

# About Us

## **What is a Charter school?**

A charter school allows parents the choice of a free, public education for their child. Students are educated in an environment that is similar to private education, but there is no tuition charged. Charter schools have a governing School Board that is comprised of community leaders and parents. Charter schools receive their funding from the State and Federal Governments in much the same way other public schools do. View a comparison (see pdf below) of charter schools to Public and Private schools.

## **What is a lottery?**

Since the number of applicants exceeds the established ceiling, students are selected by lottery. When a student is chosen, siblings of the applicant (within the same household) are also invited for admission, provided there are openings. Students currently admitted are given preference for re-enrollment. Siblings of admitted students are given preference relative to other applicants.

Voyage Academy does not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the same basis as other public schools may not discriminate in their admission policies and practices. See Enrollment for more information.

## **How are Charter schools financed?**

Charter schools are funded on the principle that state funds follow the student. A differentiated Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU) is applied to Charter school students. In distributing funds under the Minimum School Program Act, to Charter schools, Charter school pupils shall be weighted, where applicable, as follows:

The vast majority of funding comes through the WPU. In addition, the legislature appropriates funds each year to replace some of the local property tax revenues that are not available to Charter schools. Charter schools may also apply for state and federal start-up funds and specialized funds if qualifying students are served in approved programs

A Charter school may not charge tuition or require students or parents to make donations and is subject to the same rules regarding school fees as other public schools.

## **Where is the school located?**

Voyage Academy is located at 1891 North 1500 West in Clinton, Utah.

## **Why does Voyage Academy focus on Expeditionary Learning?**

Expeditionary Learning Schools are exemplified by project-based learning expeditions, where students engage in interdisciplinary, in-depth study of compelling topics, in groups and in their community, with assessment coming through cumulative products, public presentations, and portfolios. Students undertake tasks requiring perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline, and significant achievement.

The following design principles serve as a moral and cultural foundation for each Expeditionary Learning School. They express the core values and educational philosophy of Expeditionary Learning.

**The Primacy of Self-Discovery** states that learning happens best with emotion, challenge and the requisite support. People discover their abilities, values, passions, and responsibilities in situations that offer adventure and the unexpected. The primary task of the teacher is to help students overcome their fears and discover they can do more than they thought they could.

**The Having of Wonderful Ideas** places emphasis on fostering curiosity about the world by creating learning situations that provide something important to think about, time to experiment, and time to make sense of what is observed.

**The Responsibility for Learning** argues that learning is both a personal process of discovery and a social activity. Therefore, every aspect of an Expeditionary Learning school encourages both children and adults to become increasingly responsible for directing their own personal and collective learning.

**Empathy and Caring** believes that learning is fostered best in communities where students' and teachers' ideas are respected and where there is mutual trust. Older students often mentor younger ones, and students feel physically and emotionally safe.

**Success and Failure** states the fact that all students need to be successful if they are to build the confidence and capacity to take risks and meet increasingly difficult challenges. But it is also important for students to learn from their failures, to persevere when things are hard, and to learn to turn disabilities into opportunities.

**Collaboration and Competition** positions Expeditionary Learning schools as integrating individual development and group development, so that the value of friendship, trust, and group action is clear. Students are encouraged to compete not against each other, but with their own personal best and with rigorous standards of excellence.

**Diversity and Inclusion** believes that both diversity and inclusion increase the richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and respect for others. Schools and learning groups are heterogeneous.

**The Natural World** helps create a direct and respectful relationship with the natural world, which refreshes the human spirit and teaches the important ideas of recurring cycles and cause and effect. Students learn to become stewards of the earth and of future generations.

**Solitude and Reflection** argues that students and teachers need time alone to explore their own thoughts, make their own connections, and create their own ideas. They also need time to exchange their reflections with other students and with adults.

**Service and Compassion** places emphasis on strengthening students and teachers through acts of consequential service to others. One of an Expeditionary Learning school's primary functions is to prepare students with the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service.

