Is Charter School Right for You?

Written by Stacia Affelt

When it comes to deciding if you should send your child to charter school, the question isn't necessarily if charter school will fit your child, but which charter school will fit your child.

"Every child is right for some charter school," says Peter Bezanson, Basis.ed CEO. BASIS Schools operates charter schools within Arizona.

A charter school is a public school that offers freedom when it comes to curriculum, teachers, textbooks, classes, etc. As a public institution, charter schools have no tuition or admissions criteria. This means that any resident who applies automatically gets in, no matter where they live within the state.

Here is what charter schools have to offer:

Choice

As a parent, "you get to make an active choice about the kind of school that you want your kid to go to," Bezanson says.

Whatever your reasoning for choosing a charter school, the decision is up to you.

"Every kid can find a charter school that fits them and every charter school is able to meet the needs of the kids who apply," Bezanson says. "Charter schools are open to everybody and welcome to everybody."

Flexibility

As opposed to public district schools, charter schools have less state regulations and therefore more flexibility to operate and innovate.

"We have so much freedom in Arizona to operate, which is why the best charter schools in the country almost all of them have come from Arizona," Bezanson says.

Charters schools can easily modify to the needs of incoming students as they change. This is not the case for public district schools.

Arizona charter schools have a separate school board, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools, to deal with problems or complaints. This is especially good for parents who want to express a dissatisfaction or concern.

Variety

Every charter school is different and offers you a range of options to choose from. Schools vary based on mission, cultural vision, class size, dress code, curriculum, etc. Bezanson said it is the parents' responsibility to research what each charter school is about.

To narrow your search, first decide what geographical location you are looking in. Then look up the websites of every school in that area and take note of things such as the school's mission, overall culture and type of students enrolled there.

Ask questions like "Is it a school that requires students to all take the same courses?" or "Does this school offer electives?"

Arizona Charter Schools Association will help make the search easier by categorizing what's important to you when it comes to picking the right charter school within your area.

Non-selectivity

The biggest misconception about charter schools is that they are selective. However, just like a public school, charter schools must serve every kid.

"Any kid can come to a public charter school," Bezanson says. "Of course, not every kid will chose a certain charter school, so as a result charter schools are filled with kids who have chosen their particular school."

Bezanson considers it a good thing that parents can choose what kind of education they want for their child, but that sometimes gets misinterpreted.

"We're schools of choice, but that doesn't mean we get to choose our kids, the kids choose us," he says.

All photos courtesy of BASIS Scottsdale.