

VIRGINIA'S CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS
Code of Virginia
(July 1, 2016)

§ 22.1-212.5. Objectives; definitions.

A. In order to (i) stimulate the development of innovative programs within public education; (ii) provide opportunities for innovative instruction and assessment; (iii) provide parents and students with more options within their school divisions; (iv) provide teachers with a vehicle for establishing schools with alternative innovative instruction and school scheduling, management and structure; (v) encourage the use of performance-based educational programs; (vi) establish high standards for both teachers and administrators; and (vii) develop models for replication in other public schools, public charter schools may be established in Virginia as provided in this article.

B. As used in this article:

"At-risk pupil" means a student having a physical, emotional, intellectual, socioeconomic, or cultural risk factor, as defined in Board of Education criteria, which research indicates may negatively influence educational success.

"Public charter school" means a public, nonreligious, or non-home-based alternative school located within a public school division. A public charter school may be created as a new public school or through the conversion of all or part of an existing public school; however, no public charter school shall be established through the conversion of a private school or a nonpublic home-based educational program. A charter school for at-risk pupils may be established as a residential school.

"Regional public charter school" means a public charter school operated by two or more school boards and chartered directly by the participating school boards.

1998, cc. [748](#), [890](#); 2000, cc. [631](#), [712](#), [1028](#); 2004, c. [530](#); 2005, c. [928](#).

§ 22.1-212.5:1. Public Charter School Fund established.

There is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the Public Charter School Fund, hereafter referred to as "the Fund." The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller. Any gifts, grants, bequests, or donations from public or private sources shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to the Fund. Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for the purposes of

establishing or supporting public charter schools in the Commonwealth that stimulate the development of alternative public education programs. Expenditures and disbursements from the Fund shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request signed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Board of Education shall establish criteria for making distributions from the Fund to a public charter school requesting moneys from the Fund and may issue guidelines governing the Fund as it deems necessary and appropriate.

2007, c. 118.

§ 22.1-212.6. Establishment and operation of public charter schools; requirements.

A. Enrollment in a public charter school shall be open to any child who is deemed to reside within the relevant school division or, in the case of a regional public charter school, within any of the relevant school divisions, as set forth in § 22.1-3, through a lottery process on a space-available basis, except that in the case of the conversion of an existing public school, students who attend the school and the siblings of such students shall be given the opportunity to enroll in advance of the lottery process. A waiting list shall be established if adequate space is not available to accommodate all students whose parents have requested to be entered in the lottery process. Such waiting list shall also be prioritized through a lottery process and parents shall be informed of their student's position on the list.

B. A public charter school shall be administered and managed by a management committee, composed of parents of students enrolled in the school, teachers and administrators working in the school, and representatives of any community sponsors, in a manner agreed to by the public charter school applicant and the local school board. Pursuant to a charter contract, a public charter school may operate free from specified school division policies and state regulations, and, as public schools, shall be subject to the requirements of the Standards of Quality, including the Standards of Learning and the Standards of Accreditation.

C. Pursuant to a charter agreement, a public charter school shall be responsible for its own operations, including, but not limited to, such budget preparation, contracts for services, and personnel matters as are specified in the charter agreement. A public charter school may negotiate and contract with a school division, the governing body of a public institution of higher education, or any third party for the use of a school building and grounds, the operation and maintenance thereof, and the provision of any service, activity, or undertaking which the public charter school is required to perform in order to carry out the educational program described in its charter. Any services for which a public charter school contracts with a school division shall not exceed the division's costs to provide such services.

D. As negotiated by contract, the local school board or the relevant school boards, in the case of regional public charter schools, may allow a public charter school to use vacant or unused properties or real estate owned by the school board. In no event shall a public charter school be required to pay rent for space which is deemed available, as negotiated by contract, in school division facilities. All other costs for the operation and maintenance of the facilities used by the public charter school shall be subject to negotiation between the public charter school and the school division or, in the case of a regional public charter school, between the regional public charter school and the relevant school divisions.

E. A public charter school shall not charge tuition.

1998, cc. 748, 890; 2000, cc. 631, 1028; 2002, c. 851; 2004, c. 530; 2012, cc. 702, 720; 2014, cc. 645, 693; 2016, c. 770.

§ 22.1-212.6:1. Applicability of other laws, regulations, policies, and procedures.

A. Public charter schools are subject to all federal laws and authorities as set forth in this article and the charter contract with the local school board.

