

How public charter schools are funded

All state public charter schools in Connecticut receive funding through both state and federal sources, but most rely primarily on state funding. State funding for charter schools is an **entirely separate funding stream than what local school districts receive**. The General Assembly allocates this separate funding specifically for these schools to target areas of high educational need with their innovative learning approaches.

How public charter schools coexist with district schools

Because public charter schools can only open in Alliance Districts, state and local funding to the host district schools is protected from any reductions by law:

- **LOCAL:** Connecticut law prohibits the municipality from reducing its local contribution to district funding (referred to as the Minimum Budget Requirement) and as such, whether a charter school opens or not, that **local contribution to the district schools cannot go down**.
- **STATE:** The state of Connecticut provides funding to traditional public schools through the Education Cost-Sharing (ECS) formula. The state cannot reduce funding for an alliance district and as such, the state **ECS contribution to the district schools cannot go down** when a state charter school opens regardless of the number of students who leave the district to attend the charter school.

If a public charter school opens in communities and some students leave the district schools, the protected state and local funding levels mean that per-pupil funding at the district schools often increases.

Services that state law requires districts cover for all resident students, regardless of school type

- **State law requires public school districts to cover special education costs for *all its resident students*:** That includes students attending public charter schools, magnet schools, parochial schools, and others. The host district, or “sending district” where the student resides, is responsible for planning for each student and reimbursing associated costs. However, local school districts are eligible for state reimbursement for special education costs covered under the state Excess Cost grant.
- **State law also requires a student’s resident district to provide transportation to a public charter school:** The Districts are not, however, required to provide transportation for students attending charter schools located outside of their district. This is also consistent with the policy applied to magnet and parochial schools.

Important Facts

- Charter schools are **public** schools. They are **tuition-free** for all students and **open equally to all** students.
- CT’s public charter schools **increase access** to quality public education in the [lowest-performing districts](#).
- Charter students **regularly outperform** testing averages of students in their host district’s public schools.
 - **100%** of charters that took part in 2023-24 SBAC testing outperformed their host district in ELA
 - **95%** outperformed their host district in Math. Read more on [recent SBAC scores here](#).
- Charter schools are held **accountable** by the State Board of Education through annual reporting, meeting, data submissions, and site visits in the ongoing renewal process.
- Despite serving the state’s most vulnerable students, charters remain the **most underfunded public schools**.
- Charters are the only CT public schools with **no access to consistent facilities funding**. CSDE created a facilities grant program designed for charter schools, but an RFP hasn't been issued since 2018.
- Just 2% of CT’s public school students are enrolled in public charter schools, far behind the nationwide average of 7% and the average of roughly 7-8% in surrounding states (NY, MA, RI).