

Starting Out: Four Things You Should Know About Charter Schools

2025
2026



Charter Schools are Public Schools

The public education system in New York City is enormous; there are 1.1 million students to educate! For this reason, the City has several kinds of public schools for parents 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. In the 2025-26 school year, there are 286 charter schools in NYC, educating an estimated 150,500 students in all five boroughs.

Charter Schools Have Freedom to Innovate

Charter schools are independent of the NYC Department of Education. Because they are independent, charter schools have greater flexibility in the way they operate. They can develop their own academic program, hire staff based on their own standards and set distinct educational goals. Many charter schools not only emphasize the core subjects of English and math, but they also offer programs in arts, science and languages. As each charter school is different, parents should learn more about what schools have to offer before applying.

Charter Schools Help Students Achieve

Charter schools are committed to ensuring their students succeed in college and career. New York City's charter school students typically pass the state academic tests at rates higher than district schools serving similar students. Charter schools also demonstrate quality in other ways, including higher attendance rates, and higher ratings on parent, teacher and student satisfaction surveys.

Charter Schools Welcome All Students

Charter schools welcome all students, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners. Students are not selected based upon their academic background, but instead, are admitted by random lottery after parents 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.

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

Before you Apply: Visit and Ask!

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1. What is your education model?

2. Can you please describe your school's culture?

3. Which academic and/or behavior supports are available?

4. What is your student to teacher ratio?

5. How can parents be involved at this school?

6. Does this school provide assistance with middle/high school placement?

Ready to Apply: Submit an Application to NYC Charter Schools

There are three ways to apply to NYC charter schools. The deadline for most schools is on or before April 1, but it can vary from school to school.



1. Use the Common Online Charter School Application to apply to multiple schools at once. Click here for details: <https://charternyc.org/apply-online/>

OR

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

OR

3. Stop by the school to pick up an application or call the school and ask staff to mail you an application.

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.