B. Public charter schools are subject to the same civil rights, health, and safety requirements applicable to other public schools in the Commonwealth, except as otherwise provided in this article.

C. Public charter schools are subject to the student assessment and accountability requirements applicable to other public schools in the Commonwealth, but nothing in this article precludes a public charter school from establishing additional student assessment measures that go beyond state requirements if the school's authorizer approves such measures.

D. Management committees of public charter schools are subject to and shall comply with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.).

E. No public charter school shall discriminate against any individual on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services or any other unlawful basis, and each public charter school shall be subject to any court-ordered desegregation plan in effect for the school division.

F. No public charter school shall discriminate against any student on the basis of limited proficiency in English, and each public charter school shall provide students who have limited proficiency in English with appropriate services designed to teach such students English and the general curriculum, consistent with federal civil rights laws.

G. No public charter school shall engage in any sectarian practices in its educational program, admissions or employment policies, or operations.

2016, c. 770.

§ 22.1-212.7. Contracts for public charter schools.

A. Within 90 days of approval of a charter application, the local school board and the management committee of the approved public charter school shall execute a charter contract that clearly sets forth (i) the academic and operational performance expectations and measures by which the public charter school will be judged and (ii) the administrative relationship between the local school board and public charter school, including each party's rights and duties. Such 90-day period may be extended by a period not to exceed 30 days by mutual agreement of the parties. Such performance expectations and measures shall include applicable federal and state accountability requirements and may be refined or amended by mutual agreement after the public charter school has collected baseline achievement data for its enrolled students.

B. The academic and operational performance expectations and measures in the charter contract shall be based on a performance framework that clearly sets forth the academic and operational performance indicators, measures, and metrics that will guide the local school board's evaluations of each public charter school. The performance framework shall include indicators, measures, and metrics for:

1. Student academic proficiency;
2. Student academic growth;
3. Achievement gaps in both proficiency and growth between the major student subgroups based on gender, race, poverty status, special education status, English language learner status, and gifted status;
4. Attendance;
5. Recurrent annual enrollment;
6. Postsecondary education readiness of high school students;
7. Financial performance and sustainability; and
8. The performance and stewardship of the management committee, including compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and terms of the charter contract.

C. The performance framework shall allow the inclusion of additional rigorous, valid, and reliable indicators proposed by a public charter school to augment external evaluations of its performance, provided that the local school board approves the quality and rigor of such indicators and such indicators are consistent with the purposes of this article.

D. The performance framework shall require the disaggregation of all student performance data by major student subgroups based on gender, race, poverty status, special education status, English language learner status, and gifted status.

E. Annual performance targets shall be set by each public charter school and the local school board and shall be designed to help each school meet applicable federal, state, and local school board expectations.

F. The charter contract shall be signed by the chairman of the local school board and the president or chairman of the public charter school's management committee. Within 10 days of executing a charter contract, the local school board shall submit to the Board written notification of the charter contract execution, including a copy of the executed charter contract and any attachments.

G. No public charter school shall commence operations without a charter contract executed in accordance with this section and approved in an open meeting of the local school board.

H. If the charter application proposes a program to increase the educational opportunities for at-risk students, including those proposals for residential charter schools for at-risk students, the local school board or relevant school boards, as the case may be, on behalf of the public charter school, shall also request that the Board approve an Individual School Accreditation Plan for the evaluation of the performance of the school as authorized by the Standards of Accreditation pursuant to [8VAC20-131-280 C](#) of the Virginia Administrative Code.

I. Any material revision of the terms of the contract may be made only with the approval of the local school board or relevant school boards and the management committee of the public charter school.

1998, cc. [748](#), [890](#); 2000, cc. [631](#), [712](#), [1028](#); 2002, c. [851](#); 2012, cc. [702](#), [720](#); 2016, c. [770](#).

§ 22.1-212.8. Charter application.

A. Any person, group, or organization, including any institution of higher education, may submit an application for the formation of a public charter school.

