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Charter Schools

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Charter Schools

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Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools that are governed under the terms of a contract between the board of the school and the entity that authorized the school. Charter schools are generally exempt from most laws governing traditional public schools, allowing them a greater degree of autonomy in their operations and curriculum. The authorizing entity oversees the school's compliance with the contract, including provisions related to accountability for school and student performance.

This paper provides a description of charter school law and charter school funding in Wisconsin as it applies to charter schools authorized by local school boards, including virtual charter schools, and by independent charter school authorizers. The appendix to this paper lists the charter schools that operated in the state in the 2023-24 school year.

Charter School Law

Establishment of School District Charters.

School districts were first allowed to establish charter schools under the 1993-95 biennial budget act (1993 Act 16). An unlimited number of charter schools may be established by school districts in the state. There are two methods under which local school boards may authorize charter schools.

First, a school board may, on its own initiative, contract to operate a school as a charter school. Under this process, a board may convert all of the district's schools to charter schools as long as the board provides alternative public school attendance arrangements for pupils who do not wish to attend or are not admitted to a charter school. At least 30 days before entering into a contract that would

convert a private school to a charter school or that would establish a charter school that is not an instrumentality of the school district, the board must hold a public hearing on the contract. At the hearing, the board must consider employee and parental support for the charter school and the fiscal impact of the charter school on the district.

Second, a school board may authorize the establishment of a charter school upon receipt and approval of a written petition requesting the board to do so. The petition must be signed by at least 10% of the teachers employed by the district or by at least 50% of the teachers employed at one school in the district.

The petition must include the following 15 provisions:

1. The name of the person who is seeking to establish the charter school.
2. The name of the person who will be in charge of the charter school and the manner in which administrative services will be provided.
3. A description of the educational program of the school.
4. The methods the school will use to enable pupils to attain the state's statutory educational goals and expectations related to academic skills and knowledge, vocational skills, citizenship, and personal development.
5. The method by which pupil progress in attaining the state's educational goals and expectations will be measured.
6. The governance structure of the school, including the method to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement.

7. The qualifications that must be met by the individuals to be employed in the school.

8. The procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and safety of the pupils.

9. The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the school district population.

10. The requirements for admission to the school.

11. The manner in which annual audits of the financial and programmatic operations of the school will be performed.

12. The procedures for disciplining pupils.

13. The public school alternatives for pupils who reside in the school district and do not wish to attend or are not admitted to the charter school.

14. A description of the school facilities and the types and limits of the liability insurance that the school will carry.

15. The effect of the establishment of the charter school on the liability of the school district.

The board must hold a public hearing within 30 days of receiving the petition. At the hearing, the board must consider the level of employee and parental support for the school and the fiscal impact of the charter school on the district. After the hearing, the board may grant the petition.

A school board may grant a petition to convert all of the district's schools to charter schools if the petition is signed by at least 50% of the district's teachers and the school board provides alternative public school attendance arrangements for pupils who do not wish to attend or are not admitted to a charter school.

The Board of Directors of the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is required to grant or deny a charter

school petition within 30 days after a public hearing. If the MPS Board denies the petition, the person seeking to establish the charter school may, within 30 days after the denial, appeal the decision to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The Department must issue a decision within 30 days after receiving the appeal. This decision is final and not subject to judicial review.

Establishment of Independent Charter Schools. Statutes also allow certain entities to contract to operate a charter school. Table 1 shows the entities that are allowed to authorize independent charter schools and the budget act in which the entity was granted that authority. As described in a subsequent section, the method by which a particular independent charter school is funded depends in part on the authorizing entity.

Under 2015 Act 55, independent charter school authorizers are required to contract to operate a charter school, rather than operating the school directly. A prior law authorizer that was operating a school itself prior to the effective date of the act (July 14, 2015) is permitted to continue to do so.

During the history of the independent charter school program, restrictions have been placed on

Table 1: Independent Charter School Authorizers

1997-99 Budget Act

Common Council of the City of Milwaukee
Chancellor of UW-Milwaukee
Milwaukee Area Technical College District Board

2001-03 Budget Act

Chancellor of UW-Parkside

2015-17 Budget Act

Director of the Office of Educational Opportunity in the
UW System
College of Menominee Nation
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College
Waukesha County Executive
Gateway Technical College District Board

2017-19 Budget Act

All remaining UW Chancellors
All remaining Technical College District Boards

various authorizers with respect to such things as the geographic area in which they could contract to operate charters, the geographic area in which pupils had to reside to attend the charters, the number of schools they could charter, the grade levels the schools could operate, and the curriculum offered by the charter. Currently, with the following two exceptions, there are no limitations on independent charter authorizers with respect to school location, pupil residency, number of charter schools, grade levels, or curriculum:

- the two tribal colleges can authorize up to a total of six charter schools between them.
- the Waukesha County Executive can authorize charter schools located in Waukesha County.

Under 2017 Act 30, the Director of the Office of Educational Opportunity (OEO) also has the authority to enter into a contract to establish one recovery charter school in which therapeutic programming and support for pupils in recovery from substance use disorder or dependency could be provided. Under Act 30, the recovery charter school can operate only high school grades, and enrollment would be limited to no more than 15 pupils. The term of the contract for the school would be limited to four consecutive school years. No such school operated in the 2021-22 school year.

In the 2023-24 school year, 35 schools operated under the chartering authority of an independent authorizer: (a) 14 by UW-Milwaukee; (b) 11 by the Director of the OEO; (c) seven by the City of Milwaukee; and (d) one each by UW-Parkside, the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College, and the Waukesha County Executive. These schools are listed in the appendix to this paper.

