



Florida Charter Law (1996, last amended 2006)

The following information was posted by the Center for Education Reform (www.edrefrom.com/templates/dsp_cLaw.cfm?stateID=21&altCol=2).

10th strongest of the nation's 41 charter laws

General Statistics	
Update	Updated law analysis coming to this page soon. Click here for complete 2009 Charter Law Ranking & Scorecard
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited
Number of Charters Operating	382
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards; district school board may sponsor a charter school in the county over which the board has jurisdiction; Florida Schools of Excellence Commission has been established to authorize schools in districts that have not been granted exclusive authority over charters and may also approve cities and universities as co-sponsors of charters.
Eligible Applicants	Any individual or group, a municipality or a legal entity; private, parochial or home education programs not eligible for charter status.
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts, virtual
Appeals Process	Applications denied by the local school board and the Schools of Excellence Commission may be appealed to the charter school appeal commission of the state board of education and their decision is binding.
Schools May Be Started Without Third Party Consent	No; 50% of teachers and 50% of parents must support for conversions.
Recipient of Charter	Charter school governing body
Term of Initial Charter	4 or 5 years with renewal after 5 years. Nonprofits are eligible for up to a 15 year charter, and charters operating for 3 years that have demonstrated success can renew for a 15 year term to facilitate financing.
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Limited. Specific statutes apply to charters (including class size) but charter schools are exempt from local school board policies
Legal Autonomy	Yes, but autonomy may depend on the district.
Governance	Specified in charter, including charter school's status as public or private employer, or governing body appointed by the municipality governing body.
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations, but the schools may be managed by them.

Transportation for Students	Encouraged but not required. Provided by charter school for students within a reasonable distance of school; transportation must not be a barrier to equal access.
Facilities Assistance	Available district facilities or property may be made available to charter schools. A charter school capital outlay trust fund was established. A maximum of 5% of the school buildings currently in use for instructional purposes in a district may be converted to charter schools. This limitation does not apply to vacant buildings or buildings not used for instructional purposes. Land developers may be given the option to provide new charter school facilities as an alternative to paying students stationed impact fees to local school boards.
Reporting Requirements	Same as all other public schools.
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue fees for administrative services may not exceed 5% of total funding. Estimated portion is about \$6,552
Path	Funds pass through districts to school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	Federal and state funds available
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers may remain covered by district bargaining agreement, negotiate as a separate unit with the governing body, or work independently.
Certification	Required, with waivers in specific but narrow circumstances.
Leave of Absence from District	Contingent upon approval of the local school board.
Retirement Benefits	Teachers on approved leaves of absence must participate in state's retirement system.
Students	
Eligible Students	Students in district (inter-district transfer agreements may be honored for charter schools as well as for regular public schools).
Preference for Enrollment	Students enrolled prior, siblings, and the children of employees. Charter schools may give preference for enrollment to at-risk students. Also, racial/ethnic balance of charter school may not differ from district or community.
Enrollment Requirements	A charter school can limit enrollment to students at-risk of dropping out or academic failure and to students within certain boundaries.
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery/random process
At-Risk Provisions	Charter schools may give preference for enrollment to at-risk students
Accountability	Students in charter schools shall, at a minimum, participate in the statewide assessment program; and, as appropriate, the Florida Writes Assessment Test, the High School Competency Test, and other assessments administered. In secondary charter schools, a method for determining that a student has satisfied the requirements for graduation must be provided
Other Features	
Limit on Multiple Charters	Businesses are encouraged to form business partnership schools or satellite learning centers through charter school status
Impact Aid	Districts allowed to retain 5% administrative fee on the first 500 students.