

I have always known that I wanted to educate my children at home. It was a way for us to impart our values to our children through educating them in our home on a daily basis. It was also a way to protect them at such a vulnerable time in their lives from the increasingly violent and threatening environment that some public schools have become. **It has allowed them to thrive as the unique individuals they are without being forced to change under the growing pressures of their peers** while still having healthy and influential relationships with friends they have made in the community through their interests. They have gained confidence as leaders in our church, and community organizations such as Boy Scouts and 4-H, and developed skills in karate and dance. Now my two oldest children have excelled in a public collegiate environment, making the Dean's list and preparing for directed studies, internships and full-time employment.

—Dr. Stephanie Hamel, Parent, PA Virtual Charter School

I chose Esperanza Cyber Charter School because my son was experiencing a lot of difficulties in school with other students. He is terribly shy and had trouble associating with other students. As a single parent, I work many hours and did not have the ability to report to the school to have multiple meetings. My daughter had a series of behavioral issues at her old school. At ECCS, I removed these challenges, **they have found support**, and have an opportunity to focus on their school work. This was their first year and will be back next year!

—Parent, Esperanza Cyber Charter School

I started this journey into cyber school world about 6 years ago. The first time was when my son was in 2nd grade and the district tried to force me to medicate him for ADHD. I didn't know about statewide cyber charter schools at that time, so we opted for the district's online program. It was not a good program, but we persisted for 2 years before going back to the district's brick and mortar school.

When he returned he was still singled out by the school staff. Despite his treatment, he wanted to stay to be with his friends. Eventually, the torment became too much and he was suffering so I chose to pull him once again from the district school. We once again tried the schools cyber program. This time it was Jr High and the program was absolutely terrible and I felt it set him up to fail. He got behind and the school refused any tutoring or assistance and said I must send him back to regular classes. Feeling we had no other alternative, he again returned to the brick and mortar where they forced him into an alternative program at the local children's aid home, saying it would give him the tutoring he needed for math. The district refused to conduct a full and thorough IEP. At this point, attending the district school was causing my son anxiety with panic attacks—all brought on by school staff.

In desperation, I took to the internet and searched for the perfect school for him, willing to pay tuition if necessary. I came across Achievement House Cyber Charter School and called immediately. I was able to speak with Mrs. Botes, the Guidance Counselor who was amazing —reassuring, compassionate, and most of all willing to help. She was able to enroll my son within three days. Along the way, she has called, checked on him and sent emails encouraging him. She has been amazing and has helped my son begin to trust school staff again. Although it has been a difficult process, she was willing to take it step by step with him.

Once my son began all his regular classes, the staff was and still is the best you will find. They encourage each and every child, they make sure each child understands the material, and they offer tremendous help. They treat the kids as people and individuals. I sit with my son throughout his math class so I can understand it so I can help him. His teacher answers any question I have. **Since finding AHCCS our lives have done a complete change. I got my happy, fun, smiling, willing to learn son back.** I am forever in debt to AHCCS and the staff for it.

—Chastity Stanczyk, Parent, Achievement House Cyber Charter School

My Charter School Story: *I Chose Cyber School for My Children*

My middle child was bullied. School choice has enabled him to choose a safe learning environment away from his bullies. He feels safe and is able to heal and regain his confidence. He was able to make friends and not have to worry about his reports to the office being disregarded as his bullies were just “joking.” He has the opportunity to take classes in 8th grade for high school credit. He’s currently preparing for the Keystone Exams. His teachers have a flexible schedule where tutoring is easily obtained through technology.

My third child has an IEP. She needed a change —an environment that would allow her to rebuild her confidence and take the pressure off for her to keep pace with “normal” kids. School choice enabled her to change her environment. She has a flexible class schedule and a wide array of resources available to her through the special education department. We have seen the educational growth that comes with stability.

School choice has enabled our children stability when there is none within our public school district. Within the last eight years, there have been countless PDE school meetings in our area regarding closing or consolidating schools. The board members argue which side of the district should educate the student population. As a taxpayer, I have no choice in paying my school taxes. My only say as to what educational stability my children receive, is who I vote to represent my district. School choice, with public funding that follows the student, allows for the students to find what works for them.

I am a true believer that children can flourish in the appropriate educational environment that focuses on the child's individual educational needs and interests. In a society that is still in the mindset of one size fits all education, school choice has an enormous impact on the success of the child that doesn't fit in that box.

—Zoe Hatcher, Parent, PA Virtual Charter School

We love the **flexibility**. The teachers are so supportive and are able to cater to each child’s individuality.

—Jane Clements, Parent, Commonwealth Cyber Charter School

After six years in a "traditional" parochial school setting, we knew we needed a change from the lackluster curriculum and unresolved bullying. Our public school district has made national news in the past 18 months for its poor performance, failing system, and multiple neighborhood school closures, so we knew we needed to rely on school choice options and we settled on Reach Cyber Charter School. This model of education meets the needs of my self-driven, independent learners who consistently perform above grade level. At Reach, I have seen my children's confidence and academic skill sets soar in an environment where **I, as a parent, can take a more vested role in my child's education**. We have the support of professional, highly-qualified teachers, school staff, and family coordinators who have all become cheerleaders for my family's success. I never thought in the cyber model we would have created such positive relationships with other families and especially the staff who have come to know and cherish my children. Reach Cyber Charter School is the absolute best schooling option for my children and our family. I support school choice and I am grateful for the Pennsylvania Public Charter School system that allows families to seek public schooling options outside of our residential district.

—Leigh Anne Kraemer-Naser, Parent, Reach Cyber Charter School

Thank you to the parents who shared their stories. If you have a charter story to tell, please contact Brandie Karpew, Director of Operations and Data Analytics, at b.karpew@pacharters.org.