Authorizing Entity Duties. A school board or an independent charter school authorizer is required to:

1. Solicit and evaluate charter school applications.
2. Consider the principles and standards for quality charter schools established by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers when contracting for the establishment of a charter school.
3. Give preference in awarding contracts for the operation of charter schools to those charter schools that serve children at risk.
4. Approve only high-quality charter school applications that meet identified educational needs and promote a diversity of educational choices.
5. Notify DPI of its intention to create a charter school. The notice must include a description of the proposed school. An independent charter authorizer is required to do so by February 1 of the previous school year. The Department does not have the authority to approve or deny charter school notifications.
6. Monitor the performance and compliance with state charter school law of each charter school with which it contracts, in accordance with the terms of each charter school contract.
7. Submit an annual report to the State Superintendent and Legislature that includes the following information:
 - a. An identification of each charter school operating under contract with the authorizer, each charter school that operated under contract with the authorizer but had its contract nonrenewed or revoked or that closed, and each charter school under contract with the authorizer that has not yet begun to operate.
 - b. The academic and financial performance of each charter school operated under contract with the authorizer.

c. The operating costs that the school board or independent charter school authorizer incurred under its required duties, detailed in an audited financial statement prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

d. The services that the school board or independent charter school authorizer has provided to the charter schools under contract with it and an itemized accounting of the costs of the services.

Charter School Contract. If a charter school is established through the petition process, the school board is required to contract with the person named in the petition to operate the school. The contract must include all of the provisions specified in the petition and may include other provisions agreed upon by the parties. If a charter school is established on the initiative of the school board, the contract must include the 15 provisions required to be a petition for a charter and may include other provisions agreed upon by the parties.

A school board generally may not enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located outside the district. If two or more school boards enter into a contractual agreement to establish a charter school, the school must be located in one of the establishing districts. (In the 2023-24 school year, ten charter schools were operated under a contract between multiple districts. These consortia are noted in the list of charter schools in the appendix to this paper.) If one or more school boards enter into an agreement with the board of control of a cooperative educational service agency (CESA) to establish a charter school, the school must be located within the boundaries of the CESA. If a school board enters into an agreement with a federally-recognized American Indian tribe or band in the state to establish a charter school, the school must be located within the district or within the boundaries of the tribe's or band's reservation.

A school board may not enter into a contract that would result in the conversion of a private sectarian school to a charter school.

A charter school contract may be for any term not exceeding five school years and can be renewed for one or more terms not exceeding five school years. The contract must specify the amount to be paid to the charter school during each year of the contract.

A contract with a school board or independent charter school authorizer may provide for the establishment of more than one charter school, and a charter school governing board may enter into more than one contract with a school board or an independent charter school authorizer.

A charter for an independent charter school is required to include all of the items for a petition to establish a charter school by a school board, except: (a) the name of the person who would operate the charter school; (b) the name of the person who would be in charge of the charter school and the manner in which administrative services would be provided; and (c) the effect of the establishment of the charter school on the liability of the school district. A contract to operate an independent charter school is required to include all of the items required for a petition to establish a charter school by a school board with one exception. Instead of including a description of the effect of the establishment of the charter school on the liability of the school district, the contract must specify the effect of the establishment of the charter school on the liability of the authorizing entity. A contract may include other provisions agreed to by the parties.

A charter or contract for an independent charter school may include grounds for expelling a pupil from the school. If the charter or contract includes those grounds, it must include the procedures to be followed by the school prior to expelling a pupil.

The contracts between the governing boards of independent charter schools and their authorizers are also required to include the following, with one exception for one authorizer noted below:

1. A requirement that a charter school governing board adhere to specified annual academic and operational performance standards developed in accordance with the performance framework of the entity with which it is contracting.

2. Provisions detailing the corrective measures the charter school governing board will take if the charter school fails to meet performance standards.

3. A provision allowing the governing board to open one or more additional charter schools if all of the charter schools operated by the governing board were assigned one of the top two performance categories in the most recent school accountability report published by DPI and, if the charter school governing board opens one or more additional charter schools, the existing contract applies to the new school or schools unless the parties agree to amend the existing contract or enter into a new contract. (This provision does not apply to charter schools authorized by the Director of the OEO.)

4. The methodology that will be used by the charter school governing board to monitor and verify pupil enrollment, credit accrual, and course completion.

5. A requirement that the authorizing entity have direct access to pupil data.

6. A description of the administrative relationship between the parties to the contract.

7. A requirement that the charter school governing board hold parent-teacher conferences at least annually.

8. A requirement that if more than one charter school is operated under the contract, the charter school governing board report to the authorizing entity on each charter school separately.

9. A requirement that the charter school governing board provide the data needed by the authorizing entity for purposes of making the required annual report to the State Superintendent and Legislature.

10. A requirement that the charter school governing board participate in any training provided by the authorizing entity.

11. A description of all fees the authorizing entity will charge the charter school governing board.

12. A requirement that the charter school's curriculum include instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides, so far as applicable to other public schools, if the contract is for the operation of a school that includes a grade from 5 to 12.

A school board or independent charter school authorizer may enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school that enrolls only one sex or that provides one or more courses that enroll only one sex if the school board or independent charter school authorizer makes comparable schools or courses available to the opposite sex under the same policies and criteria of admission.

