

October 2026 District Newsletter

Dear Wittenberg-Birnamwood District Residents,

For this month's newsletter, I would like to address the question, "What is the difference between charter schools and voucher schools?" There has been much discussion lately at the state level about continued voucher school expansion and what it means for public schools and communities. Here is the short version of what both charter and voucher schools are, including a little regarding their impact on our localities.

Charter Schools- public schools created through a "businesslike contract" or "charter" between the charter governance board and the sponsoring school board. They are publicly funded by local, state, and federal tax dollars based on enrollment, just like other public schools. Each district receives a per pupil allocation for public school students regardless of their enrollment in a traditional or charter school. Charter schools are exempt from most state regulations that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools in exchange for greater accountability for results. Examples of this would be restrictions on length of the school year or day, minutes of instruction, and calendar. They operate in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives determined by the developer and agreed to by the chartering agency. Examples of Wisconsin charter schools are the Fox Cities Leadership Academy, Milwaukee Academy of Science, Crossroads Charter School in Ripon, and the Waupaca County Charter School.

Voucher Schools- Allows students who reside within an eligible District to attend any participating private school if certain eligibility criteria are met (student eligibility based on family income). The private school, on behalf of the pupil's parent/guardian, receives a state aid payment (\$11,305 for pupils in grades K-8 and \$13,799 for pupils in grades 9-12) for each eligible student. All taxpayers within the state contribute to the payments (not just those within the voucher school district). This year, 377 private schools registered for Wisconsin Parental Choice (voucher eligibility). There has been a lot of discussion surrounding voucher (school choice) expansion over the past few years, particularly at the state level.

I hope this clarifies some understanding surrounding both Charter and Voucher programming. Enjoy the autumn colors!

Garrett Rogowski