B. The public charter school application shall be a proposed agreement and shall include:

1. An executive summary.
2. A mission statement of the public charter school that is consistent with the principles of the Standards of Quality, including identification of the targeted academic program of study.
3. A plan for the displacement of pupils, teachers, and other employees who will not attend or be employed in the public charter school, in instances of the conversion of an existing public school to a public charter school, and for the placement of public charter school pupils, teachers, and employees upon termination or revocation of the charter.
4. The location or geographic area proposed for the public charter school.
5. The grades to be served each year for the full term of the charter contract.
6. Minimum, planned, and maximum enrollment per grade level per year for the term of the charter contract.
7. Evidence of need and community support for the proposed public charter school.
8. Background information on the proposed founding management committee members and, if identified, the proposed public charter school leadership and management team.
9. The public charter school's proposed calendar and a sample daily schedule.
10. A description of the academic program that is aligned with the Standards of Learning.
11. A description of the public charter school's instructional design, including the type of learning environment, such as classroom-based or independent study; class size and structure; curriculum overview; and teaching methods.
12. The public charter school's plans for identifying and successfully serving students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, students who lag behind academically, and gifted students, including compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
13. A description of cocurricular or extracurricular programs and how such programs will be funded and delivered.
14. Plans and timelines for student recruitment and enrollment, including lottery procedures.
15. The public charter school's student discipline policies, including discipline policies for special education students.

16. An organization chart that clearly presents the public charter school's organizational structure, including lines of authority and reporting between the management committee; staff; any related bodies, such as advisory bodies or parent and teacher councils; and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the public charter school.
17. A clear description of the roles and responsibilities for the management committee, the public charter school's leadership and management team, and any other entities shown in the organization chart.
18. A staffing chart for the public charter school's first year and a staffing plan for the term of the charter contract.
19. Plans for recruiting and developing the public charter school's leadership and staff.
20. The public charter school's leadership and teacher employment policies.
21. Proposed governing bylaws.
22. Explanations of any partnerships or contractual relationships central to the public charter school's operations or mission.
23. The public charter school's plans for providing transportation, food service, and all other significant operational and ancillary services.
24. A statement of opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.
25. A detailed public charter school start-up plan that identifies tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals.
26. A description of the public charter school's financial plan and policies, including financial controls and audit requirements.
27. A description of the insurance coverage that the public charter school will obtain.
28. Start-up and five-year budgets with clearly stated assumptions.
29. Start-up and first-year cash-flow projections with clearly stated assumptions.
30. Evidence of anticipated fundraising contributions, if claimed in the application.
31. A sound facilities plan, including backup or contingency plans, if appropriate.
32. Assurances that the public charter school (i) is nonreligious in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations and (ii) does not charge tuition.

33. Disclosure of any ownership or financial interest in the public charter school, by the charter applicant and the governing body, administrators, and other personnel of the proposed public charter school, and a requirement that the successful applicant and the governing body, administrators, and other personnel of the public charter school shall have a continuing duty to disclose such interests during the term of any charter.

C. The charter applicant shall include in the proposed agreement the results of any Board review of the public charter school application that may have been conducted as provided in subsection C of § 22.1-212.9.

1998, cc. 748, 890; 2000, cc. 631, 712, 1028; 2002, cc. 851, 874; 2004, c. 530; 2005, c. 928; 2009, c. 441; 2014, cc. 645, 693; 2016, c. 770.

§ 22.1-212.8:1. Innovation Technical Advisory Group.

The Department of Education may establish an Innovation Technical Advisory Group, comprised of individuals with experience in the establishment and operation of charter schools, college partnership laboratory schools, and virtual school programs, or it may retain the services of individuals with such experience to provide technical assistance and advice to the Board in carrying out its duties relating to charter schools, college partnership laboratory schools, and virtual school programs.

2012, c. 381.

§ 22.1-212.9. Review of public charter school applications.

A. Public charter school applications shall be received and reviewed by the Board of Education and local school boards or, in the case of a regional public charter school, by all of the relevant school boards, as provided in subsection C. However, no charter school application that is initiated by one or more local school boards shall be subject to the provisions of subsection C.

The Board of Education and each local school board shall establish procedures for receiving, reviewing, and, in the case of local school boards, ruling upon applications. The Board of Education and local school boards shall post their procedures on their websites and make a copy of the procedures available to all interested parties upon request. If any such board finds the public charter school application is incomplete, the board shall request the necessary information from the charter applicant.

B. To provide appropriate opportunity for input from parents, teachers, citizens, and other interested parties and to obtain information to assist local school boards in their decisions to grant or deny a public charter school application, local school boards shall establish a procedure

for public notice and to receive comment on public charter school applications. A local school board shall give at least 14 days' notice of its intent to receive public comment on an application.

