



# Hopes, Fears, & Reality

A BALANCED LOOK AT AMERICAN  
CHARTER SCHOOLS IN 2007

*Robin J. Lake, Editor*



center on **reinventing** public education



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CHARTER SCHOOLS IN **2007**

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DECEMBER 2007





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The National Charter School Research Project (NCSRP) brings rigor, evidence, and balance to the national charter school debate.

NCSRP seeks to facilitate the fair assessment of the value-added effects of U.S. charter schools and to provide the charter school and broader public education communities with research and information for ongoing improvement.

NCSRP:

- Identifies high-priority research questions.
- Conducts and commissions original research to fill gaps in current knowledge or to illuminate existing debates.
- Helps policymakers and the general public interpret charter school research.

The Project is an initiative of the Center on Reinventing Public Education.

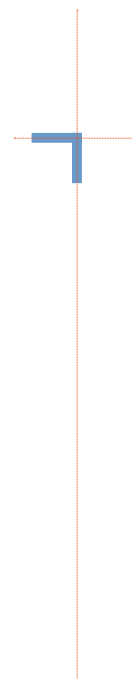
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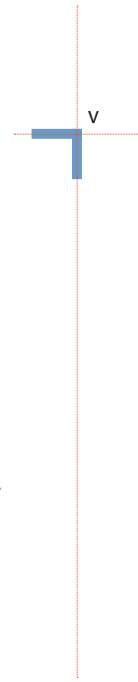
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# Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to this report other than those whose names appear as authors. We appreciate their critical eyes and constructive ideas. Specifically, our thanks go to: reviewers Paul T. Hill, Bruno Manno, Michael Podgursky, Ted Sizer, and Lisa M. Stulberg; Judy Vitzthum, for her assistance in collecting state charter school data; and our colleagues at the Center on Reinventing Public Education, especially Julie Angeley, Debra Britt, and James Harvey, for their superb production, editing, and support.

We are also grateful to our funders and advisory board members for supporting and shaping our work. Despite the important contributions of those acknowledged here, however, any opinions, omissions, or errors are the authors' alone.



## FAST FACTS: Charter Schools in 2006-2007

Number of charter schools in 2005-06: **3638**

Number of charter schools in 2006-07: **3816**

Percentage of all public schools that are charters in 2005-06: **3.7%**

Percentage of all public schools that are charters in 2006-07: **3.9%**

Percentage of all public school students that attend charter schools in 2005-06: **2.1%**

Percentage of all public school students that attend charter schools in 2006-07: **2.3%**

Number of states that *expanded* the allowable number of charter schools or charter school students: **3**

Number of states that *restricted* the allowable number of charter schools or charter school students: **1**

Percentage of all charter schools that were new *last year*: **12.2%**

Percentage of all charter schools that were new *this year*: **8.8%**

Number of charter schools that opened in 2005-06: **445**

Number of charter schools that opened in 2006-07: **336**

Number of charter schools that closed in 2005-06: **106**

Number of charter schools that closed in 2006-07: **107**

**SOURCE:** Unless otherwise noted, the figures reported here come from NCSRP's annual survey of state charter school offices conducted between June and September 2007. For more detailed information about the survey and its results, see the NCSRP web site: [www.ncsrp.org](http://www.ncsrp.org). The numbers of all public school students and public schools nationwide come from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data, as well as data published on state Department of Education websites.



## OVERVIEW

# Charter Schools From the Outside-In

*Robin J. Lake*

*Hopes, Fears, & Reality* was conceived as an annual exercise in providing objective evidence about what was going on in charter schools, how well they were doing, where they needed to improve, and what could be learned from the research on these new kinds of public schools. This is the third of these reports.

Essays in the 2005 volume pointed to the need to insure that bad charter schools were closed, and explored the feasibility of using charter schools as replacements for low-performing traditional public schools. The 2006 volume explored how parents make charter school choices, how school districts cope with competition for students, how charter school and union leaders might find common ground, and a variety of ways to improve charter authorization and assessment.

This year's review explores what is going on inside charter schools themselves: How are they organized and led? Who teaches in charter schools and how do their work and compensation differ from that of teachers in traditional public schools? Do charter schools seem to be meeting their original promises? Do charter school students experience anything different than students in traditional public schools?

