

# WASHINGTON STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

## FACT SHEET

### OVERVIEW

In November 2012, voters approved Initiative 1240, making Washington the 42nd state to have public charter schools. This measure allows up to 40 public charter schools to be opened over a five-year period. Washington's charter school law was carefully designed to incorporate what other states have learned in 20 years of experience with operating public charter schools.

### ABOUT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are independently managed public schools that are operated by approved nonprofit organizations. They are free and open to all students. Charter schools receive funding based on student enrollment, just like any other district public school. In addition, public charter schools are subject to the same high academic standards as district schools and hold teachers to the same certification requirements.

Public charter schools, however, are free from many other regulations and have more flexibility to set curriculum and budgets, make staffing decisions, and offer more customized learning experiences for students. For example, teachers in public charter schools are able to customize curriculum for individual students, and charter schools are free to offer a longer school day and school year, or establish their own standards for student behavior.

In addition, Washington state public charter schools will be subject to annual performance reviews and be held accountable by strict performance frameworks that look at academic growth, retention and graduation rates, financial sustainability, and other factors.

New research suggests charter schools are particularly successful in serving disadvantaged students. In *The National Charter School Study 2013* published by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University, researchers found that students of color in charters are surpassing their peers in district public schools. In just one school year, African-American charter school students living in poverty gained the equivalent of 29 days of learning in reading and 36 days in math when compared to their peers in district public schools. Hispanic English-language learners saw even higher gains: 50 days of additional learning in reading and 43 days in math. These results are promising for Washington state.

### ABOUT WA CHARTERS

The Washington State Charter Schools Association (WA Charters) is a statewide nonprofit organization that supports the start-up of high-quality public charter schools, with a focus on serving academically and economically disadvantaged communities.



WA Charters focuses on three key areas of support:

- + **Community and family engagement:** WA Charters' goal is to build the capacity of new charter schools, local communities, and families to partner with each other to support student achievement. WA Charters provides free workshops, informational events, and community meetings. More information can be found on our website: [www.wacharters.org/for-families](http://www.wacharters.org/for-families).
- + **Leadership development:** Through fellowship programs, WA Charters recruits and supports leaders who want to grow high-performing public charter schools focused on students who have been historically underserved in Washington state. We also work with local school board members to share charter school authorizing best practices and support efforts to build strong partnerships between district schools and charter schools.
- + **Support and services:** Experts who have successfully opened high-quality public charter schools will support new charter school operators in areas like managing their financial information and finding and securing facilities. WA Charters members can access additional resources about running charter schools and will have opportunities to collaborate with one another as they work to open high-quality charter schools across the state.

### CHARTER SCHOOLS: FAST FACTS

- + Charter schools are public schools.
- + Charter schools are open to all students.
- + Charter schools are managed by nonprofit, non-religious organizations.
- + Charter schools will be held to high academic and accountability standards.
- + Charter schools allow for more flexibility.
- + Washington is the 42nd state to have public charter schools.

## GET INVOLVED

Here are a few ways you can become part of the effort to support charter schools in Washington state:

- + **Attend workshops about charter schools:** WA Charters hosts a series of workshops about creating high-quality public charter schools in Washington state. View upcoming opportunities at [www.wacharters.org/events](http://www.wacharters.org/events).
- + **Talk to your friends and neighbors:** Help spread the word by discussing and sharing accurate information about charter schools with friends and neighbors.
- + **Learn about successful charter schools in other states:** Washington state benefits from the experiences of 41 other states that have implemented charters. You can find out more information at [www.wacharters.org/research-studies](http://www.wacharters.org/research-studies).
- + **Communicate with local officials:** Contact your local decision-maker—including legislators, mayors, and school board members—and let them know public charter schools are an issue their constituents care about.

## LEARN MORE

 **Website:** [wacharters.org](http://wacharters.org)

 **Facebook:** [facebook.com/wacharters](https://facebook.com/wacharters)

 **Twitter:** [@wa\\_charters](https://twitter.com/wa_charters)

