

# The Benefits of *Charter* Schools

By Allison Mowatt



A new school year is around the corner, and students throughout the country are preparing to say good-bye to summer and hello to another academic adventure. At some point, as a parent you may contemplate alternative methods of schooling for your child rather than the typical public or private school. For instance, did you ever consider sending your child or teenager to a charter school?

Charter schools are primary or secondary schools that operate with freedom from many of the rules and regulations that apply to traditional public schools, which is one of the main advantages of a charter school. While charter schools provide an alternative to other public schools, they are still a part of the public education system and are not allowed to charge tuition.

They are usually organized by parents, teachers, community members, activists, or existing schools. State-authorized charters are often established by non-profit groups, universities and some government organizations.

The rules and structure of a charter school vary from state to state, but they are all expected to follow certain basic guidelines, which are set forth in each school's charter contract. The contract usually outlines the school's mission, program, goals, the number of students served, methods of assessment, and ways to measure success. In addition, charter schools are held accountable to the sponsor that supports them, whether it's the local school board, a state education agency, a university, or some other entity.

The schools receive public money, and funding is dictated by the state. In return, the schools are expected to produce positive academic results and fiscal practices, follow the charter contract, and report to the parents who are sending their children there and to the public that is funding the school. Charters are usually granted three to five years, but at the end of the term, the person or organization granting the charter can renew the contract.

Parents, teachers, and students find charter schools appealing because they increase opportunities for learning, set high academic standards, feature smaller classes, offer an alternative for parents and students within the public school system, encourage innovative teaching methods, and are accountable for producing positive results in student education.

Now that you are equipped with the knowledge and benefits of charter schools, you may find that this is the right approach for you and your child.

## Local Charter Schools

- 1 The Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School- PA** Cyber is the premier online K-12 educational provider for students and their families in combining the best technology, personal instruction, and approved curriculum with highly qualified teachers. PA Cyber is a public charter school with over 9,000 students. As a public school, PA Cyber provides services at no cost to students and families. For more information, visit [www.pacyber.org](http://www.pacyber.org).
- 2 The Fell Charter School-** Located at 777 Main Street in Simpson, this Lackawanna County charter school has about 251 students in grades K-11. For more information, call (570) 282-5199 or visit [www.fellcharter.org](http://www.fellcharter.org).
- 3 The Evergreen Community Charter School-** Located on Route 191 and 391 in Cresco, The Evergreen Community Charter School enrolls about 63 students in grades 6 through 12. For more information, call (570) 595-6355 or visit [www.evergreencommunityschool.org](http://www.evergreencommunityschool.org).
- 4 The Lehigh Valley Academy Regional Charter School-** Located at 1560 Valley Center Parkway in Bethlehem, this Northampton County school has about 627 students in grades K-11. For more information, call (610) 866-9660 or visit [www.lvacademy.org](http://www.lvacademy.org).
- 5 Bear Creek Community Charter School-** This community charter school is located at 2000 Bear Creek Boulevard in Wilkes-Barre. The school serves students in grades K-8. For more information, call (570) 820-4070 or visit [www.bearcreekschool.com](http://www.bearcreekschool.com).