### **Thinking in a new direction**

Across the country, educators, policy makers, and parents are looking for ways to fix an education system that is failing far too many students. EL Education offers a different approach to school improvement, and we have the results to prove that it works. We engage our students so that they become self-motivated learners. We inspire our teachers and give them the tools they need to make a difference in their students' achievement. And we give hope to communities that have lost faith in the ability of their schools to prepare young people for success.

### **Powerful Professional Development**

We invest in the growth of both new and veteran teachers, helping them create rigorous and stimulating learning environments where students love to learn and teachers love to teach. We offer our teachers professional development, coaching and online tools to improve curriculum design, instruction, school culture, leadership, and assessment practices.

### **Engaged Teaching and Learning**

EL challenges students to think critically and take active roles in their classrooms and communities. This results in high achievement and greater engagement in school. Voyage Academy strives to give students the academic and character-building skills they need to reach their potential as learners and leaders.



## **Cultivating student success**

EL Education schools are outperforming state and district averages on standardized tests and closing critical achievement gaps. In many US cities, EL schools are the highest-performing public schools, and in many EL high schools, 100% college acceptance is the standard. For our students, the benefits are clear. Students who attend an EL school:

- Graduate with the academic knowledge, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving capacity needed to succeed in
- college and beyond
- Hold themselves and their peers to high expectations for quality work, commitment to learning, and character
- Take leadership roles in their schools and communities
- Engage their families and communities in their learning by leading family conferences and making formal presentations to expert panels
- Complete projects that challenge them to do the work of professionals — scientists, historians, mathematicians, writers, and artists
- Work with experts and conduct field research to produce high-quality academic products that meet professional standards
- Contribute to their communities through meaningful service embedded in the curriculum
- Benefit from learning in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe, marked by kindness, respect, and responsibility
- Find joy in learning

**Curriculum:** Our approach to curriculum makes standards come alive for students by connecting learning to real-world issues and needs. Academically rigorous learning expeditions, case studies, projects, fieldwork, and service learning inspire students to think and work as professionals do, contributing high-quality work to authentic audiences beyond the classroom. Our schools regularly analyze the curriculum to check alignment to standards and opportunities for all students to meet those standards.

**Instruction:** Our classrooms are alive with discovery, inquiry, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. Teachers talk less. Students talk and think more. Lessons have explicit purpose, guided by learning targets for which students take ownership and responsibility. In all subject areas, teachers differentiate instruction and maintain high expectations in order to bring out the best in all students and cultivate a culture of high achievement.

**Assessment:** Our leaders, teachers, and students embrace the power of student-engaged assessment practices to build student ownership of learning, focus students on reaching standards-based learning targets, and drive achievement. This approach to assessment is key to ensuring that schools achieve educational equity. Students continually assess and improve the quality of their work through the use of models, reflection, critique, rubrics, and work with experts. Staff members engage in ongoing data inquiry and analysis, examining everything from patterns in student work to results from formal assessments, disaggregating data by groups of students to recognize and address gaps in achievement.

**Culture and Character:** Our schools build cultures of respect, responsibility, courage, and kindness, where students and adults are committed to quality work and citizenship. School structures and traditions such as crew, community meetings, exhibitions of student work, and service learning ensure that every student is known and cared for, that student leadership is nurtured, and that contributions to the school and world are celebrated. Students and staff are supported to do better work and be better people than they thought possible.

**Leadership:** Our school leaders build a cohesive school vision focused on student achievement and continuous improvement, and they align all activities in the school to that vision. Leaders use data wisely, boldly shape school structures to best meet student needs, celebrate joy in learning, and build a school-wide culture of trust and collaboration. Leadership in our schools goes beyond a single person or team-it is a role and expectation for all.

### **What is the school calendar?**

Our school calendar is closely aligned with the calendar of Davis School District. See the school calendar on our website.

### **How does Voyage Academy provide opportunity for parental involvement in management decisions at the school level?**

Voyage Academy believes that when parents participate in their children's education, the result is an increase in student achievement, an improvement of students' attitudes, increased attendance, fewer discipline problems, and high aspirations for lifelong learning. Studies have shown that when parents participated in the decision-making roles in the educational program, academic achievement scores of students increased dramatically. Parents of students attending Voyage Academy will have an opportunity to be a part of the Parent Crew Organization (PCO), not to be affiliated with PTA.

