



Pennsylvania's Public Cyber Charter Schools

MYTH vs FACT

Pennsylvania's 14 Public Cyber Charter Schools are the choice for parents and families throughout the Commonwealth. During the 2021-2022 school year, more than 56,700 students attended a public cyber charter school to help achieve their academic goals.¹

MYTH	Public school money is being poured into Public Cyber Charter Schools
FACTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School Districts (SDs) determine how much it costs to educate regular and special education students within their respective region. ● On average, school districts reimburse cyber charter schools just 66.5% of what the SD has determined it costs to educate a child. SDs keep the remaining 33.5% within their brick-and-mortar buildings. 82 SDs keep over 40% from charter schools.² ● School districts are also placing funds in special accounts to avoid paying full reimbursements to public charter schools.³ ● "Rising costs" are a direct result of increased student enrollment as parents choose cyber charter schools instead of the traditional school district options.

MYTH	Public Cyber Charter Schools lack oversight
FACTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Pennsylvania Department of Education has direct oversight of all 14 public cyber charter schools. ● All 14 public cyber charter schools are required to submit more reports than traditional public schools. These reports go to the PA Department of Education (PDE), the Federal Department of Education, the PA Health Department and other agencies; over 300 annually! ● Certified Independent Public Accounting Firms review and report on all cyber charter school financial information annually. Each public charter school's budgets are reported on the PDE website. ● Cyber charter schools host public board of trustee meetings and publish both the agendas and minutes online. ● Cyber charter schools must submit annual charter reports demonstrating results consistent with their operating charters. ● Cyber charter schools are required to renew their operating charters every 3-5 years. Their operating charters can be revoked by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. ● Cyber charter schools are ultimately accountable to the parents and students who continue to choose them to help their students achieve their goals.

SOURCES

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education. Enrollment Reports and Projections. Public School Enrollments 2021-2022.
<https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/Enrollment/Pages/PublicSchEnrReports.aspx>
2. Charter School Funding. Pennsylvania Department of Education.
<https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Charter%20Schools/Pages/Charter-School-Funding.aspx>
3. Ray, S. P. (2019, April 16). School board reviews early budget.
http://www.titusvilleherald.com/news/article_4b937e60-6001-11e9-a8f5-ff24fd1d6e80.html



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MYTH vs FACT

MYTH

Public Cyber Charter Schools have questionable academic performance

FACTS

- Cyber charter school students are required to take the same state mandated tests as all public school students.
- Students do not leave schools where they are successful. Many of Pennsylvania's public school students enroll in cyber charter schools with academic deficits; often 2 or more years behind their classmates.
- Many public school students enroll in cyber charter schools after the school year has begun and after their individual needs were not met in their former schools.
- Pennsylvania's new Future Ready Index takes into account a student's previous academic performance and includes a student's year over year growth, an indication of a student's success within a particular school.
- Students who remain in a cyber charter school for 3 or more years show consistent academic growth that surpasses that of their peers in traditional brick-and-mortar school districts.

MYTH

Public Cyber Charter Schools "over identify" special education students

FACTS

- Public Cyber Charter Schools are required to comply with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The "Child Find" portion of IDEA that identifies Special Education Students is specific and required by all schools.
- Child Find requires all public, cyber charter schools to locate, identify, evaluate, and support any student who may need special education supports to meet their individual academic goals.
- Cyber charter schools are required to ensure that all students identified as needing special education services are provided with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) which supports their individual needs and ensures they are able to meet their individual goals.

MYTH

School Districts increase property taxes to offset the high cost of Public Cyber Charter Schools

FACTS

- School Districts are able to increase property taxes based on their approved annual budgets. Cyber Charter Schools have no taxing authority.
- In the 2019-20 school year, Pennsylvania's 500 school districts grew their reserve fund balances by \$249 million to a total of \$4.8 billion.¹
- On average, during the 2019-20 school year, school districts spent less than 2.5% of their annual budget on tuition reimbursements to cyber charter schools for educating public school students compared to over 6.6% SDs spent on debt.²
- During the 2019-20 school year, 411 of Pennsylvania's 500 School Districts had General Fund Balances exceeding 20% of Total Spending.³

SOURCES

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education. Detailed Annual Financial Reports. General Fund Balance 2010-11 to 2019-20. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/School%20Finances/Finances/AFR%20Data%20Summary/Pages/AFR-Data-Detailed-.aspx>
2. Pennsylvania Department of Education. Tuition Schedule: 2010-11 to 2019-20. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/School%20Finances/Finances/AFR%20Data%20Summary/Pages/AFR-Data-Detailed-.aspx>
3. Pennsylvania Department of Education. General Fund Balance 2010-11 to 2019-20. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/School%20Finances/Finances/AFR%20Data%20Summary/Pages/AFR-Data-Detailed-.aspx>

PCCSA
Public Cyber Charter School Association