

OVERVIEW

Charters:

Oregon is one of 43 states, including the District of Columbia, that permit charter schools. Oregon's charter law was enacted in 1999. As of 2013-14, there were [124 charter schools](#) in operation, enrolling an estimated 29,718 students.

State charter school law allows new start-up charter schools, traditional public to charter school conversions, and virtual charter schools. Only local school districts may serve as charter authorizers.

OREGON'S CHARTERS

Year of Charter Law – 1999

NAPCS Ranking of Charter Law – 27 of 43

Total Charters – 124

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools ranks Oregon's law as average nationwide (27th out of 43 states).

Vouchers or Other State Assistance for Private School Choice:

Oregon does not currently have a voucher or tuition tax credit program in operation.

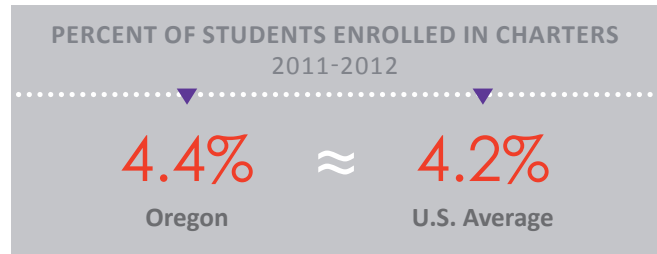
State Laws on Other Forms of School Choice:

Oregon has an open enrollment program for transfers between school districts. A student may transfer to a different school district with the approval of the receiving local school board. The receiving board determines how many students it will accept, and districts have the option to not accept transfers.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

History

- Public charters have been allowed under state law since 1999.
- There is **no cap** on the number of charter schools that can be approved.
- As of the 2013-14 school year, **124 charters** were in operation in Oregon, enrolling an estimated 29,718 students.

**Details**

- State charter school law allows new start-up charter schools, traditional public to charter school conversions, and virtual charter schools. Small school districts with just one school may also convert that school to a charter.
 - Currently there are 17 charter schools that operate as the only school in a district. There are also 12 statewide virtual charter schools and four state-sponsored charter schools.
- Local school districts serve as the primary charter school authorizer. If a board denies a proposal, the applicant may appeal to the State Board of Education or submit a proposal to an institution of higher education. Those entities then become the authorizer if they approve the application.
- There are no caps on charter school growth. If more than three percent of a district's students are enrolled in a virtual charter school not sponsored by that district, any additional students from the district must receive district approval before enrolling in the virtual charter school.
- Oregon charter schools **must conduct annual financial audits** that are prepared in accordance with the *Municipal Audit Law*. Charter schools must also report on school and student performance, as well as legal compliance, on at least an annual basis to the school authorizer and the State Board of Education.

FINDINGS ON CHARTERS IN OREGON

The Center for Research and Education Outcomes at Stanford University conducted a [National Charter School Study in 2013](#). The report considered the effect that enrolling in a charter school had on a student's academic performance, specifically measuring how much academic growth charter students attained over the course of one year compared to similar students in traditional public schools. The Center found that **Oregon's charter school students had lower gains in reading and math than peers in traditional public schools. Compared to traditional public school peers, Oregon charter students experienced an annual academic loss in reading equivalent to 22 days of reading instruction and a loss in math equal to 50 fewer days of math instruction.**

VOUCHERS OR OTHER STATE ASSISTANCE FOR PRIVATE SCHOOL CHOICE

History

- Oregon does not currently have a voucher or tuition tax credit program in operation.
- In recent years, legislators have proposed a series of school choice bills, but none have made it out of committee for a vote.

Details

- In 2011, legislators presented bills modeled on Florida’s school choice reforms.
 - [HB 2290](#): Proposed a scholarship program for children with disabilities to attend schools of their choice, in or outside the school district. The bill stayed in committee and never received a vote.
 - [HB 2291](#): Proposed tax breaks for corporations or individuals who contribute to scholarship organizations. At least 25 percent of the scholarships would be targeted to low-income students. The bill stayed in committee and never received a vote.
- In 2014, legislators presented [SB 1576](#), the *Education Equity Emergency Act*.
 - The legislation would have established state-funded education savings accounts [modeled on a program in Arizona](#).
 - Whereas vouchers are applied to tuition costs at a specific private school, education savings accounts provide users with the flexibility to allocate funds to approved services and items based on their families’ needs.
 - Program participants would be able to apply 90 percent of state per-student education funding towards approved educational expenses including private schools, tutoring, education therapy, textbooks, online education programs, community colleges, universities, or colleges.
 - The bill remained in committee and never received a vote.

STATE POLICIES ON OTHER FORMS OF SCHOOL CHOICE

Open Enrollment

- Oregon's open enrollment law was passed in 2011 as part of a package of education reforms. The program was first implemented in 2012.
- Students need only the permission of the receiving school district to enroll.
- The receiving local school board determines how many students it will accept from outside the district. School districts have the option not to accept transfer students.
- Districts may not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, disability, individualized education program, income, English language proficiency, athletic ability, or residence.
- A [school district must conduct a lottery](#) if it receives more applications than available positions.
- State student funding follows the student; districts receive the same allocation from the State School Fund for resident students and non-resident transfer students.

FINDINGS ON OPEN ENROLLMENT IN OREGON

Because per-student funding follows students as they transfer districts, some members of the public and district leaders have expressed concern about the fiscal consequences for school districts losing students. Equity was also a concern, given that students have to arrange their own transportation to a different school district.

In response, legislators amended the open enrollment law in 2013 to limit districts from advertising for open enrollment transfers. Districts were also [forbidden from favoring certain districts](#) and considering a student's district of residence as a factor in accepting or rejecting their transfer request. Legislation was also filed in 2013 that would have effectively ended open enrollment in 2014-15. That bill, HB 3008, remained in committee and was not put to a vote.

Virtual Education

- Oregon is home to a variety of virtual learning opportunities, including fully-online charter schools, full and part-time online programs at the district level, and the Oregon Virtual School District, a state program.
- There were 11 fully-online charter schools in 2013-14, which together enrolled 7,172 students statewide. [Virtual charters receive state funding](#) at the same level as in-person, "brick-and-mortar" charter schools.
 - In 2011, legislators [passed a bill expanding the cap for virtual charters](#) (a cap from 2009 had restricted enrollment to the student counts enrolled in May 2009). Up to three percent of a district's students can now enroll in virtual schools. The law also requires that at least 95 percent of instructional hours at the virtual school be taught by licensed teachers.
- The [Oregon Virtual School District](#) (OVSD) is a collection of distance learning, online programs offering supplemental courses, content, and teaching support. Students do not directly enroll in the OVSD, but schools may opt to use its resources to supplement coursework. The OVSD receives annual funding of approximately \$900,000 from the State School Fund.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[Keeping Pace with K-12 Online & Blended Learning: Oregon](#)

[National Alliance for Public Charter Schools: Oregon Charter Law Analysis](#)

[National Charter School Study \(2013\)](#)

[Oregon Charter School Handbook](#)

[Oregon Charter School Directory](#)