

Special Education in NYC Charter Schools

2025
2026



Charter Schools Are Public Schools

The public education system in New York City is enormous; there are over one million students to educate! For this reason, the City has several kinds of public schools for families to choose from. Charter schools are one of these choices, along with traditional district schools. Charter schools are free and open to all New York City students. There are currently 286 charter schools in NYC, educating an estimated 150,500 students in all five boroughs.

What is Special Education?

Special education is defined as supports and programs designed to develop the educational potential of children with disabilities. Special education processes are guided by federal and state law and NYC policy. Charter schools aim to

ensure these needs are met by offering, among other things, smaller class sizes, co-teaching, more time for reading and math, and a longer school day and year.

Charter Schools Serve All Students

Charter schools welcome all students, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners. Charter schools do not select students based upon their academic background. Instead, students are admitted by random lottery after families fill out a simple application. Charter schools serve students in elementary through high school grades and are located in every borough of New York City.

Charter schools work with families and city representatives at every IEP meeting to ensure students with disabilities are receiving appropriate educational supports and progressing on their IEP goals.

Charters Help Students with IEPs Achieve

NYC charter school students with disabilities historically score proficient in Math and English Language Arts (ELA) at higher rates than citywide averages. For example, on the 2022-23 state assessments, charter students with disabilities were 40% proficient in math, as opposed to 24% proficiency in the district. Charter students are also more likely than their district peers to be declassified from special education and move into less restrictive settings.

Visit
[CharterNYC.org](https://www.CharterNYC.org)
to find charter
schools in
your community.



Educate Yourself: Visit and Ask!

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1. Describe your school's culture and educational philosophy.

2. How are students with disabilities included in your school?

3. What academic and/or behavioral supports are available specifically for students with disabilities?

4. What training do teachers have in working with students with IEPs?

How to Apply to NYC Charter Schools

There are three ways to apply to NYC charter schools. Applications are accepted between October 1 and April 1 for the following school year.

1.

Use the Common Online Charter School Application, which is available in ten languages, to apply to multiple schools at once! [Apply](#) to NYC charter schools now.



2.

Visit a school's website directly to download its application or to apply online.

[Find charter schools](#) in your community.



3.

Stop by a school in person to pick up an application or call a school and ask them to mail you an application.

Many charter schools host Open House events for families to learn more.

[View Calendar](#)



When there are more student applications than seats available, charter schools are required to hold lotteries to randomly select students for admission. Students whose names are not selected will be added to the school's waiting list and may be admitted as seats become available in the future.



The Collaborative for
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