Amidst the political debate about charter schools, it is easy to forget that at the end of the day they are *schools*. Student work is put on walls, teachers teach and plan lessons, parents complain, and students, like students everywhere, roll their eyes at new assignments.

As schools, charter schools face many of the same issues as other public schools: how to build effective educational programs, how to motivate staff, how to encourage students

## WHAT ARE CHARTER SCHOOLS?

Charter schools are public schools of choice. Charter schools receive public funds based on the number of children who attend, and schools that do not attract enough students to pay their bills must close. Schools obtain charters only with the approval and oversight of their local school district or other state agency. The approving agency can also close a charter school if it does not perform. The adults who run charter schools and teach in them enjoy significant freedom of action, but they can lose their jobs if the school proves ineffective or families do not choose it.

Charter schools are another way—in addition to schools directly operated by a school district—that communities can create new public education options and partnerships for their children. While some of public education's traditional constituents may be uncomfortable with charter schools, these new institutions are intended to be part of the fabric of public life in their communities.

to work hard, what to do in the face of violence or vandalism, how to develop school leadership, and how to create an organizational culture that promotes the school's goals.

In pursuing these goals, charter schools are structurally different from other public schools. They can usually hire their own teachers and administrators, rather than accepting staff assigned from the central office. They have greater freedom to set their own hiring and compensation policies. They also are free to build their own expectations for student behavior and cultural norms. Ultimately, they are accountable to many parties (parents, governing boards, and possibly organizational partners) for results—not just to the school district or the agency that approved the charter.

With these differences come opportunities for innovative approaches to public schooling, as well as new challenges. But those outside charter schools know very little about whether these schools are taking advantage of those opportunities or dealing with the challenges. This edition of *Hopes, Fears, & Reality*, then, begins to focus on some of these issues: what are the pressing concerns, tensions, and opportunities involved with teaching, leading, and governing charter schools?

Like prior volumes, this year's edition begins with some basic facts and figures. In chapter 1, **Jon Christensen** and **Robin J. Lake** of the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) provide a view from both outside and inside. Based on two analyses (one of a survey of state charter school offices and another of the National Center on Education Statistics' most recent School and Staffing Survey), the authors conclude that charter schools continue to grow, albeit at somewhat slower rates, while delivering on several of their promises of operating in a different way from traditional public schools.

Chapter 2 takes up the issue of charter school internal governance, including teacher involvement in decisionmaking, community partnerships, and governing boards. Drawing on early findings from a federally funded study, **Joanna Smith**, **Priscilla Wohlstetter**, and **Dominic J. Brewer** of the University of Southern California note that charter school decentralization necessarily creates tensions between school-based autonomy and stakeholder empowerment that can be extremely turbulent and difficult to resolve. The authors argue that addressing these tensions effectively is critical to charter school survival and success. They find that charter schools have made progress toward improved governance and produced notable governance innovations, but the movement as a whole still employs fairly traditional governance models. The authors conclude with

recommendations for ways to encourage greater experimentation and dissemination of effective governance practices.

Chapter 3 introduces us to the individuals who straddle the two worlds, inside and outside charter schools: school leaders. Principals lead the school, including explaining it to external constituencies and mobilizing staff to meet its goals. In this chapter, CRPE's **Christine Campbell** reports on an interview with **Jonathan Schnur**, co-founder of New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS), about the challenges of finding, training, and keeping strong school leaders. Campbell describes Schnur's views on developing the charter school leadership pipeline and the emerging challenge of finding enough leaders to scale up high-quality charter schools. Campbell also distills important lessons about rethinking traditional urban school leadership policies and systems.

Chapters 4 and 5 bring us right into the heart of the school. In chapter 4, CRPE's **Michael DeArmond**, **Betheny Gross**, and **Dan Goldhaber** look at charter school teacher compensation. They conclude that, although charter school teachers are somewhat younger, less experienced, and less likely to be certified, most charter schools, despite some experimentation with performance-based pay, use traditional compensation strategies such as salary schedules. Greater experimentation is more likely in schools that operate under less-restrictive policy environments, are start-ups (as opposed to converted from traditional public school status), and are authorized by agencies other than school districts.

