nationally recognized Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments.
 - Students at Summit Olympus in Tacoma more than doubled the national average growth in reading, and more than tripled the national average of growth in math, according to the MAP assessments.



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WASHINGTON PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL COMPARISON

Excel Public Charter School in Kent

- Currently serving grades 6 and 7; will eventually serve grades 6-12
- Enrollment: 126

Demographics	Excel %	District %
Free and reduced-price meals	50.0%	51.5%
Special education	16.7%	9.3%
English language learners	20.6%	18.5%
Students of color	69.9%	63.4%

Green Dot Destiny Middle School in Tacoma

- Currently serving grade 6; will eventually serve grades 6-8
- Enrollment: 165

Demographics	Destiny %	District %
Free and reduced-price meals	83.0%	63.5%
Special education	21.8%	12.5%
English language learners	1.0%	9.8%
Students of color	81.0%	57.6%

Rainier Prep in Highline

- Currently serving grades 5 and 6; will eventually serve grades 5-8
- Enrollment: 164

Demographics	Rainier %	District %
Free and reduced-price meals	75.0%	67.9%
Special education	9.2%	12.2%
English language learners	29.5%	24.8%
Students of color	93.2%	76.2%

SOAR Academy in Tacoma

- Currently serving grades K and 1; will eventually serve grades K-8
- Enrollment: 77

Demographics	SOAR %	District %
Free and reduced-price meals	75.0%	63.5%
Special education	10.4%	12.5%
English language learners	9.1%	9.8%
Students of color	67.9%	57.6%

Summit Sierra in Seattle

- Currently serving grade 9; will eventually serve grades 9-12
- Enrollment: 107

Demographics	Sierra %	District %
Free and reduced-price meals	56.0%	37.6%
Special education	10.3%	12.3%
English language learners	17.0%	12.8%
Students of color	77.6%	54.3%

Spokane International Academy

- Currently serving grades K, 1 and 6; will eventually serve grades K-8
- Enrollment: 156

Demographics	SIA %	District %
Free and reduced-price meals	53.0%	57.8%
Special education	5.9%	14.3%
English language learners	3.0%	5.2%
Students of color	26.2%	30.8%

First Place Scholars in Seattle

- Currently serving grades K-5
- Enrollment: 94

Demographics	First Place %	District %
Free and reduced-price meals	98.0%	37.6%
Special education	12.0%	12.3%
English language learners	25.0%	12.8%
Students of color	95.2%	54.3%

PRIDE Prep in Spokane

- Currently serving grades 6 and 7; will eventually serve grades 6-12
- Enrollment: 150

Demographics	PRIDE %	District %
Free and reduced-price meals	60.0%	57.8%
Special education	12.2%	14.3%
English language learners	1.0%	5.2%
Students of color	25.0%	30.8%

Summit Olympus in Tacoma

- Currently serving grade 9; will eventually serve grades 9-12
- Enrollment: 90

Demographics	Olympus %	District %
Free and reduced-price meals	73.0	63.5%
Special education	12.2%	12.5%
English language learners	5.0%	9.8%
Students of color	80.0%	57.6%



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WASHINGTON PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Are Washington public charter schools really public schools?

Yes. Public charter schools are indeed public schools and a part of public education in Washington. Like any other type of public school, Washington public charter schools are:

- **Open to all students**
- **Tuition-free**
- **Publicly funded**
- **Staffed by certified teachers**
- **Held accountable to state and national standards**

How do public charter schools choose their students?

Parents choose public charter schools for their children; no one is assigned to public charter schools automatically. Public charter schools are free and open to all students, and the schools are not allowed to hand-pick or discriminate against students for any reason. If a school does not have room, students are admitted by a random, public lottery.

How do the results at public charter schools compare to traditional public schools?

In just a few months, public charter schools are already making a difference for the students they serve, with early results showing remarkable progress in math and reading. Nationwide, between 2010 and 2013, fifteen of sixteen independent studies found that students attending public charter schools perform better academically than their peers at traditional public schools.

Are the positive results at public charter schools just a reflection of their students coming from privileged backgrounds?

