

Arizona Charter School Association's Policy Positions

Funding

The Association supports increased equitable student funding. Arizona is a robust school choice state where 30% of the public schools are charter schools and offers families open enrollment at any public school. However, the state's education funding system is outdated and inconsistent with Arizona's school choice policies and must be modernized.

Achievement/Accountability

In 2014, 18 of the top 30 schools are charter schools, according to the Arizona Department of Education. 73 percent of charter schools earned an A (A-Alt) or B (B-Alt) or improved their letter grade, according to 2014 A-F results from the Arizona Department of Education.

Charter schools that have failed to meet legislative mandates, including academic performance measures, have been closed. Arizona should strengthen its receivership laws to allow and encourage proven, quality educators to do a school turnaround or takeover F-rated schools.

Charter schools undergo annual, independent financial audits and legal compliance reviews to ensure fiscal responsibility.

The state requires Arizona public charter schools to participate in the state adopted academic standards, assessment, and public accountability system. Specifically, the law states:

In A.R.S §15-183E4:

That it designs a method to measure student progress toward the pupil outcomes adopted by the state board of education pursuant to section 15-741.01 including participation in the essential skills tests and the nationally standardized norm-referenced achievement tests as designated by the state board and the completion and distribution of an annual report card as prescribed in chapter 7, article 3 of this title.

The issue of *student progress* is called out specifically in the original law, and the Arizona Charter Schools Association has established a solid reputation as a leader on issues of academic standards, assessment, and in particular on the issue of quantifying academic gains.

In addition, public charter schools are subject to a direct accountability more urgent than other public schools. That accountability is the obligation to meet the needs of the students and families they serve or to cease to exist.



Above all other priorities, the Association supports local control. Schools should retain the right to choose curriculum consistent with their educational philosophy. The Association would continue to support a periodic public review of Arizona standards.

Facilities

Access to and maintenance of school facilities is a key challenge facing Arizona's public schools. The Association supports policies that will provide greater access to affordable capital financing. In particular, the Association will support legislation that provides quality schools with access to lower cost financing through partnerships with the State of Arizona. Doing so will enhance the quality of educational options for students.

In addition, the Association will support legislation that makes it clear that school districts choosing to sell or lease public school facilities give preference to public charter schools seeking to purchase or lease from the district.

Grassroots

The Association receives regular input from our Charter Leaders Advisory Council, Board of Directors and schools members via school visits; annual advocacy tour; summits; weekly Wednesday email; and weekly legislative phone calls.

Our Wednesday email is a consistent, credible source of information for all members, leaders and Association advisors. During the legislative session, we hold weekly conference calls for members and Association leaders with our lobbyist to discuss specific pending bills. Each year, we participate in a statewide advocacy tour in late August, early-September to talk to our charter leaders about our advocacy work and issues they are interested in pursuing. The Association team also attends regional meetings throughout the year to provide support and advocacy updates.

Historically, the Association held an annual conference, but in response to members' requests, we changed our conference format to more targeted and frequent conferences on issues of interest to teachers, business leaders, and school leadership. This shift has dramatically increased participation of our members in outreach efforts this first year.

About the Association

The mission of the Arizona Charter Schools Association is to support student achievement through quality charter schools; to advocate for student equity and charter school autonomy; and to lead Arizona charter schools as a sustainable, strong, and credible organization. Founded in 1995, the Association has grown to be the key resource and advocate for Arizona's charter schools, a groundbreaker in transforming public education in Arizona, and a leader in the national charter movement.

Approved by the Arizona Charter Schools Association's Charter Leaders Advisory Council on December 5, 2014