Chapter 5, meanwhile, explores an issue of intense interest to parents, students, and staff—school safety. CRPE's **Paul T. Hill** and **Jon Christensen** analyze School and Staffing Survey data and conclude that charter schools are quieter and less disruptive than similar schools serving similar students. They suggest that school safety is a product of careful management of school climate. From a policy perspective, the authors conclude that districts can learn from the charter experience to support, not abandon, school leaders who take risks to maintain school climate, and warn that charters leaders' apparent success in maintaining safer climates might be compromised if their authorizers do not continue to provide that same support.

Finally, chapter 6 draws us back outside the school again to the topic of charter school caps, an issue essential to the continued expansion of charter schools nationally. **Andrew J. Rotherham** of Education Sector questions the common rationale for charter school caps. He argues that hard-and-fast caps do not represent sound policy and that,

while some constraints on growth of charter schools make sense from a policy standpoint, a more defensible approach would be to establish “Smart Caps” to encourage the growth of proven charter models.

## A RESILIENT AND LASTING STRUCTURAL INNOVATION

In a seminal and much-discussed article published in *Education Week* in September 2007, CRPE director Paul T. Hill discusses how difficult it is to reach the “tipping point” in school choice.<sup>1</sup> He notes that “arguing for public school choice in the form of charter schools or voucher programs is not the same thing as claiming that any program offering choice will deliver all of the concept’s potential benefits.”

As Hill points out, and this year’s *Hopes, Fears, & Reality* confirms, charter schools are getting some things right but also facing serious challenges. Charter schools, like all schools, are difficult to run and need strong leaders. They require a lot from teachers and not all teachers are suited to them. They demand a lot from parents and students. They need as much money as the traditional public schools with which they compete—and they need to prove their merits on the same tests and outcome measures as other schools. Like traditional public schools, they also require strong oversight, both from governing boards and authorizers.

With all of that acknowledged, it is still the case that charter schools have proven themselves to be a resilient and lasting structural innovation in public education in the United States over the course of some 15 years. They are a significant laboratory in which dedicated reformers can conduct small, powerful experiments to illuminate how to reshape governance, strengthen school culture, improve teaching and learning, and promote accountability and more options for families.

The challenge for charter schools ten or even five years ago was to demonstrate their staying power. As the essays in this year’s report reveal, the challenge today is different, but no less compelling. Having demonstrated their staying power, charters now need to seize the opportunity that their laboratory status provides and demonstrate their ability to live up to their promise for distinctly different and more effective public schooling. Whether that happens or not will clearly depend on more than just the initiative of the people running charter schools. Ultimately, real charter innovation will depend on the ability of policymakers to resist the temptation to try to effect more consistent quality

by forcing charters back into a traditional policy framework, and instead learn—and act on—which policy and oversight practices best support dramatically more productive public school teaching and learning.

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#### NOTES

1. Paul T. Hill, “Waiting for the Tipping Point: Why School Choice Is Proving to Be So Hard,” *Education Week*, September 5, 2007.



## CHAPTER I

# The National Charter School Landscape in 2007

*Jon Christensen and Robin J. Lake*

*Number of charters continues to grow, but rate of growth slows and growth concentrates in certain states.*

Like the death of Mark Twain, report of limits on the growth of charter schools appear premature. Even *Hopes, Fears, & Reality* in 2005 worried that future growth of charter schools would be “limited in many states by legislative caps on numbers and/or locations of charters.”<sup>1</sup>

“Under current state caps,” said the National Charter School Research Project two years ago, “there is room for just 725 more schools nationwide . . . Most states are clearly bumping up against their caps, making it likely that, barring legislative changes, charter school growth in these states will grind to a halt in the next few years.”<sup>2</sup>

