

So how did you do? Charter schools are without question an exciting evolution in the battle to provide our kids with the tools needed to lead productive lives in a global environment. Ultimately, a diverse menu of educational options benefits our students, which is what education is all about.

Charter School Fiction

Unfortunately, myths about the true nature of charter schools persist despite the fact that charters have been a part of Colorado's educational landscape for over 10 years.

Pop quiz: Are charter schools publicly funded? Do charter schools enroll mostly white rich students? Do charter schools hand pick their students? Do Charter schools offer special education services? Are charter schools religiously oriented schools? Do charter schools take money away from public schools?

Let's see how you did. First, Charter schools are indeed publicly funded schools. They are public schools that operate outside the traditional system. Specifically, charters offer unique educational options for students and families in terms of curricular program, instructional approach and/or academic focus. All public schools are funded through tax dollars and in the case of charters, that money follows the student.

Charter schools enroll anyone who wishes to exercise their statutory right to enroll in a public school of choice. Here at Carbon Valley Academy (a charter school located in Southwest Weld County) our student body is made up of Hispanic, African, Indian, Native American and Caucasian students. We have students from all socioeconomic levels as well. The distinction is not in color of skin or family income level, but in choice of academic program. Charter schools do not handpick their students; actually families handpick charter schools.

Contrary to many rumors, charter schools in fact do offer special education services. Again, referring to Carbon Valley Academy we have a working contractual relationship with our chartering district, St. Vrain, to cooperatively provide all special education services to our students. We support speech language therapy, Occupational/Physical therapy etc... per each students individual education plan. What about students who need testing to determine if they need services? Charters offer the same diagnostic testing services employed in neighborhood public schools. No student is left without service or support simply because they enroll in a charter school.

Charter schools are not religious schools. They are free public schools of choice and are non-sectarian, non-religious institutions. They do not employ religiously based curricular programs nor do they violate state or federal anti-discrimination provisions. Further, there are no admissions requirements such as an entrance exam. Charter schools use a lottery system which ensures applicants an equal opportunity for admission.

Do charter schools take money away from public schools? The answer depends on who you believe is the benefactor of the \$6,000 allocated per student per year for public education. Some believe it is intended to support the organization known as the local neighborhood public school. However, from the perspective of the Colorado Constitution, it's the student. Unfortunately, opponents of charter schools intentionally use tactical mischaracterizations such as 'take money away' so as to conjure images of robbery or thievery.

Consider a family who chooses to fly on Frontier Airlines instead of United for a spring break vacation. They make their choice based on a host of unique personal needs including price, flight times and convenience. By choosing Frontier, they are no more robbing or 'taking money away' from United Airlines than a family who chooses a charter school instead of a local neighborhood public school. They are simply exercising their right to find the best option for their particular needs.