



Wisconsin Charter Schools: a Navigation Tool for Families

District Authorized Charter Schools:

In school district charter schools, the school board is considered the ‘authorizer’ and may determine whether the charter school is an **instrumentality** of the school district in which it is located. All charter schools are operated by a governance board. If it is an instrumentality, the district employs all personnel for the charter school. If it is a **non-instrumentality**, the personnel are considered employees of the charter school governance board, and not the district.

District charter schools can be **virtual** or **non-virtual**. A virtual charter school is defined in Wis. Stats. § 115.001 (16) as “a charter school under contract with a school board under s. 118.40 in which all or a portion of the instruction is provided through means of the Internet, and the pupils enrolled in and instructional staff employed by the school are geographically remote from each other.” Virtual charter schools are publicly funded, nonsectarian schools that are exempt from many regulations that apply to traditional public schools and that offer some of their classes online.

Questions to reflect on when considering this option:

- What is the relationship between the District and the School?
- Is the District fully supportive of the School?
- What has the history of charter schools been in the District? Has it been successful?
- How much autonomy does the School have from the District?

How to apply to a district authorized charter school:

1. If the child is a resident of the district in which the district authorized charter school is located (i.e. you live in Lodi and the school is part of the Lodi school district), you can apply directly with the school in the springtime, and the child will be entered into the lottery/lotteries, and then added to a waitlist if need be.
2. If the child is not a resident of the district in which the school is located (i.e. you live in Lodi but the charter school is part of the Baraboo school district), you will need to apply BOTH with the school itself (entering the lottery) and also apply to the district through their open enrollment process. Currently the WI open enrollment process runs from February-June.
3. If you live outside of the school district in which the charter school is located and your student requires special education services, keep in mind that the district in which the charter school is located is only statutorily required to provide those types of services to their resident students, and they typically set annual limits on the number of spaces they are able to accommodate with the various services. So while the charter school itself is a random lottery, the district may not be able to provide all of the services the out-of-district student may require and therefore, they may not be able to attend.

Additional Resources

- [Charter Schools - Wisconsin DPI page](#)
- [WI Department of Public Instruction information: Virtual Charter Schools](#)

Independently Authorized Charter Schools:

Sometimes referred to as 2r or 2x charter schools, or New and Legacy charter schools, these are charter schools that are not authorized by a public school district. Each of the following have authority to authorize a charter school in Wisconsin:

- The common council of the city of Milwaukee
- The chancellor of any institution in the University of Wisconsin System
- Each technical college district board
- Waukesha County Executive
- College of Menominee Nation
- Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College
- UW- System Office of Educational Opportunity

The terms "2r" or "2x" refer to the section of the charter school law within [s. 118.40](#) of the Wisconsin State Statutes that grants these entities authority to authorize charter schools. All employees of independent charter schools are employed by the operating organization (governance board) of the charter school.

Questions to reflect on when considering this option:

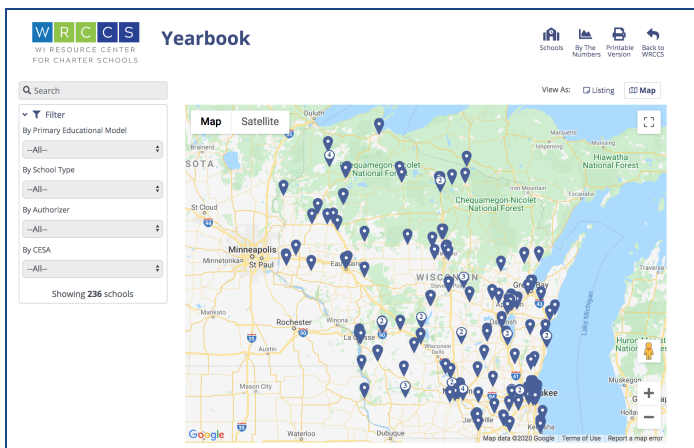
- What is the relationship between the Authorizer and the School?
- Is the Authorizer fully supportive of the School?
- What has the history of charter schools been with this Authorizer? Have they been successful?
- How much autonomy does the School have from the Authorizer?
- What level of support is given by the Authorizer?

How to apply to an independently authorized charter school:

1. Anyone can apply directly with the school in the springtime, and the child will be entered into the lottery/lotteries, and then added to a waitlist if need be.
2. If your child requires special education services, these will be provided by the charter school.
3. Note that there are no virtual options of independently authorized charter schools, so you will need to attend these schools in person.

Additional Resources

- [WI Department of Public Instruction: Independent Charter Schools](#)



Learn more!
Explore the map and list view of the [WRCCS charter schools yearbook](#).