No. The vast majority of students attending Washington public charter schools struggled in their previous schools, with many students entering public charter schools a year or more behind in math and reading. More than 70 percent of students in Washington's public charter schools are people of color, compared to 43 percent at public schools across the state. More than two-thirds of Washington's public charter school students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals, compared to 45 percent at public schools statewide.

Do public charter schools have an unfair advantage because they benefit from smaller class sizes?

Public charter schools in Washington typically have class sizes comparable to other types of public schools. Where class sizes are smaller, it is because a public charter school has chosen to allocate its resources differently.

How are public charter schools different than traditional public schools?

Public charter schools have more flexibility to innovate and customize learning to meet the needs of their diverse students. In exchange for more accountability, public charter schools have more flexibility around staffing, length of the school day and year, and curriculum than traditional public schools.

What kind of accountability and oversight do public charter schools have?

Many checks and balances ensure public charter schools provide a quality education. Public charter schools are accountable to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education, just like any public school. The boards that oversee public charter schools are subject to state and non-profit financial audits. Public charter schools also have to comply with the same state and federal laws regarding health, safety, civil rights, and nondiscrimination as every other public school. Public charter schools must meet the same academic standards as any public school; their teachers have to meet the same certification requirements as any public school teacher; and students have to pass the same standardized tests.

How are public charter schools authorized?

To authorize a public charter school, a non-profit organization applies to a local school district or to the Washington State Charter School Commission. The application is rigorous. Public charter schools are required to describe their curriculum in detail, confirm how facility and financial considerations will be handled, demonstrate parent and community support for the applying school, share plans for serving students with special needs, provide proposals for student recruitment and enrollment, including a targeted plan for recruiting students in underserved communities, and show evidence that their proposed educational program is based on proven methods. The process also includes an opportunity for the community to provide input during a public forum.

How is ongoing oversight of public charter schools assured?

After a public charter school's application is approved, the school enters into a contractual relationship with the state or district level authorizer. The contract requires extensive oversight of financial, academic and organizational performance. Public charter schools must seek reauthorization every five years.



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WASHINGTON PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How are public charter schools accountable to the local community?

Public charter schools have the ultimate form of local control and accountability: parents are empowered to choose the school that best meets their child's needs. Since enrollment is voluntary and an exercise of parental choice, public charter schools are directly accountable to parents and must ensure they are meeting parents' standards and expectations.

Do public charter school employees and teachers have collective bargaining rights?

Yes. Public charter school employees, including teachers, have a strong voice in their workplace. They have the right to organize and collectively bargain for pay, benefits, and working conditions.

Who is teaching at public charter schools and how much are they paid?

Public charter school teachers must be certified, just like teachers at traditional public schools. Reflecting the diversity of the students they serve, 39 percent of Washington's public charter school teachers are people of color, compared to 13 percent at public schools statewide. Washington's public charter schools provide good jobs for local educators. Pay and benefits for public charter school teachers are at or above compensation levels in local school districts.

Do public charter schools privatize or bring a profit motive to public education?

No. All Washington public charter schools are operated by non-religious, non-profit organizations.

How are Washington's public charter schools funded and how much funding do they receive?

Public charter schools are funded based on student enrollment, just like traditional public schools. They provide another public school option, but they do not change current law stating that funding follows the student.

Like other public schools, public charter schools depend on a mix of federal and state funding. Public charter schools are funded just like traditional public schools, through state funding programs that include Basic Education, Special Education, Learning Assistance Program, Transitional Bilingual, Highly Capable, and Student Transportation. Under federal law, public charter schools receive federal funding at rates similar to traditional public schools, through funding programs that include the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Title funding.

After the Washington State Supreme Court's ruling, public charter schools no longer have access to local levy funding, which is not available to public schools that do not fall under the definition of common schools. As a result, public charter schools now receive 20 percent less public funding, at \$8,845 per student, than traditional public schools, at \$11,075 per student.

How does Senate Bill 6194 change funding to keep public charter schools open?

Senate Bill 6194 honors the will of Washington voters by reinstating the 2012 voter-approved public charter school law, with an updated funding mechanism that would keep public charter schools open and address the uncertainty students face as a result of the Washington State Supreme Court's ruling.

