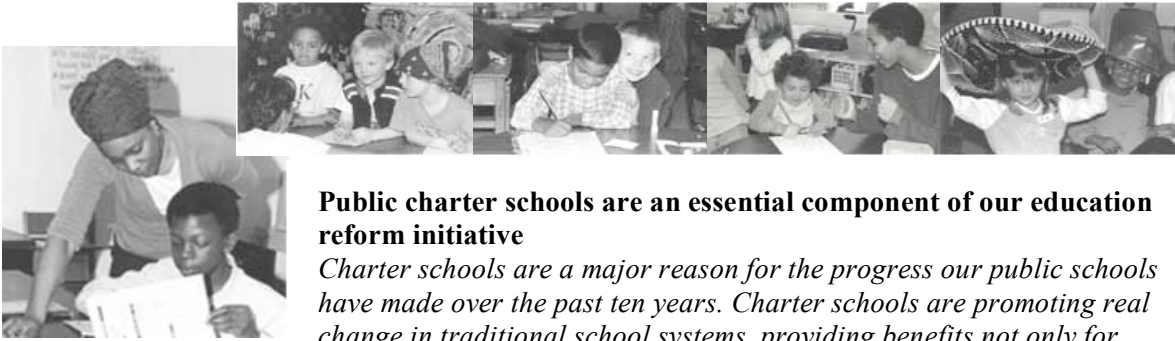


Public Charter Schools: An Essential Component of Education Reform



Public charter schools are an essential component of our education reform initiative

Charter schools are a major reason for the progress our public schools have made over the past ten years. Charter schools are promoting real change in traditional school systems, providing benefits not only for students who attend them, but for all public school students. Public school systems are responding to the positive competitive spirit charter schools are creating. More reforms like full-day kindergarten and pilot schools are being implemented in school systems where charter schools are located.

Educational choice should not be the domain of the rich.

Public charter schools give poor and working class families genuine educational choice. Choice is a powerful weapon for parents seeking educational equity and equal access to quality educational opportunities for their children. Parents who seek alternatives for their children, but cannot afford private school, have found an answer in charter schools. Parents are voting with their feet enrolling more than 19,000 of their children in the state's 50 charter schools; 13,200 more sit on waiting lists.

Public charter schools are succeeding academically

Charter schools are setting higher standards with higher test scores. And they are doing it with less money. In 2003, a higher percentage of students in public charter schools scored proficient or advanced in every subject at every grade level compared with their district peers. The academic success was evident in urban, suburban and rural charter schools.

Public charter schools are held to extremely high standards

Charter schools must first go through a rigorous 18-month application process, and then are evaluated every year by the state Department of Education. Their charters are up for renewal every five years. If the schools do not perform up to standards, they are shut down. The Washington-based Thomas B. Fordham Institute ranked Massachusetts' application, performance, and oversight practices as the toughest in the nation.

Public charter schools reflect the demographic make-up of the communities they serve

Since charters are open to all who enroll and hold blind lotteries if there are more applicants than slots, they cannot select their students. In spite of this, charter schools mirror the demographics of their districts. Statewide, charter schools enroll a higher percentage of minority students and students living below the poverty line than districts. And charter schools are under the same obligation as district schools to provide in-school services to special education students.

Public charter schools are developing and sharing innovative programs

Charter schools were established to "stimulate the development of innovative programs within public education" and to provide "models for replication in other public schools." Through various dissemination projects and informal collaborative efforts, charter schools are promoting their effective practices. The Project for School Innovation brings together teachers from charter and district schools so they can learn from one another. This is evidence that charter schools are not a threat to public education; they are partners in it.

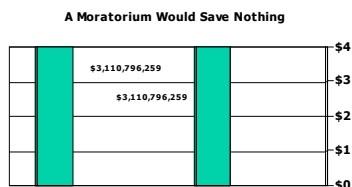
The Fiscal Facts

A public charter school moratorium would not save the state any money

If new charter schools don't open, the money isn't saved; it's still spent on the district schools, because the children will remain in the district schools. Total state spending on public education will remain the same.

The only thing the moratorium would accomplish is to deny parents educational choice

The real aim of the moratorium is to keep all school spending within the established system.



The total amount of spending on public education in communities with public charter schools is unchanged
When charter schools are funded, there is no loss of public school funds because charter schools are public schools.

Public charter schools cost the state nothing extra

The state is effectively taking a slice of total education spending and reallocating it to charter schools. The way it works is very simple. If 2% percent of the students leave the district schools for charter schools, 2% of the money follows.

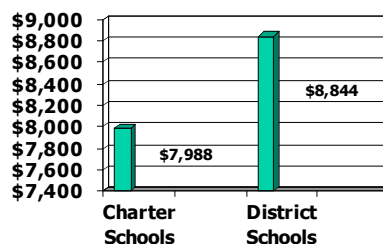
Public charter school opponents are over-stating the fiscal impact

Charter schools represent less than 2% of total state spending on public schools. Districts claim they cannot identify savings to offset the loss of students to charter schools, because their costs are fixed. Are districts arguing that 98% of their costs are fixed? In addition, since the first charter school opened in the fall of 1995, the state has provided more than \$100 million in reimbursements to school districts to help them adjust their operations after redirecting students and funds to charter schools.

Public charter schools spend less money per pupil than district schools

Charter schools don't receive state school building assistance and – unlike other public schools – pay for their own facilities. Yet, they relieve overcrowding in district public schools and reduce the need for new district schools. When you account for the lack of facilities financing, charter schools spend on average \$856 dollars less per pupil than district schools. That's 10% less per pupil than district schools.

Charter Schools Are A Bargain



A legislative commission found the funding formula to be unfair to charter schools

The 1998 study, conducted by the accounting firm of KPMG Peat Marwick, concluded that "the greatest inequity" in the formula had to do with the lack of facility financing made available to charter schools.

The bottom line

The state is getting more value from public charter schools.

