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Charter schools offer a choice to parents and students who are dissatisfied with the educational opportunities of public schools, but who are not interested or cannot afford to attend a private school. A charter school is free and generally funded with state education money. Although they are held to the same academic standards as public schools, proponents argue that charter schools are less burdened with the bureaucracy of a public school system, giving them the freedom to explore different areas and methods of education. They may differ from public schools by focusing on specific topics (science and technology, or art and music), by preparing students for a specific major college, by using a distinct set of teaching methods, or by wrapping school rules and activities around a theme such as military discipline. Advertising On the other hand, critics argue that charter schools do not provide students with better education, are not held accountable for education standards, and drain funding away from public schools. This may be a contentious issue; multiple studies on the effectiveness of charter schools show conflicting conclusions. Whether or not they are the best choice, charter schools offer options to parents who feel dissatisfied with traditional public schools. They have become increasingly popular in the United States and other countries: since the beginning of the charter school movement in the late 1980s, there have been more than 5,000 charter schools in the United States alone, serving 1.7 million students [source: Center for Education Reform]. This article will explain how charter schools are created and how their funding works. We will look at the educational opportunities they offer and we will also delve into the controversy that surrounds them. The main advantage of charter schools is that they are not bound by strict curriculum regulations and other bureaucratic requirements. This allows them to focus on specific content areas, focus on different aspects of education, offer innovative courses and teach subjects that are not always found in a typical public school. A charter school could assign more difficult tasks than students in a conventional public school, or focus on writing skills. Charter schools can let students create independent projects and even change the length of the school day or school year. The Western New York Maritime Charter School in Buffalo, New York, is an example of a charter school who has an innovative approach to a high school program. In addition, the usual classes required of high school students, each student is enrolled in the Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC). They wear naval uniforms and hold the ranks of the NJROTC. The school emphasizes a naval code of conduct; students participate in NJROTC exercises, colour eder and other activities. Students have helped refurbish a sailboat and can sailing lessons. Many of the school's administrators served in the U.S. Marines and the U.S. Navy. Charter schools are not completely exempt from oversight and accountability, despite their flexibility. They must always meet the standards set by the state or the local education council. Students still have to pass standardized tests as required by the state, and academic performance is generally measured by students' grades on those tests. If the test scores of a charter school are too low than in neighbouring districts, the school risks losing its charter and closing its doors. Charter schools may be innovative, but why are they so controversial? Then we'll talk about it. For much of the 20th century, parents really had only two choices: either send their children to their district public school or pay for private school. Today, however, the growth of charter and loving schools has increased the number of publicly funded education opportunities available to students. Charter Schools The term charter came from a New England teacher named Ray Budde, who suggested in the 1970s that local school boards give teachers charters to try different pedagogical approaches. In the late 1980s, the city of Philadelphia began experimenting with a charter school model within its existing public schools. Advertising The first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992. That same year, California passed its own charter school law. In 2003, 40 states had charter laws. In 2005, the National Charter Schools Program provided nearly \$217 million in grants for charter schools. Today, there are more than 3,000 charter schools across the country, serving nearly 900,000 students. Typically, parents, community leaders, teachers or school districts submit a proposal to create a charter school. Once the charter is approved by the local school board or the State Board of Education, the U.S. Department of Education provides grants to pay for the planning and implementation of the school. Although publicly funded, charter schools have much more autonomy than other public schools. They can tailor their programs to the needs of the community, rather than adhere to national or state guidelines. In addition, they can teach in more innovative ways than traditional public schools. Although charter schools technically accept each student in their coverage area, they are sometimes a lottery if the number of interested students exceeds the available time slots. Each school describes its mission, program, goals, students and evaluation methods in its charter. Most charters are granted for a period of three to five years. During this period, the school must prove to the school board or school board that it has achieved academic results. If this is not the case, the charter may be revoked. Revoked. 1991 and 2004, about 400 charter schools were forced to close. Magnet Schools Magnet schools were designed to encourage racial integration by incorporating students from different communities in the same region. These schools are generally regulated to ensure that they have a good balance between students of all ethnic backgrounds. Loving schools often focus on a particular field or skill set, such as the gifted and talented, mathematics or science. Principals have more control over curricula than principals in traditional public schools. Loving schools may also be more selective, accepting or rejecting students on the basis of their academic abilities and/or behaviour. Loving schools are funded by federal and state grants, local school boards, business contributions and sometimes tuition fees. In 2001-02, there were 3,100 loving schools in the United States. For more information on public education and related topics, see the links on the next page. Related HowStuffWorks Articles MSN Encarta. Public Education in the United States Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics: 2006 Center for Education Statistics. Fast Facts Center for Education Statistics. In what ways do public and private schools differ? Center for Education Statistics. Special analysis 2002. Private schools: A brief Portrait of education statistics. America's Charter Schools: Results of the NAEP 2003 Pilot Study.Standard and Poor's School Matters. U.S. Public Schools and Districts 1036196//lid=162/stlid=676/locid=1036195/site=pesUS Charter Schools. Overview. Charter Schools. History. Charter Schools. Answers to frequently asked questions. 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Christian Science Monitor, March 3, 2006. for a Change Summaries of Year-Round Education Programs 20SUMMARIES%20OF%20YRE%202007.pdfWake County Public Schools According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, principals are generally required to have a master's and a state license. These requirements may not apply to charter schools, depending on your state's laws and regulations. However, most charter schools hire principals with the same qualifications as traditional public school principals. Principals generally have a master's degree in education administration and a bachelor's degree in school administration from the state where they work. The usual career path for a principal is to start with a bachelor's degree in education, work as a teacher to gain experience, and then enter a master's program in education administration or education leadership before seeking a state license and a position as a principal. However, the requirement for a state license does not apply to private school principals. Charter schools are public schools, but they are given much more autonomy than traditional public schools, and not all public school rules apply to them. For example, charter teachers in Texas are not required to be certified unless they teach ENGLAND or special needs. Charter schools in Texas are not required to meet the state's minimum class planning periods, and charter principals do not need to be licensed or meet minimum education qualifications. Not all states allow charter schools, and the rules vary in states that do, so you should check the law in your own state before looking for work as a charter school principal. Charter schools have so much regulatory leeway to give them the opportunity to experiment with changes to the traditional public school model. However, most charter principals with credentials equivalent to what you'll find in any other school. According to a study published in Education Week, 74 per cent of charter principals hold degrees from traditional education programs. About 60 per cent are former public school principals, while 13 per cent have a background other than education. The most common way to become a charter principal is follow a traditional career path and obtain a master's degree in leadership and education administration. However, you may be able to get a job as a charter principal without that exact training if you have a broad comparable background in the administration of any institution or organization. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median salary for all principals was \$86,970 in 2010. About author Scott Thompson has written professionally since 1990, starting with the Pequawket Valley News. He is the author of nine published books on topics such as history, martial arts, poetry and fantasy fiction. His work has also appeared in Talebones magazine and the anthology Strange Pleasures. Anthology.

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