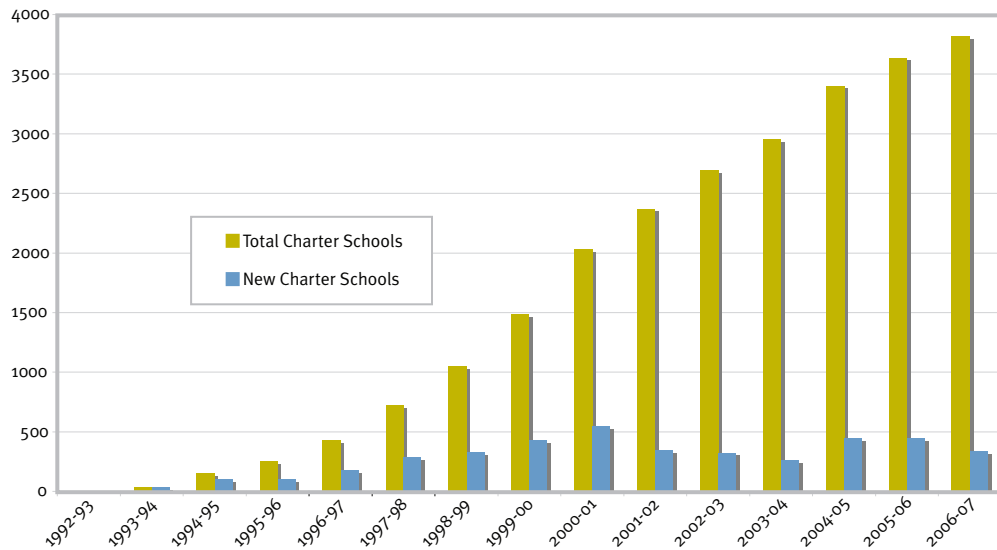
But in the last three years (2004–2007), more than 1,200 new charter schools have opened (see figure 1). In just the past year a single state, New York, doubled the number of charter schools authorized, from 100 to 200.<sup>3</sup> So, as cap limits are reached, it seems clear that state governments are reacting to provide some breathing space.

Nationally, hundreds of new charter schools still open each year. By the autumn of 2006, more than 3,800 charter schools were operating in 40 states and the District of Columbia. Charter schools now account for about 4 percent of total U.S. public schools and 2 percent of all public school students. Enrollment exceeds one million (1,119,599).<sup>4</sup>

## GROWTH RATES SLOWING

Still, the rate of new school openings has slowed. Some 336 new charter schools opened in 2006, down from the 450 that opened in each of the previous two years and well below the 2000–2001 high-water mark of 546 new charter schools (figure 1). Steady state growth in raw numbers has become hard to maintain.

**FIGURE 1. CHARTER SCHOOL GROWTH: NEW & TOTAL CHARTER SCHOOLS, 1992–2006**



**SOURCE:** The numbers of charter schools from 1992-2004 are from the Center on Education Reform. The numbers of charter schools from 2004-2006 come from NCSRP's annual survey of state charter school offices conducted between June and September 2007.