A contract with a school board or independent charter school authorizer must specify that if the capacity of the charter school is insufficient to accept all pupils who apply, the charter school would have to accept pupils at random. A charter school is required to give preference in enrollment to pupils who were enrolled in the charter school in the previous school year, and to siblings of pupils who are enrolled in the charter school. Charter schools are allowed by law to give preference in enrollment to the children of the charter school's founders, governing board members, and full-time employees, but the total number of such children given preference can be no more than 10% of the charter school's total enrollment.

A charter school established under a contract with a union high school district may give

preference in enrollment to pupils who were enrolled during the previous year in a charter school operating under a cooperative agreement with the charter school established under contract with the union high school district. This provision applies to students attending a charter school authorized by an underlying K-8 school district as they transition to a charter school authorized by the UHS district.

Legal Status. The law specifies, with one exception, that the school board of the school district in which a charter school is located determines whether or not the charter school is an instrumentality of the district. If the board determines that the charter school is an instrumentality of the district, the board must employ all personnel for the charter school. If the board decides the charter school is not an instrumentality of the district, the board cannot employ any personnel for the charter school. The exception to this provision specifies that an independent charter school or a private school located in MPS which is converted to an MPS charter school is not an instrumentality of MPS. Therefore, MPS cannot employ any personnel for such a charter school.

Independent charter schools are considered local education agencies (LEAs) for the purpose of federal law, and as such are eligible for funding as LEAs and are required to comply with all federal requirements of LEAs. In general, independent charter schools cannot be instrumentalities of any district and no school board may employ any personnel for these charter schools. However, any charter school authorized by the City of Milwaukee that is established and operated by a for-profit entity must be an instrumentality of MPS and all staff employed by the charter school must be employees of MPS.

Charter School Governing Boards. A charter school is required by law to be governed by a governing board that is a party to the contract with the authorizing entity. No more than a minority of the governing board's members may be employees of

the charter school or employees or officers of the school district in which the charter school is located.

Subject to the terms of its contract, a charter school governing board has all the powers necessary to carry out the terms of its contract, including the following:

1. To receive and disburse funds for school purposes.
2. To secure appropriate insurance.
3. To enter into contracts, including contracts with a University of Wisconsin institution or college campus, technical college district board, or private college or university, for technical or financial assistance, academic support, curriculum review, or other services.
4. To incur debt in reasonable anticipation of the receipt of funds.
5. To pledge, assign, or encumber its assets to be used as collateral for loans or extensions of credit.
6. To solicit and accept gifts or grants for school purposes.
7. To acquire real property for its use.
8. To sue and be sued in its own name.

A charter school governing board may not charge tuition, with an exception for out-of-state pupils enrolled in virtual charter schools, which is described below.

A charter school governing board is prohibited from discriminating in admission or denying participation in any program or activity on the basis of a person's sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional

or learning disability, with an exception for single-sex schools or classes previously described.

A charter school governing board must be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices and all other operations.

If a charter school replaces a public school, in whole or in part, the charter school governing board must give preference in admission to any pupil residing within the current or former attendance area of that public school.

Charter School Requirements. Charter schools are subject to all federal laws governing education, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Unless specified in statute, charter schools are not subject to the provisions of Chapters 115 through 121 of the Wisconsin Statutes, which are generally the provisions that govern K-12 education. Charter schools are required to:

a. Administer state standardized pupil assessments, including the civics assessment required for high school graduation, to pupils in the required grade levels.

b. Adopt pupil academic standards in mathematics, science, reading and writing, geography, and history.

c. Develop and enforce a policy specifying criteria for promoting a pupil from 4th grade to 5th grade, from 8th grade to 9th grade, and for granting a high school diploma. A charter school cannot promote a pupil from 4th to 5th grade or from 8th grade to 9th grade unless the pupil satisfies the promotion criteria, and cannot grant a high school diploma unless the pupil has satisfied these criteria.

d. Be included in a school district's annual school performance report, DPI school accountability reports, and the statewide student information system.

e. Participate in the DPI educator effectiveness evaluation system or an alternative process in accordance with DPI administrative rule.

f. Assess the early literacy skills of pupils enrolled in four-year-old kindergarten through third grade and provide interventions for at-risk pupils.

g. Provide to the parent of each enrolled pupil a copy of the school's accountability report and a list of the educational options available to children who reside in the pupil's resident school district.

h. Ensure that all of the school's instructional staff hold a license or permit to teach issued by DPI.

The Department has promulgated an administrative rule defining "instructional staff" to mean all professional employees who have direct contact with students or with the instructional program of the school, including teachers, librarians, pupil services staff, and administrative staff who supervise licensed staff.

In addition to the standard teacher licensing process, DPI is required by law to grant a charter school teaching license to any person who has a bachelor's degree and demonstrates, based upon criteria established by DPI, that the person is proficient in the subjects that he or she intends to teach. The license authorizes the person to teach in the subject area and grade level of the license in a non-virtual charter school. Under DPI rule, an applicant can demonstrate satisfactory content knowledge by one of the following: (a) completion of a major or minor at an accredited institution in the subject area of the license; (b) passing a content knowledge examination approved by DPI in the subject area of the license; or (c) passing an assessment process approved by DPI in the subject area of the license. A charter school teacher's license is valid for five years and is renewable.

Pupil Rights. No pupil may be required to attend a charter school without the approval of his or

her parents or legal guardian, or the pupil's approval if the pupil is an adult.

Transportation. Charter schools are not required, under current law, to provide transportation for their pupils. Similarly, the law does not specifically include charter pupils among the pupils that school districts are required to transport. However, if the parties agree, then the contract between a charter school and school board or an independent charter school authorizer may provide for the transportation of charter school pupils.