Senate Bill 6194 directs public charter school funding to come from the state's Opportunity Pathways Account, which contains state lottery revenues that are not restricted to common schools. The change does not affect the amount of money taxpayers, or the state, pays for each student; it simply designates a different source of funds for the students in public charter schools.

The voter-approved initiative was ruled unconstitutional so how will Senate Bill 6194 be any different?

Senate Bill 6194 provides a constitutional solution by clarifying that public charter schools are not common schools and by establishing a new funding source that is completely separate from any type of funding that is constitutionally limited only to common schools.

The Washington State Supreme Court ruled that public charter schools cannot be considered common schools because they are not controlled directly by local school boards. As a result, public charter schools cannot receive funding that is restricted only to common schools. The state Supreme Court's ruling addressed how public charter schools can be constitutionally funded. The state Supreme Court did not rule that public charter schools must be common schools to constitutionally exist. In fact, the Washington State Constitution allows for public schools that do not fall under the definition of common schools.

How do charter schools fit into the need to adequately and fairly fund all schools, as required by the McCleary decision?

Public charter school students are impacted by McCleary like all public school students. In light of the state Supreme Court's ruling that public charter schools can no longer receive local levy funds, public charter schools have a real interest in finding a McCleary solution. Keeping public charter schools open and making a difference for students in diverse communities is a big step forward toward education equity in Washington State, but there is more work to do that includes meeting the state's obligations under the McCleary decision.



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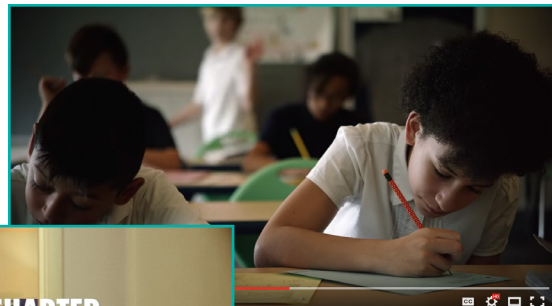
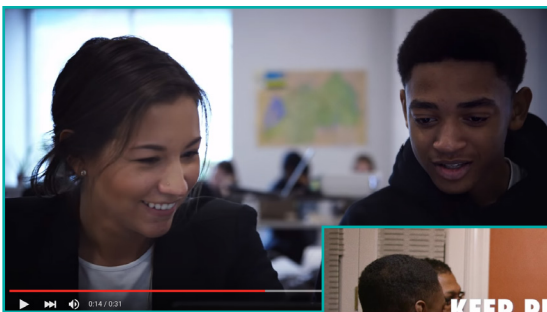
The groundbreaking student and parent led campaign to keep public charter schools open and serving diverse communities

Families from across the state are standing up for their local schools, calling on their elected representatives to act now to keep public charter schools open, so they can continue delivering results for communities that need more great public schools.

As legislative leaders get to work on a solution, students and parents will be ramping up their campaign. Here is a look at how Washington families are making their voices heard so far:

Television advertising

Television ads sharing the stories of two public charter school students, Jerald and Sydney, aired on broadcast networks and cable stations in the Seattle and Tacoma areas.



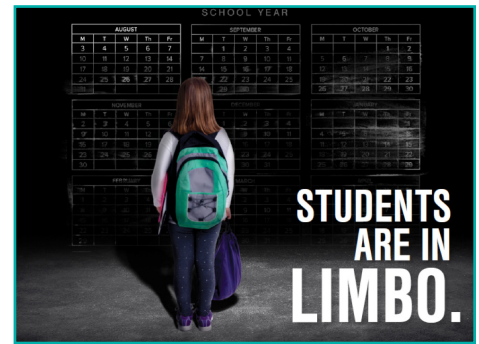


ACT NOW FOR WASHINGTON STUDENTS

The groundbreaking student and parent led campaign to keep public charter schools open and serving diverse communities

Direct mail

Nearly half a million voters, in targeted legislative districts, received direct mail advertisements calling for a solution to keep public charter schools open.



Connecting with supporters

The Act Now for Washington Students campaign is engaging and activating thousands of public charter school supporters online and through social media.

Building grassroots strength

Public charter school students and parents are calling, writing and meeting directly with their elected representatives in Olympia. Hundreds of students have visited their state capital, for rallies, civics lessons, and to participate in hearings.





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