

# California Charter Schools Myths vs. Facts

## Myth 1: Charter Schools are Private Schools

**Fact:** Charter schools are public schools.

- They are tuition-free, open to all students, and funded through taxpayer dollars, just like traditional public schools.
- Charter schools must hire credentialed teachers, administer state standardized tests, teach California state standards curriculum, and their boards follow open meeting laws.

## Myth 2: Charter Schools Don't Serve Diverse Student Populations

**Fact:** Charter schools in California serve a highly diverse population, including many students from historically underserved communities. The distribution of charter school enrollment by ethnicity and student subgroup mirrored traditional public schools (DataQuest 23-24):

- Hispanic or Latino Students: 53.6%
- African American Students: 6.8%.
- Asian Students: 5.4%.
- English Learners: 13% of the state's English learner population.
- Foster Youth: 8.3%.
- Students with Disabilities: 11%.

## Myth 3: Charter Schools Aren't Held Accountable

**Fact:** Charter schools are subject to rigorous accountability measures and families choose to attend – or not.

- They must meet academic, financial, and operational standards outlined in their charter agreements, and submit an annual Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). Regular oversight is conducted by the local education agencies (e.g., school districts or the state) that authorize them.
- Failure to meet these standards can result in charter revocation or families leaving for other educational options.

## Myth 4: Charter Schools Only Benefit Affluent Families

**Fact:** Charter schools and traditional public schools serve similar percentages of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, with **32.4%** of charter school students and **31.3%** of traditional public school students identified in this category.

- **77%** of parents, including those from historically underserved communities, support public school alternatives like charters (EdChoice/Morning Consult, February 2023).

## Myth 5: Charter Schools Drain Resources from Traditional Public Schools

**Fact:** Public funding follows the student, just like with traditional public schools. Charter schools are funded based on their enrollment and attendance, using the same formulas as school districts. They receive less funding per student than traditional public schools serving similar student demographics.

- *Example:* Charter schools do not have access to home-to-school transportation funding and have limited access to facilities funding.

## Myth 6: Parents are Less Satisfied with Charter Schools

**Fact:** Parents report higher satisfaction with charter schools compared to traditional public schools. Cited reasons include safer learning environments and better academic outcomes.

## Myth 7: Charter Schools Can Select Their Students

**Fact:** Charter schools are open to all students.

- If applications exceed capacity, they must conduct a public lottery to determine enrollment.
- They cannot discriminate based on race, income, academic ability, or other factors.

## Myth 8: Charter Schools Force Student and Teacher Participation.

**Fact:** Charter schools are schools of choice. Because all stakeholders opt in, charter schools are highly responsive to the needs of their students and teachers. They must continuously deliver quality education and supportive work environments to retain both groups, fostering a culture of innovation and accountability.

- *Students:* Families choose charter schools because they offer specialized programs, innovative teaching methods, or learning environments that best meet their children's needs.
- *Teachers:* Educators choose to work at charters because of their unique missions, flexibility in curriculum, and the opportunity to innovate in the classroom.