Charter Revocation. A school board or independent charter school authorizer can revoke a contract with a charter school if the board or authorizer finds that any of the following occurred: (a) the school violated the contract; (b) the school's pupils failed to make sufficient progress toward attaining the state's educational goals and expectations; (c) the school failed to comply with generally accepted accounting standards of fiscal management; or (d) the school violated charter school laws.

Virtual Charter School Provisions

Virtual Charter School Requirements. A virtual school is defined in statute as one in which all or a portion of instruction is provided on the internet, and pupils and staff are geographically remote from each other. In the 2023-24 school year, 62 virtual charter schools (authorized by 53 school districts) enrolled a total of 12,931 pupils. These virtual charter schools are noted in the list of charter schools in the appendix to this paper.

Access to instructional staff is provided by the virtual schools, but pupils generally complete work independently under the supervision of their parents. Teachers in virtual charters must be appropriately licensed by DPI in the subject and grade level for each virtual course taught. An individual who holds a license to teach a subject and level in the state from which the online course is provided is considered by law to be appropriately licensed to teach the subject and level in Wisconsin. DPI is

prohibited by law from requiring professional development for an appropriately-licensed person teaching in a virtual charter school that would not otherwise be required for a similarly-licensed person teaching outside of a virtual charter school. Anyone providing educational services to a virtual charter pupil in the pupil's home who is not instructional staff employed by the school, including the pupil's parent or guardian, is not required to hold a license or permit to teach.

Virtual charter schools are required to provide educational services to pupils at least 150 days each school year, and instructional staff duties are enumerated in statute. Teachers must be available for direct instruction for at least the same number of hours of instruction as are required for regular public school pupils, which varies by grade level, but no more than 10 hours per day can count towards this requirement. Teachers in virtual charter schools must respond to any inquiries by pupils and parents within one full school day. Pupils are required to participate in state pupil assessments.

The governing body of a virtual charter school must establish a parent advisory council that meets regularly. At the beginning of each school term, the governing body must inform its pupils' parents in writing of the names of, and how to contact, the school's staff and the members of the school's governing body, authorizing school board, and parent advisory council.

A virtual charter school is considered to be located in the school district that contracts for the establishment of the school. If a district enters into an agreement with another district or CESA to establish a virtual charter, the school is considered to be located in the district specified under that agreement. If the virtual charter enrolls pupils from outside the school district, other specified requirements under the open enrollment program also apply.

Virtual Charter School Restrictions. Independent charter school authorizers are prohibited

from establishing virtual charter schools. Like other charter schools, virtual charters are prohibited from charging tuition, except that virtual operators are required to charge tuition to out-of-state pupils enrolled in the school, in an amount equal to at least the open enrollment transfer amount.

Pupils attending a virtual school are not subject to the usual compulsory school attendance requirements, but are subject to specified requirements regarding participation. Statutes define the equivalent of excused absences for virtual charter school pupils. If a pupil fails to adequately participate in the virtual school, the pupil may be transferred back to his or her resident district, or, if attending a virtual school within the resident district, to another school or program within that district. A parent or guardian may appeal such transfers to DPI.

Charter School Funding

The way in which charter schools are funded differs based on the authorizing entity. Charter schools authorized by a school board receive funding in a manner similar to other public schools, based on whether the pupils attending the schools are residents of the district or not. While independent charter schools receive a standard per pupil payment, their effect on the school finance system depends on whether or not the authorizing entity had chartering authority prior to the 2015-17 budget act (2015 Act 55).

School District Charters. For a charter school authorized by a school district, the contract between the school board and the person operating the charter school must specify the amount to be paid to the charter school during each school year of the contract. The contract costs are aidable under the equalization formula.

Resident pupils enrolled in a charter school are

counted by the school district for revenue limits and general aid purposes. Nonresident pupils may enroll in a charter school through the open enrollment program. Under open enrollment, a pupil may attend a public school outside his or her district of residence, provided the pupil's parent complies with certain application procedures and the applicable acceptance criteria are met. The district of residence counts an open-enrolled pupil for revenue limit and general school aid purposes. The nonresident district operating the charter receives a statutorily-determined per pupil transfer amount, which is equal to \$8,962 for a regular education pupil and \$13,814 for a special education pupil in 2024-25. [For more information on this program, see the Legislative Fiscal Bureau's informational paper entitled, "Open Enrollment Program."]

As a result, a "brick and mortar" charter school that enrolls mostly resident pupils is funded in a manner similar to a traditional non-charter school operated by the district. Conversely, for a virtual charter school that enrolls a large number of non-resident pupils, the contract costs for the services of the private curriculum provider can be primarily funded by the open enrollment payments received from the pupils' school districts of residence.

Independent Charter Schools. DPI is required to pay the operator of an independent charter school a statutorily-specified amount per pupil. In 2024-25, that payment is \$11,729 per pupil. Under current law, the per pupil payment is indexed, so that the payment in a given year is equal to the sum of the amount paid per pupil in the previous year plus the following amounts: (a) the per pupil adjustment under revenue limits for the current year, if positive; (b) the change in the amount of statewide categorical aid per pupil between the previous year and the current year, if positive; and (c) the change in the low revenue adjustment amount under revenue limits between the previous year and the current year, if positive.

The change in the low revenue adjustment amount was added to the indexing mechanism

beginning in 2024-25 under 2023 Act 11. That act also provided for an additional increase of \$1,727 to the payment amount in 2023-24 above the increase provided under the indexing mechanism.