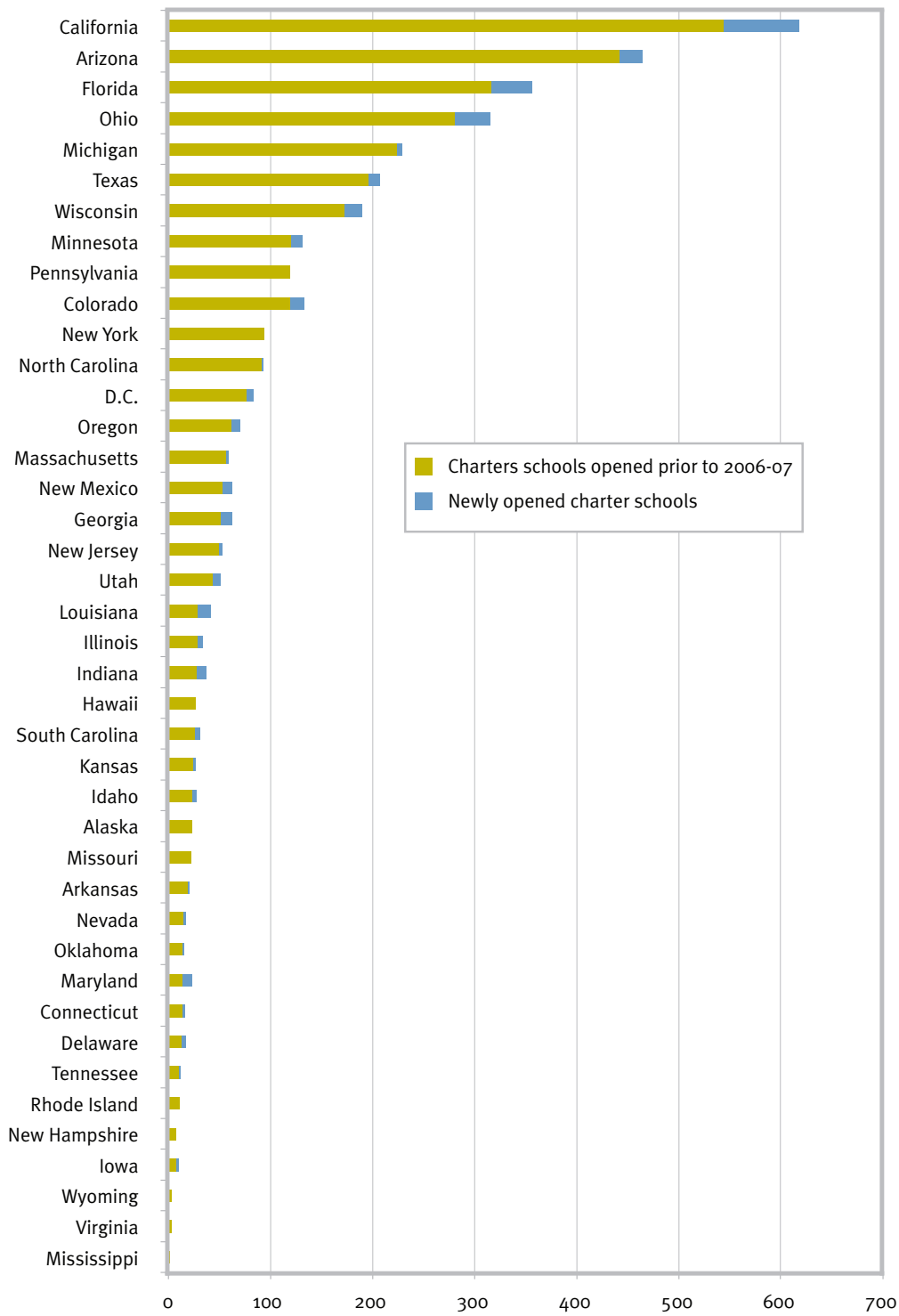
As a consequence, while the number of charter schools increased ten-fold between 1994 and 1999 (increasing from 100 schools to slightly more than one thousand), the number increased just about two and a half times between 1999 and 2003 (from 1,050 to 2,695). Since then the rate of growth has slowed even more. Between 2004 and 2005, the number of schools operating grew by 7 percent, and the following year the growth rate declined to about 5 percent. However, as with all national charter school figures, national totals and averages conceal almost as much as they reveal. Important variations are included in those numbers.

### NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL GROWTH CONCENTRATED IN CERTAIN STATES

As NCSRP reported in 2005, some states are experiencing exceptionally rapid growth, while others are growing more slowly or not at all. Figure 2 reveals the variation in charter school growth rates by state.



FIGURE 2. CHARTER SCHOOL GROWTH BY STATE, 2006-07



The gap between “booming” states (such as California, Florida, Ohio, and Wisconsin) and other states with charter laws is widening. The number of charter schools in California, Florida, and Ohio grew by about 11 or 12 percent in 2006–2007. Meanwhile, growth in two of the other states with the largest number of charter schools, Michigan, and Texas, has slowed considerably. Michigan, with 234 charter schools in 2006–2007, opened only 5 last year, while Texas, with 196 schools, opened just 11. By contrast, growth rates in Delaware and Maryland were robust, but on top of very low bases. Delaware, with just 13 charter schools, opened 4 new ones; and Maryland added 9 new charters to the 14 it had. Eight states (Mississippi, Virginia, Wyoming, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Missouri, Alaska, and Hawaii) added no new charter schools to the handful they already had.