C. Prior to submission of an application to a local school board for review, the public charter school applicant shall submit its proposed charter application to the Board of Education for its review, comment, and a determination as to whether the application meets the approval criteria developed by the Board. The Board's review shall examine such applications for feasibility, curriculum, financial soundness, and other objective criteria as the Board may establish, consistent with existing state law. The Board's review and comment shall be for the purpose of ensuring that the application conforms with such criteria, and the Board shall make a determination as to whether the application meets the approval criteria developed by the Board. Nothing in this section shall prevent a local school division from working with a charter school applicant before the application is submitted to the Board of Education for review and recommendation.

1998, cc. 748, 890; 2000, cc. 631, 1028; 2001, cc. 438, 469; 2002, c. 851; 2004, c. 530; 2010, cc. 393, 650; 2013, cc. 52, 225.

§ 22.1-212.10. Reconsideration and technical assistance; decision of local board final.

A. If a local school board denies a public charter school application, or revokes or fails to renew a charter agreement, it shall provide to the applicant or grantee its reasons, in writing, for such decision, and it shall post such reasons on its website. A public charter school applicant whose application was denied, or a grantee whose charter was revoked or not renewed, shall be entitled to petition the local school board for reconsideration. The petition for reconsideration shall be filed no later than 60 days from the date the public charter school application is denied, revoked, or not renewed. Such reconsideration shall be decided within 60 days of the filing of the petition.

B. Each local school board shall establish a process for reviewing petitions of reconsideration, which shall include an opportunity for public comment. The petition of reconsideration may include an amended application based on the reasons given by the local school board for such decision.

C. Prior to seeking reconsideration, an applicant or grantee may seek technical assistance from the Superintendent of Public Instruction to address the reasons for denial, revocation, or non-renewal.

D. Upon reconsideration, the decision of a local school board to grant or deny a public charter school application or to revoke or fail to renew a charter agreement shall be final and not subject to appeal. Following a local school board decision to deny a public charter school application or

to revoke or fail to renew a charter agreement, the local school board shall submit documentation to the Board of Education as to the rationale for the local school board's denial or revocation of the charter school application.

The Board of Education shall have no authority to grant or deny a public charter school application or to revoke or fail to renew a charter agreement.

E. Nothing in this section shall prohibit an applicant whose application has been denied or a grantee whose charter has been revoked or not renewed from submitting a new application, pursuant to § 22.1-212.9.

1998, cc. 748, 890; 2000, cc. 631, 1028; 2010, cc. 393, 650; 2012, cc. 702, 720.

§ 22.1-212.11. Public charter school restrictions.

A. Local school boards may establish public charter schools within the school division. Priority shall be given to public charter school applications designed to increase the educational opportunities of at-risk students, and at least one-half of the public charter schools per division shall be designed for at-risk students; however, the one-half requirement shall not apply in cases in which an existing public school is converted into a public charter school that serves the same community as the existing public school, nor shall such public charter school conversions be counted in the determination of school division compliance with the one-half requirement.

B. Local school boards shall report the grant or denial of public charter school applications to the Board and shall specify the maximum number of charters that may be authorized, if any; the number of charters granted or denied; and whether a public charter school is designed to increase the educational opportunities of at-risk students.

C. Nothing in this article shall be construed to prevent a school that is the only school in the division from applying to become a public charter school.

1998, cc. 748, 890; 2000, cc. 631, 1028; 2002, cc. 851, 874; 2004, c. 530; 2009, c. 441; 2014, cc. 645, 693.

§ 22.1-212.12. Public charter school term; renewals and revocations.

A. A charter may be approved or renewed for a period not to exceed five school years. A public charter school renewal application submitted to the local school board or, in the case of a regional public charter school, to the relevant school boards shall contain:

1. A report on the progress of the public charter school in achieving the goals, objectives, program and performance standards for students, and such other conditions and terms as the school board or boards may require upon granting initial approval of the charter application.

2. A financial statement, on forms prescribed by the Board, that discloses the costs of administration, instruction, and other spending categories for the public charter school and that has been concisely and clearly written to enable the school board or boards and the public to compare such costs to those of other schools or comparable organizations.

B. Local school boards may revoke a charter if the public charter school:

1. Violates the conditions, standards, or procedures established in the public charter school application;

2. Fails to meet or make reasonable progress toward achievement of the content standards or student performance standards identified in the charter application;

3. Fails to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management; or

4. Violates any provision of law from which the public charter school was not specifically exempted.

C. Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict the authority of local school boards to decline to renew a charter agreement.