DPI is required to make payments equal to 25% of the total due to each school in September, December, February and June of each school year and send the check to the operator of the charter school. For payment purposes, independent charter pupils are counted on a full-time equivalency (FTE) basis, rather than a headcount basis. By statute, pupils in grades 1-12 are generally counted as 1.0 FTE pupil, while kindergarten pupils are counted as fractions of a pupil, generally based on the amount of educational programming provided.

Independent charter school operators are also eligible to receive payment for summer school pupils. A school is eligible to receive a summer school payment for a pupil if the school offers a minimum of 19 summer days of instruction and each day of summer instruction is comprised of at least 270 minutes of instruction. Each independent charter school must, by September 15, file a report with DPI stating its summer daily attendance for each day of summer school. Schools offering summer school receive an amount equal to 5% of the per pupil payment from the immediately preceding school term if the pupil attends at least 15 days of summer instruction. The payment is prorated based on the number of days attended if the pupil attends fewer than 15 days. DPI must include the entire summer school payment with the December payment installment, but as a separate check.

Payments for the independent charter school program (with the exception of payments to schools authorized by the Director of the OEO) are funded from a sum sufficient appropriation from the general fund. Payments to charter schools authorized by the OEO are made from a separate sum sufficient general fund appropriation.

Prior to the 2021-23 budget act, DPI was required by law to proportionally reduce the

general school aid for which each school district was eligible by an amount totaling the estimated payments for schools chartered by legacy authorizers who had that authority prior to 2015 Act 55 (UW-Milwaukee, the City of Milwaukee, and UW-Parkside). A school district's revenue limit calculation was not affected by the aid reduction for independent charter schools established by these legacy authorizers. Thus, a school district could increase its property tax levy to offset this aid reduction.

The general school aid reduction associated with these legacy authorizers was deleted in the 2021-23 budget act, beginning in the 2021-22 school year. As a result, these pupils are now fully funded from the state general fund. Pupils in independent charter schools established by legacy authorizers are not counted by any school district for revenue limit and general aid purposes.

Pupils that attend a charter school authorized by any of the new authorizers who were given that authority under 2015 Act 55 or later (in 2023-24, the Director of the OEO, the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College, and the Waukesha County Executive) are counted by their district of residence for revenue limit and general aid purposes. DPI must reduce the district's general aid payment (and categorical aid, if necessary) in an amount equal to the total of the per pupil payments made for pupils residing in the district. Districts are not allowed to levy to backfill, or replace, that aid reduction.

Table 2 shows the number of FTE pupils, the per pupil payment, and program expenditures (as reported in the state's annual fiscal report) for the independent charter school program for each year since 2005-06. (The expenditures shown in the table include, for the relevant years, prior law payments from the independent charter school appropriation to the Racine Unified School District for pupils attending the UW-Parkside charter school who were previously enrolled in the District. These payments ended in 2012-13.)

Table 2: Independent Charter School Program Expenditures

	FTE Pupils	Per Pupil Payment	Expenditures (In Millions)
2005-06	4,473	\$7,519	\$34.8
2006-07	4,826	7,669	38.5
2007-08	5,487	7,669	43.5
2008-09	5,296	7,775	42.7
2009-10	6,124	7,775	48.9
2010-11	7,159	7,775	56.9
2011-12	6,863	7,775	54.4
2012-13	7,459	7,775	58.7
2013-14	7,964	7,925	63.1
2014-15	8,413	8,075	67.9
2015-16	8,807	8,079	71.3
2016-17	7,526	8,188	61.6
2017-18	7,813	8,395	65.6
2018-19	8,455	8,619	73.4
2019-20	8,693	8,911	78.0
2020-21	8,913	9,165	82.3
2021-22	10,243	9,201	94.8
2022-23	10,647	9,264	99.4
2023-24	11,104	11,385	128.5
2024-25	11,883*	11,729	147.0*

*Estimated

In 2023-24, the aid reduction attributable to pupils attending a charter school authorized by a new authorizer was equal to \$28.1 million. The remaining expenditures were fully funded from the state general fund.

Categorical Aid Eligibility. A charter school established by a school district may participate in categorical school aid and grant programs, but such participation needs to be included in the charter. A district-sponsored non-instrumentality charter school can be reimbursed for special education costs in the same manner as other types of charter

schools, if the school board contracts with the charter school to provide special education services to pupils attending the school. A charter school must comply with all requirements associated with the categorical aid program in which it participates.

By statute, independent charter schools are eligible for the following categorical aid programs: (a) special education aid, (b) high-cost special education aid, (c) special education transitions incentive grants, (d) special education transition readiness grants, (e) pupil transportation aid, (f) school lunch aid, (g) school day milk, (h) educator effectiveness grants, (i) robotics league participation grants, (j) aid for school mental health programs, (k) school-based mental health services grants, (l) peer-to-peer suicide prevention program grants, (m) Head Start supplement, and (n) the telecommunications access program. Any categorical aid received by an independent charter school is in addition to the statutory per pupil payment.

Appendix

The appendix lists the charter schools in operation in 2023-24 by school district or chartering authority. The September headcount enrollment of and grade levels operated by each charter school for that year are also shown. Charter school consortia and virtual charter schools are both noted in the appendix.

In 2023-24, 236 charter schools were open, chartered by 106 authorizers. In total, 49,098 pupils were enrolled in all types of charter schools in 2023-24.