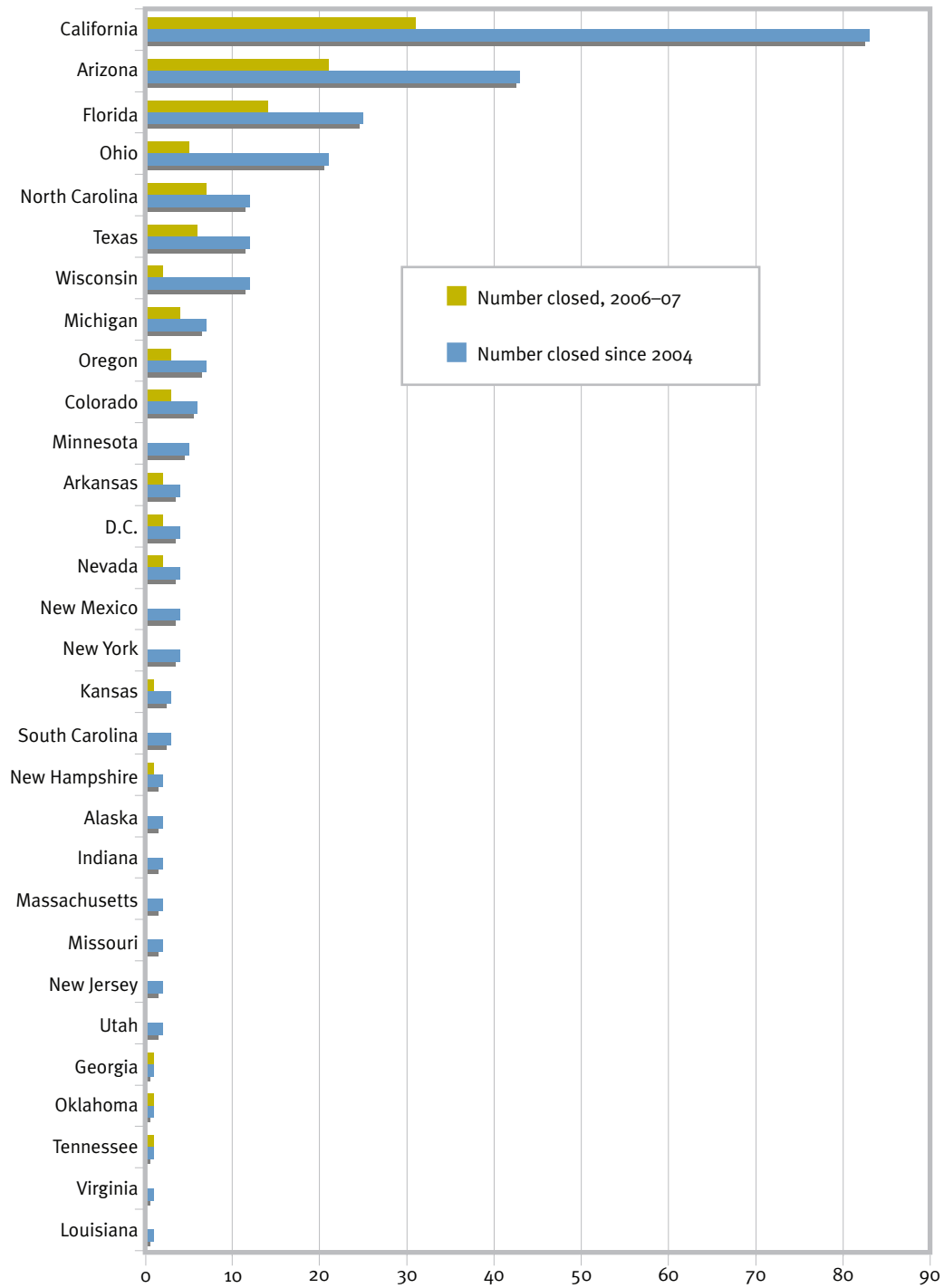
Most of the variation among states can be explained by restrictive laws and caps. But a number of other factors are also in play.<sup>5</sup> Artificially low per-pupil allotments, lack of funding for facilities (in the form of either capital grants or assistance with leases and rents), challenges in locating high-quality leaders or teachers, and lack of appropriate facilities are problems in many communities and contribute to slow growth.

