



Charter Schools FAQs



Why do we have charter schools?

Charter school legislation is a result of federal and state initiatives and statutes. Alaska passed charter school legislation in 1995. The law was established in response to requests from parents and teachers for more educational choices for their students.

According to state law, up to 60 charter schools are allowed to operate in Alaska. Charter schools provide free, public school choice for students and their families. Charter schools allow parents, teachers and students to choose an alternative curriculum or program of study. Charter schools also offer a choice to parents who want a style or type of instruction that they believe best fits their child's needs.



How are charter schools started?

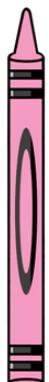
Charter schools are started by a founding group which submits a charter proposal to the local school board. If the charter application is approved, the proposal is sent to the State Board of Education where it must be approved before a charter school can begin. Charter schools must meet the same requirements for financial, instructional and curriculum accountability as any other public school.



Who is eligible to enroll in a charter school?

Parents/guardians may apply to enroll any student eligible for public school enrollment. A charter school must enroll all students who submit a timely application. According to Alaska state statute, if the number of student applications exceeds the capacity of the charter program, class, grade level or building, the charter school must first consider providing additional space and teachers.

If additional space is not available and it is not possible to accommodate all eligible students then students shall be accepted by random drawing or lottery and placed on a wait list in the order in which they applied to the charter school. All charter schools in our district follow the same lottery guidelines.



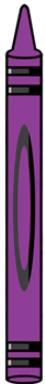


How are charter schools funded?

Charter schools are public schools. Charter schools receive the same state foundation funding for education as other public schools. Foundation funding is determined by a formula based on the number of actual students enrolled in the school.

Do charter schools charge tuition or admission fees?

All charter schools are free public schools. Charter schools do not charge tuition or admission fees. Charter schools offer free admission just like other public schools.



If a charter school is a free public school, what makes it different?

Charter schools operate like all other public schools with three exceptions.

- **Charter school curriculum** varies from the school district adopted curriculum. The charter school submits a “charter” requesting an alternative curriculum or teaching approach. The alternative curriculum must be approved by the local district school board and the state school board.
- **An Academic Policy Committee** of school parents and staff oversees the mission of the school, ensuring that the integrity of the charter is maintained.
- **The charter school administrator** is hired and fired by the Academic Policy Committee. The charter school administrator is responsible to the Academic Policy Committee but must ensure that the charter school adheres to local and state educational policy.



Who can teach in a charter school?

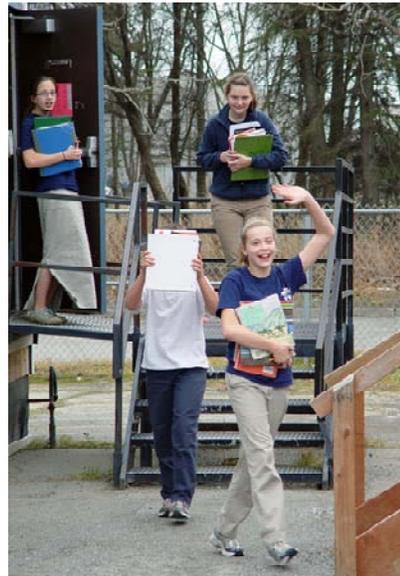
Charter school teachers must meet the same teaching certification criteria as any other public school teacher unless the charter school applies to the local school board and to the State to request a waiver from these requirements. No charter school in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District has requested a waiver. All teachers in KPBSD charter schools are



selected according to the same criteria as all other KPBSD teachers. Some charter schools require additional training or certification of their teachers in order to meet the educational mission of the school.

How are charter school teachers paid?

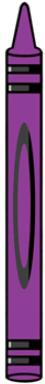
KPBSD charter school teachers are paid according to the same salary schedule as any other KPBSD teacher.





Do charter schools pay for public school services?

Each charter school has a contract with the local school board. These contracts are reviewed annually. Costs for bussing, food services, worker's compensation, special education services, nursing, library aides, custodial services, building utility fees, property and liability insurance, and state-required indirect cost fees are all deducted from the charter school budget by the district.



Are charter schools religious schools?

In addition to other requirements of state law, a charter school must be nonsectarian. Religious affiliation is not permitted.

Can charter schools restrict class size or enrollment?

According to Alaska State Statute, a charter school is required to establish a teacher-to-student ratio in the original charter application. This number may only be changed by negotiating the contract with the local school board.



Are charter schools exempt from school district policy?

All KPBSD charter schools operate under existing school board policy.

What other schooling choices do we have?

Alaskan families can choose to send their students to:

- Free local public schools that offer the district adopted curriculum choices
- Free local public charter schools that offer an alternative curriculum choice
- Free public school district optional and alternative high school programs
- Free public local school district home-schooling programs
- Free public out-of-district home-schooling programs
- Private school programs



For more information about the free public school options in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, and a link to the District's schools, visit the Web site, www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us, and click on the Schools tab.

