

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Contact the Wyoming Association of Public Charter Schools (WAPCS) today to stay informed about upcoming events and opportunities to help bring a better charter school law to our state.

Talk with friends and neighbors who might have similar concerns about their children's education and share this brochure with at least FIVE of them.
(Contact WAPCS if you need more and we'll be happy to send additional brochures to you.)

Consider **hosting a meeting** or a coffee to introduce other members of your community to charter schools. Don't forget to invite the press!
(WAPCS can help you plan your event.)

Your state and local policymakers need to hear from you. Send them a letter to let them know you support charter schools and improving Wyoming's law to allow other entities to authorize charters. Not sure who your elected officials are? We can help! You can also visit the Wyoming State Legislature at www.legisweb.state.wy.us or call legislative services at (307) 777-7881.

Other resources

The Center for Education Reform (CER) is our partner in bringing better educational options to the Equality State. Visit their website at www.edreform.com or call (800) 521-2118 today to learn more about charter schools and education reform in America.



Contact 307-214-8126
www.wyomingcharters.org

The **Wyoming Association of Public Charter Schools (WAPCS)** is a statewide non-profit organization committed to advancing the charter school movement in Wyoming. Our purpose is to increase the number of high-performing, independent, public charter schools available to meet the educational choice needs of Wyoming's families.

CREATING GREAT SCHOOLS

Giving Parents a Voice and Children a Choice



While most states once offered only the traditional models of education, today states offer a wide variety of options that allow families to choose schools other than those to which they are assigned by school district zones.

Almost every state has enacted a "school choice" program which gives parents the power and opportunity to choose the school their child will attend. Some grant parents more freedoms than others.

In Wyoming, there is much more to be done.

The most successful and commonly adopted form of school choice is public charter schools.

WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?

Charter schools are innovative public schools designed by educators, parents or civic leaders -- opened and attended by choice, free from most rules and regulations governing conventional public schools, and accountable for results.

Today, over 4,200 charter schools serve more than 1.2 million children in forty states and the District of Columbia.

WHY CHOOSE CHARTER SCHOOLS?

Educational quality: The primary reason for charter schools is to make sure every child has access to a quality education. With the freedom and choice to do so, charters set higher standards and must meet them in order to stay open, unlike most other public schools which can remain open no matter how poorly they perform.

Focus on the kids: Perhaps most importantly, a charter school is set up around the needs of children, not around the needs of adults. The focus should always be on programs designed to help children succeed, no matter what it takes.

Safer, stronger communities: Charter schools typically engage local businesses and other organizations to help provide resources and services to the school and its families, creating a community hub. Whether turning an inner-city ghetto into a bustling and safer neighborhood, or bringing families in rural America together, charters have a proven effect on the strength and safety of a community.

DO CHARTER SCHOOLS COST TAXPAYERS MORE MONEY?

NO. Charter schools are public schools. Like district public schools, they are funded according to enrollment and receive funding from the district and the state according to the number of students attending. Simply stated, the money follows the student.

WYOMING'S CHARTER LAW CAN DO BETTER

Currently there are only three charter schools operating in Wyoming. Another recently applied to the Cheyenne School Board and was turned down. Local school boards are often unable or unwilling to have fair and impartial processes to vet charter schools, and many that do approve charter schools create friction between schooling entities. An independent authorizer is needed to ensure charter school quality and growth.

**RANKING: 8TH WEAKEST IN U.S.
GRADE: D**

WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER?

An authorizer is the entity or body approved by the legislature to bring charter schools into existence. Authorizers set up processes and approve charter schools and are accountable for managing and monitoring their progress in compliance with all applicable laws.

Independent or multiple authorizer is the term given to entities other than local school boards that have authority under state law to approve charter schools. They are typically bodies outside of the regular education structure of a state (new public boards, universities, municipalities, etc.).

STRONG LAWS MATTER FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

States that have multiple authorizers are not only more likely to foster growth, but more likely to foster quality growth. Eighty percent of the nation's 4,200 charter schools are in states with multiple authorizers or a strong binding appeals process. States with multiple authorizers have almost four times more charter schools than states requiring a form of local school board approval.

Seventeen states have multiple or independent chartering authorities, including the neighboring states of Colorado, Idaho, and Arizona. Charter school students are outperforming their peers in conventional public schools. For example:

Seventy-four percent of Colorado's charter school students in grades 3-8 scored at or above state standards in reading and 64 percent were at or above state standards in math.

In grades 3-10, 87 percent of Idaho's charter school students were rated proficient in reading and 81 percent of charter students achieved that level in math. Those marks topped those of conventional public school students.

OUR STUDENTS CAN DO MORE

Today, Wyoming has over 84,000 students in conventional public schools and only 37 percent of our 4th grade and 33 percent of our 8th grade students meet or exceed standards in reading according to

the Nation's Report Card. Achievement drops the longer our kids are in conventional public schools from 45 percent proficiency in 4th grade math to only 36 percent of our 8th graders meeting or exceeding proficiency.

Wyoming Chooses Charter Schools

The evidence is clear: **Wyoming residents see room for improvement in our public schools.** More than 4 in 10 respondents to a recent statewide survey gave their schools a 'B' grade and another 30 percent gave their schools a grade of 'C' or lower.

Wyoming parents believe charter schools can be better and, at the very least, can expand the number of options that our students have to obtain a quality education.

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents to this survey feel that parents should be allowed to choose from a number of public schools rather than assigning our children to one public school based solely on where they live.

This concept of school choice enjoys a tri-partisan majority: Democrats (71 percent), Republicans (62 percent) and Independents (71 percent).

Wyoming supports allowing communities to create public charter schools by a 76 percent majority.

Fifty-nine percent feel that more than one group (beyond local school boards) should have the authority to create charter schools.

Seventy-eight percent of Wyoming residents said they would be very or somewhat likely to move their child out of a school if the child felt unsafe.