#### **CHARTER SCHOOL CLOSURES REMAIN IMPORTANT ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM**

While the rate of increase has been declining, the number of charter schools closing each year has risen since NCSRP began tracking national charter statistics. While disappointing on one level, on another it is a sign of the success of the movement, perhaps even of its health. Charter schools are supposed to close if they do not meet needs in their communities. Although NCSRP does not track the reasons charter schools close, some likely fail due to inability to attract students or are closed by their authorizing agency for low performance or financial problems.

During the 2006–2007 school year, 107 charter schools closed, almost the same number as closed the year before (106), but a far higher number than the 65 reported for 2004–2005. Most closures occurred in states where new charter schools opened, suggesting the possibility that these states have highly active authorizers, engaged in considering new applicants as well as holding existing schools accountable. Consistent with past years, California, Arizona, and Florida closed a much higher number of schools in 2006–2007 than did other states, accounting for about 60 percent of all closures (see figure 3).

FIGURE 3. NUMBER OF CHARTER SCHOOLS CLOSED, BY STATE



NOTE: Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Mississippi, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Wyoming had no charter school closures during these years.

## NEW STATE LEGISLATION FOCUSED ON CAPS, OVERSIGHT AND FUNDING

Charter schools have always been legislative and political battlegrounds, with complex and frequently contentious legislative and electoral battles over whether to authorize charter schools, how many to allow, and to whom they are to be accountable.

In some ways, 2006–2007 was no different, including a highly contentious dispute over caps in New York.<sup>6</sup> Some 20 states reported passing laws affecting charter schools. Another six states reported that legislation was proposed but did not pass. Legislative activity affecting charters took place in some of the major charter states, such as Arizona, Florida, and Ohio, as well as in many states with a smaller charter presence.

On the other hand, new legislation this year mainly addressed issues of growth and increased effectiveness (for example, caps, oversight, and funding), not fundamental questions about the existence of charter schools. No states actively considered creating a charter school law for the first time or abolishing charter schools altogether.

Three states raised their caps on charter schools, though only New York added large numbers.<sup>7</sup> Iowa doubled its limit on charter schools from 10 to 20.

Legislation increasing charter school caps was considered but not passed in Illinois and North Carolina. Utah moved in the opposite direction, placing a limit on how much total charter school enrollment could grow each year. A number of states increased the amount of funding to charter schools, including Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, and New Jersey. Colorado and Indiana, on the other hand, acted to decrease charter school funding.

While the charter policy direction among states differs, the message seems to be pretty clear: a few years ago it was an open question of whether charter schools would remain part of the public school landscape; the issue now seems to be the conditions under which they will exist, not their existence itself.

## INSIDE CHARTER SCHOOLS

What is behind the numbers? One of the promises of charter schools was that they would staff and organize themselves differently. To expand our understanding of charters as schools, NCSRP examined data from the National Center on Education

Statistics 2003–2004 School and Staffing Survey (SASS). This database includes responses from principals and teachers in both traditional and charter public schools, permitting easy comparisons of their responses on a variety of factors.<sup>8</sup>

What emerges, in brief, is a picture in which charter schools are more likely to use non-traditional approaches to school structure and are more oriented to “at-risk” students. Charter schools are also likely to employ younger teachers, without traditional teaching credentials, who report that they work about the same number of hours as teachers in traditional schools, but seem to have more influence on school practice and policy. Based on responses in the SASS data, charter schools seem to be fulfilling some of their early promise for innovation around instruction, teacher hiring, and professional practice.