APPENDIX

Wisconsin Charter Schools 2023-24 School Year

<u>District/Authorizer</u>	<u>School Name</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Grade Level(s)</u>
School District Authorized Charter Schools			
Algoma	Algoma Venture Academy	41	7-12
Appleton Area	Appleton Bilingual School	134	K-5
Appleton Area	Appleton eSchool **	37	7-12
Appleton Area	Appleton Public Montessori	153	K4-6
Appleton Area	Appleton Technical Academy	76	9-12
Appleton Area	Classical School	496	K-8
Appleton Area	Fox Cities Leadership Academy	49	9-12
Appleton Area	Fox River Academy	129	K-8
Appleton Area	Kaleidoscope Academy	460	6-8
Appleton Area	Renaissance School	156	9-12
Appleton Area	Stephen Foster Elementary Charter School	253	PK-6
Appleton Area	Tesla Engineering Charter School	155	9-12
Appleton Area	Valley New School	66	7-12
Appleton Area	Wisconsin Connections Academy **	672	K4-12
Athens	Maple Grove School	107	K-5
Augusta	Wildlands Charter School	71	7-12
Barron Area	Advanced Learning Academy of Wisconsin **	30	K-12
Barron Area	Barron Area Montessori School	52	K4-5
Birchwood	Birchwood Public Montessori	24	K4-6
Birchwood	Bobcat Virtual Academy **	11	K4-12
Burlington Area	Wisconsin Connect Charter School **	63	K4-12
Butternut	Promethean Charter School	1	9-12
Cambridge	Koshkonong Trails School	28	7-12
Cameron	Cameron Academy of Virtual Education **	123	K4-12
Cameron *	North Star Academy	39	9-12
Cedar Grove-Belgium Area	Rocket Academy	7	11-12
Chequamegon	Class ACT Charter	0	9-12
Chetek-Weyerhaeuser	Link2Learn Virtual Charter School **	35	K4-12
Columbus	Discovery Charter School	76	K-3
Cumberland	Island City Virtual Academy **	47	K4-12
D C Everest Area	D C Everest Idea School	66	6-12
Delavan-Darien	DD Technical School	66	9-12
Denmark	Viking Academy	32	6-12
DeSoto Area	DeSoto Virtual School **	8	K-12
Eau Claire Area	Chippewa Valley Montessori Charter School	305	K4-5
Eau Claire Area	Eau Claire Virtual School **	141	K-12
Eau Claire Area	McKinley Charter School	137	6-12
Elkhorn Area *	Career and College Academy	230	6-12
Elkhorn Area *	Elkhorn Options Virtual School **	273	K4-12
Elmwood	Western Wisconsin Virtual Charter School **	13	K4-12
Fond du Lac	Fond du Lac STEM Academy	148	5-12
Gilman *	eSucceed Charter School **	78	K-12
Grantsburg	iForward **	881	K-12
Green Bay Area	John Dewey Academy of Learning	161	6-12
Green Bay Area	Northeast Wisconsin School of Innovation	265	7-12

<u>District/Authorizer</u>	<u>School Name</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Grade Level(s)</u>
Greendale	Time 4 Learning Charter School	91	K4
Hayward Community	Hayward Center for Individualized Learning **	244	K4-12
Hayward Community	Northern Waters Environmental School	42	6-12
Hortonville	Fox West Academy	60	6-8
Hudson	Hudson Virtual Charter School **	6	9-12
Janesville	ARISE Virtual Academy **	116	K-12
Janesville	Rock River Charter School	253	6-12
Janesville	Rock University High	98	9-12
Kaukauna Area	New Directions Learning Community	260	K4-4
Kaukauna Area	Park Community Charter School	252	K4-4
Kenosha	Brompton School	218	K-8
Kenosha	Dimensions of Learning Academy	218	K-8
Kenosha	Harborside Academy	611	6-12
Kenosha	Kenosha School of Technology Enhanced Curriculum	1,191	K4-8
Kettle Moraine	High School of Health Sciences	192	9-12
Kettle Moraine	KM Connect Virtual Academy for Communication & Collaboration **	26	6-11
Kettle Moraine	KM Explore Elementary School	122	K-5
Kettle Moraine	KM Global School for Global Leadership and Innovation **	72	9-12
Kettle Moraine	KM School for Arts and Performance	118	9-12
Kiel Area *	Between the Lakes Virtual Academy **	83	K4-8
Kiel Area *	Kiel eSchool **	48	9-12
LaCrosse	Coulee Montessori Charter School	115	K4-6
LaCrosse	Coulee Region Virtual Academy **	78	K-12
LaCrosse	Polytechnic School **	106	6-12
LaCrosse	School of Technology and Arts I	122	K4-5
LaCrosse	School of Technology and Arts II	34	6-8
LaFarge	Kickapoo Valley Forest School	54	K4-1
Lake Geneva J1	Maple Park Charter School **	26	K4-8
Lake Geneva-Genoa UHS	New Visions Charter School **	35	9-12
Lakeland UHS	Lakeland STAR Academy	21	9-12
Little Chute Area	Flex Academy **	78	K-8
Little Chute Area	Little Chute Career Pathways Academy	92	9-12
Lodi	Ouisconsin School of Collaboration	75	3-5
Madison Metropolitan	Badger Rock Middle School	99	6-8
Madison Metropolitan	Nuestro Mundo Community School	295	K-5
Manitowoc	McKinley Academy **	93	K-12
Marathon City	Marathon Venture Academy	161	6-8
Marshall *	JEDI Virtual School **	169	K4-12
Mauston	iLEAD Charter School	92	7-12
Mauston	Lemonweir Academy	52	6-12
Mauston	Mauston Montessori Charter School	102	K4-6
McFarland	Destinations Career Academy of Wisconsin **	340	9-12
McFarland	Insight School of Wisconsin **	150	9-12
McFarland	Wisconsin Virtual Academy High School **	1,423	9-12
McFarland	Wisconsin Virtual Academy K-8 **	1,336	K-8
Medford Area *	Rural Virtual Academy **	2,125	K4-12
Menasha	Fox Valley Virtual School **	79	K4-8
Menominee Indian	Kaehkenawapahtaeq Charter School	28	K4-K
Merrill Area	Bridges Virtual Academy **	697	K4-12
Merrill Area	Merrill Adult Diploma Academy	25	10-12
Middleton-Cross Plains	Clark Street Community School	103	9-12
Milwaukee (MPS)	ALBA School	620	K3-8
Milwaukee (MPS)	Alliance School of Milwaukee	155	9-12
Milwaukee (MPS)	Carmen High School - South Campus	399	9-12
Milwaukee (MPS)	Carmen High School - Southeast Campus	676	9-12