Parents are encouraged to participate in fieldwork, which is an integral part of our curriculum. Parents with varying talents and skills will also be encouraged to help out with after school clubs, varying from academic to athletic social interests.

### **Is there a Special Education program?**

Absolutely! Voyage Academy employs a Special Education Teacher along with a team of Special Education aides to address the needs of children who require special education. As with any public school, Voyage Academy complies with all federal special education laws including "IDEA 2004". The school and Special Education teachers work directly with parents of special education children to properly address the individual disability challenges each child faces.

### **Is transportation provided?**

No. With the exception of field trips, transportation is the responsibility of each family.

### **If I don't live in Davis County, can my child still attend?**

Yes, provided your child has been accepted into the school, it doesn't matter which school district you live in as long as you can provide your own transportation to and from school each day.

### **How can I be more involved in my child's education at Voyage Academy?**

Parents of students attending Voyage Academy are voting members of the Parent Crew Organization (PCO). The membership elects an executive committee and chairs for school committees, such as fundraising, volunteerism, etc.

All parents are encouraged to volunteer at least thirty hours per academic year. There are many opportunities even for parents who have young kids at home or parents who work.

### **May a Charter school limit its enrollment to certain students?**

No. A Charter school is part of the public education system and must be open to all students, without discrimination, on the same basis as other public schools. If the number of students applying to enroll in a Charter school exceeds the capacity of the school or of programs, classes, or grade levels within the school, then those students to be admitted are chosen at random from among the applicants. For more information, see Enrollment.

### **Are Charter schools subject to the same laws and regulations as other public schools?**

As a general rule, yes. Laws and regulations relating to religion in the schools, school fees and tuition, health and safety, civil rights, annual reports, prohibitions against advocacy of unlawful behavior, screening of potential employees or volunteers for competency and fitness, and most other matters are the same for both Charter schools and other public schools. The State Board may waive any of its rules for a Charter school or other public school, if the school applies for a waiver and the State Board finds that the waiver would not violate applicable law or cause harm to students or the school. A Charter school is exempt from existing negotiated agreements relating to the hiring, employment, and dismissal of employees. A Charter school's governing body may determine the level of compensation and the terms and conditions of employment for its employees. Charter schools may only employ educators who hold valid teaching certificates or who meet State Board requirements for alternative certification or authorization.

### **How are Charter schools held accountable for what they do?**

A Charter school must make the same annual reports as other public schools, including an annual financial audit and monthly budget report. Additionally, the Charter school must participate in the statewide testing programs. Charter schools submit all reports to the Utah State Board of Education.

### **Where can I get additional information about Charter schools?**

Find more information on Charter schools at:

[www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org)

[www.educationevolving.org](http://www.educationevolving.org)

[www.charterschoolsusa.com](http://www.charterschoolsusa.com)

### **Are the teachers certified?**

Yes. As required by the state of Utah, all teachers shall be licensed, certified teachers, or be qualified to teach under USOE's alternative certification or authorization program.

The principal and executive committee of the governing board work together to arrive at a joint decision on hiring of teachers and other staff as deemed necessary. For teachers, the principal does a pre-selection from applications received. The principal conducts the final interview and submits new hire recommendations to the Board for ratification.

Individual employees, including the principal, are hired with an annual contract, which is renewable at the end of each year. The governing board carries the right to terminate any employee that is not complying with the standards set forth by the school and included in the employment contract.

Background checks and/or drug testing on prospective or current employees are performed as required by state law.

The principal, with input from the Board of Directors, is responsible for evaluating the performance of teachers on an annual basis.

### **Is there a library?**

Voyage Academy houses a complete library, which includes various forms of multi-media learning resources. The collection includes complete sets of age-appropriate fiction, non-fiction and art reference materials. Students learn different research techniques through utilization of hard reference materials, the Internet, trade journals, etc.

The collection is built on a foundation of scholastically recommended books, consisting of classic children/young adult literature and local periodicals. The library has educational learning centers, along with defined group and personal reading spaces.