1998, cc. [748](#), [890](#); 2000, cc. [631](#), [1028](#); 2002, c. [851](#); 2004, c. [530](#); 2012, cc. [702](#), [720](#).

§ 22.1-212.13. Employment of professional, licensed personnel.

A. At the discretion of the local school board, charter school personnel may be employees of the local school board, or boards, granting the charter. Any personnel not employed by the local school board shall remain subject to the provisions of §§ [22.1-296.1](#), [22.1-296.2](#), and [22.1-296.4](#).

B. Professional, licensed education personnel may volunteer for assignment to a public charter school. Assignment in a public charter school shall be for one contract year. Upon request of the employee and the recommendation of the management committee of the public charter school, reassignment to the public charter school shall occur on an annual basis.

C. At the completion of each contract year, professional, licensed education personnel who request assignment to a public noncharter school in the relevant school division or who are not recommended for reassignment in the public charter school, other than for the grounds cited in § [22.1-307](#), shall be guaranteed an involuntary transfer to a public noncharter school in the school division according to the employment policies of the school division.

D. Professional, licensed personnel of a public charter school shall be granted the same employment benefits given to professional, licensed personnel in public noncharter schools in accordance with the policies of the relevant school board or boards.

E. School boards may employ such health, mental health, social services, and other related personnel to serve in residential charter schools for at-risk pupils as set forth in the charter agreement between such school board and the charter school; however, nothing herein shall require a school board to fund the residential or other services provided by a residential charter school.

1998, cc. 748, 890; 2000, cc. 631, 712, 1028; 2012, cc. 702, 720; 2016, c. 770.

§ 22.1-212.14. Funding of public charter schools; services provided.

A. For the purposes of this article, students enrolled in a public charter school shall be included in the average daily membership of the relevant school division and shall be reported in fall membership for purposes of calculating the state and local shares required to fund the Standards of Quality.

B. Insofar as constitutionally valid, a local school board or, in the case of a regional public charter school, the relevant school boards may establish by contract an agreement stating the conditions for funding the public charter school, including funding for the educational program to be provided by a residential charter school for at-risk students. In accordance with subsection D, the per pupil funding provided to the charter school by the local school board or, in the case of a regional public charter school, the relevant school boards, shall be negotiated in the charter agreement and shall be commensurate with the average school-based costs of educating the students in the existing schools in the division or divisions unless the cost of operating the charter school is less than that average school-based cost.

C. Services provided the public charter school by the local school board or the relevant school boards, in the case of regional public charter schools, may include food services; custodial and maintenance services; curriculum, media, and library services; warehousing and merchandising; and such other services not prohibited by the provisions of this article or state and federal laws.

D. Funding and service agreements between local school boards and public charter schools shall not provide a financial incentive or constitute a financial disincentive to the establishment of a public charter school, including any regional public charter school.

E. Any educational and related fees collected from students enrolled at a public charter school shall be credited to the account of such public charter school established by the relevant local school board.

F. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the proportionate share of state and federal resources allocated for students with disabilities and school personnel assigned to special education programs shall be directed to public charter schools enrolling such students. The

proportionate share of moneys allocated under other federal or state categorical aid programs shall be directed to public charter schools serving students eligible for such aid.

G. The management committee of a public charter school is authorized to accept gifts, donations, or grants of any kind made to the public charter school and to spend such funds in accordance with the conditions prescribed by the donor. However, no gift, donation, or grant shall be accepted by the management committee of a public charter school if the conditions for such funds are contrary to law or the terms of the agreement between the local school board and the public charter school or, in the case of a regional public charter school, the relevant school boards and the regional public charter school.

H. The Department of Education shall provide technical assistance to local school boards relating to receipt, review, and ruling upon applications for public charter schools.

1998, cc. [748](#), [890](#); 2000, cc. [631](#), [712](#), [1028](#); 2002, c. [851](#); 2012, cc. [702](#), [720](#).

§ 22.1-212.15. Report of public charter schools.

The Board shall report the number of public charter schools established in the Commonwealth, as well as the number of charters denied, in its annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly pursuant to § [22.1-18](#).

1998, cc. [748](#), [890](#); 2000, cc. [631](#), [1028](#); 2002, cc. [851](#), [874](#); 2010, c. [61](#).

§ 22.1-212.16. Immunity.

Public charter schools shall be immune from liability to the same extent as all other public schools in the Commonwealth, and the employees and volunteers in a public charter school are immune from liability to the same extent as the employees and volunteers in a public school.

2002, c. [874](#).