<u>District/Authorizer</u>	<u>School Name</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Grade Level(s)</u>
Milwaukee (MPS)	Carmen Middle/High School - Northwest Campus	586	6-12
Milwaukee (MPS)	GreenTree Preparatory Academy	496	6-12
Milwaukee (MPS)	Highland Community School	414	K3-8
Milwaukee (MPS)	Hmong American Peace Academy	1,894	K3-12
Milwaukee (MPS)	Honey Creek Elementary	354	K3-5
Milwaukee (MPS)	I.D.E.A.L. Charter School	216	K3-8
Milwaukee (MPS)	La Causa Charter School	570	K3-8
Milwaukee (MPS)	Milwaukee College Preparatory School -- 36th Street	478	K4-8
Milwaukee (MPS)	Milwaukee College Preparatory School -- 38th Street	478	K4-8
Milwaukee (MPS)	Milwaukee College Preparatory School -- Lloyd Street	477	K4-8
Milwaukee (MPS)	Milwaukee College Preparatory School: Lola Rowe North	509	K3-8
Milwaukee (MPS)	Milwaukee Environmental Science Academy	295	K3-8
Milwaukee (MPS)	Milwaukee Excellence Charter School	269	6-12
Milwaukee (MPS)	Next Door Charter School	107	K3-K
Milwaukee (MPS)	Whittier Elementary School	142	K3-5
Minocqua J1 *	Lakeland STAR School	5	6-8
Mondovi	Anthony Acres School	51	6-12
Monona Grove	Monona Grove Liberal Arts Charter School for the 21st Century	86	6-12
Montello	High Marq Environmental Charter School	32	6-12
Montello	Montello Virtual Charter School **	22	K4-12
Mukwonago	Eagleville Charter School	109	K-6
Necedah Area	N-Gage Academy	32	6-12
Necedah Area	N-Vision Learning Center	74	1-5
Neenah	Alliance Charter Elementary	186	K4-6
Nekoosa	Central Wisconsin STEM Academy	32	6-8
Nekoosa	WISE Academy **	218	K4-12
New London	Catalyst Academy	24	9-12
Norris	Norris Academy Virtual School **	24	K-12
North Fond du Lac	Exploration Charter High School	15	9-10
North Fond du Lac	Treffert Way School for the Exceptional Mind	59	K-9
Northern Ozaukee	Sugar Maple Nature School	70	K-5
Northern Ozaukee	Wisconsin Virtual Learning **	321	K4-12
Northland Pines	Northland Pines Montessori Learning Center	70	K4-4
Northland Pines	SOAR High School	73	8-12
Northland Pines	SOAR Middle School	41	5-8
Northwood	NorthStar Community Charter School	30	4-8
Northwood	Northwood Elementary School	158	K4-5
Northwood	Northwood High/Middle School	137	6-12
Northwood	Northwood Virtual Charter School **	3	K4-12
Oshkosh Area	ALPs Charter School	59	4-8
Parkview	Parkview Academy of Virtual Education **	22	6-12
Prairie du Chien Area	Mighty River Academy of Virtual Education **	42	K-12
Richland	PARTNER Charter School	14	8-12
Richland	Richland Online Academy **	18	K-12
Ripon Area	Barlow Park Charter School	157	K-2
Ripon Area	Odyssey Academy of Virtual Learning **	224	K4-12
Ripon Area	Quest Charter School	156	3-5
River Falls	Renaissance Charter Academy	41	9-12
River Falls	River Falls eSchool **	0	K-12
River Falls	River Falls Public Montessori Academy	182	K4-6
Saint Croix Central	Saint Croix Virtual Academy **	223	K4-12
Shawano	LEADS Primary Charter School **	85	K4-8
Sheboygan Area	Central High School	180	9-12
Sheboygan Area	Etude Elementary School	187	K4-5
Sheboygan Area	Etude High School	88	9-12

