

Charter School vs. Public School – What's The Difference?

Choosing where to put your children in school is a major decision for many parents and can have a significant impact on the quality of education that your children receive. Two of the options that exist are charter schools and public schools, both of which are publicly funded options. This article will help you understand the key differences when deciding between charter schools vs. public schools.

Quality of Education

One key, and controversial, point when it comes to comparing charter schools to public schools is the quality of education provided. Charter schools have a great deal of flexibility in determining the curriculum that they teach, and in many schools, parents are able to contribute their opinions and preferences regarding the curriculum. Public schools are very limited in terms of flexibility around what they can teach, as they are required to stick to a state-mandated curriculum.

The impact of this has varying results, with some charter schools outperforming public schools and some performing worse. A key area where charter schools have consistently shown higher results in schools in disadvantaged communities or schools where the majority of students whose first language is not English. The ability to adapt the curriculum and methods of teaching to the specific needs of these students has shown significant benefits.

In addition to a flexible curriculum, charter schools can also set their own school years, which has resulted in most having a school year anywhere from three to ten weeks longer than public schools. This provides more teaching time and can also be a major

consideration for parents who struggle to find care for their children during long school breaks.

Funding

Public schools and charter schools are both publicly funded, in that their funds come from federal, state, and local governments. This is why the two are often compared and publicly debated, as public schools see money given to charter schools as coming out of their budgets. Charter schools are often non-unionized, creating another dynamic in terms of groups that oppose charter schools and their funding.

Charter schools often seek private funding as well, through donations or grants, and these supplemental funds can be a significant advantage to the school's ability to fund operations. While most charter schools are independent and not-for-profit, there are some private companies running charter schools now and finding ways to generate a profit and better education results.

Accountability

Charter schools are more accountable due to the fact that they are required to maintain test scores, and student retention, and actively manage their own finances. If a charter school underperforms it can be closed, something that public schools don't have to worry about. This means that teachers and administrators are far more engaged in ensuring students succeed, otherwise, they can lose their jobs.

Class Size

Class sizes for charter schools can vary greatly but generally, they will have smaller class sizes and provide students with more one on one time with teachers. Charter schools often limit their total

student population, requiring parents to apply for their children to attend the school. Public schools have to take everyone in their school district, resulting in some having significant class sized and overburdened teachers.

Overall Assessment□

When considering a charter school vs. a public school for your child you need to research the results of all of the schools you are considering. While charter schools generally outperform that is not always the case, additionally the curriculum taught by the school may or may not be what you'd like to see your child receiving in terms of education. Another important consideration is that the flexibility and rules governing charter schools vary from state to state, as they are created through state law. This can have a major impact on the quality of education that exists and the amount of flexibility the schools actually have.