

OKLAHOMA

(Law passed in 1999; 22nd strongest of the nation's 43 charter laws)



Oklahoma has made some improvements to its charter school law, but it still has a long way to go to be considered one of the best. The Sooner State has added university authorizers, virtual charter schools, and a blanket waiver, although inequitable funding and a cap on where charters can open continue to be problematic for growth.

INDEPENDENT OR MULTIPLE AUTHORIZERS - YES (5)

APPROVAL	School boards and technology center school districts in certain locations and schools that are members of the Oklahoma state system of higher education can serve as authorizers. A federally recognized Indian tribe can open a charter if it offers native language immersion and is located on a reservation or within treaty boundaries. The state board can sponsor two charters operated by the Office of Juvenile Affairs. The state virtual charter school board can only open full-time statewide virtual schools.
APPEAL	If a second attempt at approval is denied, applicant may proceed to mediation and/or binding arbitration. Decisions by the state virtual charter school board may be appealed to the state.

OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY

STATE	Yes. Charters receive a blanket waiver from traditional public school rules and regulations. Virtual schools are allowed. Management contracts with ESPs are not restricted.
LOCAL	Limited. The blanket waiver applies to some local education rules and regulations. Charters are their own LEAs for the purpose of special education.
TEACHER FREEDOM	Yes. Teachers are exempt from district work rules and collective bargaining agreements. Charter school employees have the option to participate in state retirement system.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ALLOWED

CAP	Yes. Charters are unlimited in school districts with 5,000 or more students in counties with a total population of at least 500,000 (e.g. Oklahoma City and Tulsa.) Charters are also unlimited in districts with a school on the school improvement list (currently 21 of 521 districts.)
-----	--



EQUITY

<p>STUDENT FUNDING</p>	<p>Funds pass through the district for locally-approved charters. Charters receive funds from the same state aid funding formula as conventional schools. Law grants authority to the state to determine local funding policy (local funding not guaranteed by law), so large inequities are often present. All authorizers may deduct up to five percent administrative fees from the school's state aid allocation.</p> <p>“The student membership of the charter school shall be considered separate from the student membership of the district in which the charter school is located for the purpose of calculating weighted average daily membership pursuant to Section 18-201.1 of this title and state aid pursuant to Section 18-200.1 of this title. For charter schools sponsored by a board of education of a school district, the sum of the separate calculations for the charter school and the school district shall be used to determine the total State Aid allocation for the district in which the charter school is located. A charter school shall receive from the sponsoring school district, the State Aid revenue generated by its students for the applicable year, less up to five percent (5%) of the State Aid allocation, which may be retained by the school district as a fee for administrative services rendered.” [70 Okl. St. § 3-142(A)]</p>
<p>FACILITIES FUNDS</p>	<p>Yes. The charter school incentive fund provides up to \$50,000 per school to cover costs of renovating or remodeling existing facilities, and any additional start-up costs they might have. Charters also have access to the State Public Common School Building Equalization Fund, which gives funds for buildings, provided schools fulfill certain obligations like securing matching funds. Grants could be as high as \$4 million. [70 Okl. St. § 3-144]</p>

LINK TO THE
OKLAHOMA CHARTER
SCHOOL LAW