<u>District/Authorizer</u>	<u>School Name</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Grade Level(s)</u>
Sheboygan Area	Etude Middle School	86	6-8
Sheboygan Area	George D. Warriner High School for Personalized Learning **	128	9-12
Sheboygan Area	George D. Warriner Middle School **	51	6-8
Sheboygan Area	Lake Country Academy	458	K4-8
Sheboygan Area	Sheboygan Leadership Academy	210	K4-8
Shorewood	New Horizons for Learning	24	9-12
Solon Springs	Eagles Academy Charter School	22	6-12
Solon Springs	Eagles' Wings Montessori Charter School	78	K4-6
Solon Springs	Eagles' Wings Virtual Charter School **	8	K4-12
Sparta Area	Innovations STEM Academy	88	6-8
Sparta Area	Sparta Alternative Independent Learning School	63	9-12
Sparta Area	Sparta Montessori School	181	K4-6
Stevens Point Area	Point of Discovery School	127	7-12
Tomah Area	Tomah Area Montessori School	63	K4-6
Tomorrow River	Tomorrow River Community Charter School	178	K4-8
Tomorrow River	Tomorrow River Virtual Charter School **	47	K4-8
Turtle Lake	Laker Online **	11	K-12
Twin Lakes #4	Learning by Design Academy **	12	K4-8
Two Rivers	Lighthouse Learning Academy **	280	K4-12
Verona Area	Core Knowledge Charter School	419	K-8
Verona Area	New Century School	124	K-5
Verona Area	Verona Area International School	118	K-5
Viroqua Area	Laurel High School	45	9-12
Viroqua Area *	Vernon County Area Better Futures High School	13	9-12
Viroqua Area	Viroqua Area Montessori School	144	K4-8
Watertown	eCampus Academy Charter School **	142	K4-12
Watertown	Endeavor Charter School	52	9-12
Waukesha	eAchieve Academy - Wisconsin **	658	6-12
Waukesha	eAchieve Elementary **	120	K4-5
Waukesha	Waukesha Academy of Health Professions	114	9-12
Waukesha	Waukesha Engineering Preparatory Academy	150	9-12
Waukesha	Waukesha STEM Academy	599	K4-8
Waupaca	Chain Exploration Center	133	K4-8
Waupun	School for Agricultural and Environmental Studies	105	K4-6
Wausau	Enrich, Excel, Achieve Learning Academy	33	6-12
Wausau	Wausau Area Montessori Charter School	101	K-8
Wausau	Wausau Area Virtual Education **	175	K-12
Wauwatosa	Wauwatosa STEM School	131	K-5
Wauwatosa	Wauwatosa Virtual Academy **	115	K-12
West Allis	Deeper Learning Virtual Academy **	134	K4-12
West Allis	Shared Journeys	4	7-12
West DePere	Phantom Knight School of Opportunity	23	7-12
Weyauwega-Fremont	Fremont STEM Academy	12	5-6
Whitnall	CORE4	106	K4
Wisconsin Rapids	Central Oaks Academy **	97	K4-8
Wonewoc-Union Center	Wonewoc-Center Virtual Academy **	<u>9</u>	K-12
Subtotal - School District Authorized Charter Schools		37,597	
Independent Charter Schools			
City of Milwaukee	Central City Cyberschool	378	K4-12
City of Milwaukee	Darrell Lynn Hines Academy	172	K4-8
City of Milwaukee	Downtown Montessori	239	K3-8
City of Milwaukee	Dr. Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy	312	9-12
City of Milwaukee	Escuela Verde	120	9-12

<u>District/Authorizer</u>	<u>School Name</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Grade Level(s)</u>
City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Academy of Science	1,404	K4-12
City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Math and Science Academy	244	K4-8
LCO Ojibwe College	WOLI/Akii-gikinoo'amaading	21	6-12
Office of Educ. Opp.	Adeline Montessori School	137	K3-9
Office of Educ. Opp.	Central Sands Community High School	30	9-11
Office of Educ. Opp.	Isthmus Montessori Academy	220	K4-12
Office of Educ. Opp.	Kenosha High School of Technology Enhanced Curriculum	61	9-10
Office of Educ. Opp.	Milestone Democratic School	84	6-12
Office of Educ. Opp.	Mill Creek Academy	187	K4-5
Office of Educ. Opp.	New Leaf Prep Academy	186	K-8
Office of Educ. Opp.	One City Elementary School	283	K4-5
Office of Educ. Opp.	One City Preparatory Academy	53	6-7
Office of Educ. Opp.	The Lincoln Academy	626	K4-11
Office of Educ. Opp.	UpGrade Media Arts Schools	10	6-12
UW-Milwaukee	Bruce Guadalupe Community School	1,410	K4-8
UW-Milwaukee	Carmen Middle School South	206	6-8
UW-Milwaukee	La Casa de Esperanza Charter School	265	K4-8
UW-Milwaukee	Milwaukee Scholars Charter School	769	K4-8
UW-Milwaukee	Pathways High School	171	9-12
UW-Milwaukee	Rocketship Southside Community Prep	398	K4-5
UW-Milwaukee	Rocketship Transformation Prep	231	K4-5
UW-Milwaukee	Seeds of Health Elementary School	377	K4-8
UW-Milwaukee	Stellar Collegiate Charter School	217	K4-5
UW-Milwaukee	Tenor High School	627	9-12
UW-Milwaukee	UCC Acosta Middle School	180	6-8
UW-Milwaukee	Veritas High School	255	9-12
UW-Milwaukee	Woodlands School - Bluemound Campus	370	K4-8
UW-Milwaukee	Woodlands School - State Street Campus	198	K4-8
UW-Parkside	21st Century Preparatory School	512	K4-8
Waukesha County Exec.	Lake Country Classical Academy	<u>548</u>	K-10
	Subtotal - Independent Charter Schools	11,501	
	Total Charter School Enrollment	49,098	

* Authorizing district for a consortium of districts

** Virtual charter school