### NONTRADITIONAL CURRICULUM AND SCHOOL STRUCTURE

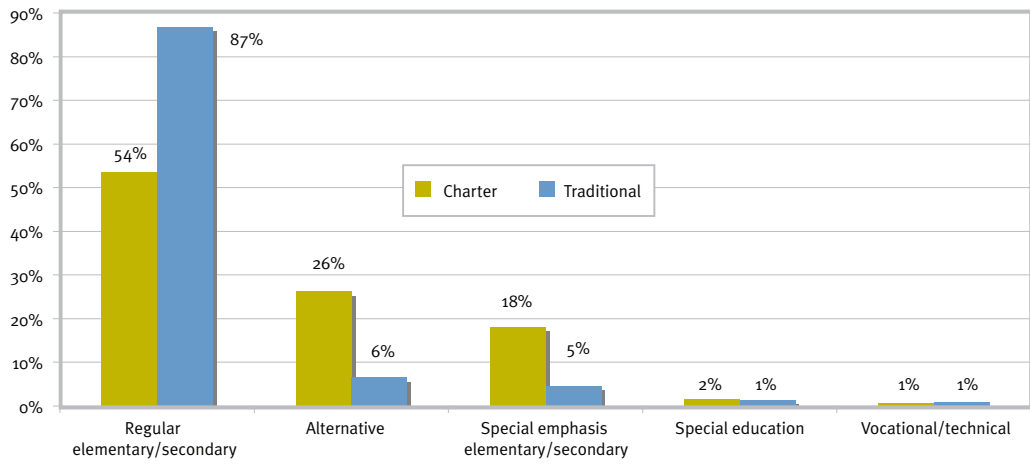
In 2005, NCSRP observed that charter schools appeared to structure themselves in different ways from traditional public schools. They were typically smaller and tended to offer unconventional grade configurations, such as K-8 and K-12, options not as common in traditional public schools.<sup>9</sup>

Only half of charter school principals surveyed identified the schools they led as “regular” elementary or secondary schools, compared to about 87 percent of traditional public schools. Charter school principals are also more than four times as likely to describe their schools as “alternative” schools, meaning they offer a nontraditional curriculum (26 percent versus 6 percent).<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, nearly four times as many charter principals identify their schools as special emphasis schools (for example, science or the performing arts) than do traditional school principals (18 percent versus 5 percent).

There is virtually no difference in the rates at which charter school principals and traditional public school principals report an emphasis on special education or vocational/technical education.

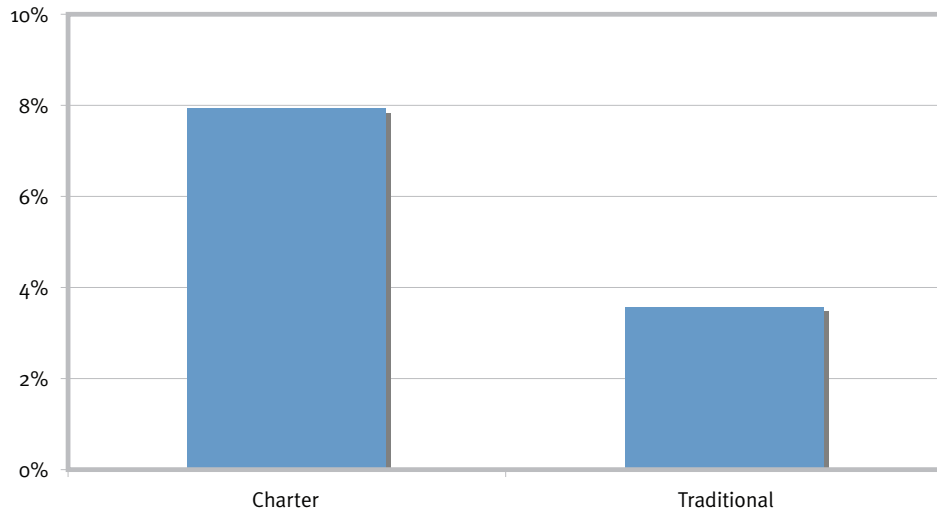
**FIGURE 4. HOW SCHOOLS IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES**



**GREATER FOCUS ON STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS**

One fear put forth by charter school opponents was that these schools would “cream” students in an effort to avoid dealing with students facing the most severe educational challenges. As NCSRП showed two years ago, charter schools nationally are mainly urban and serve proportionate numbers of minority and low-income students.<sup>11</sup> The SASS data show that charter schools are also more likely to target youth with severe behavioral problems (see figure 5).

**FIGURE 5. PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS SERVING PRIMARILY STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS**

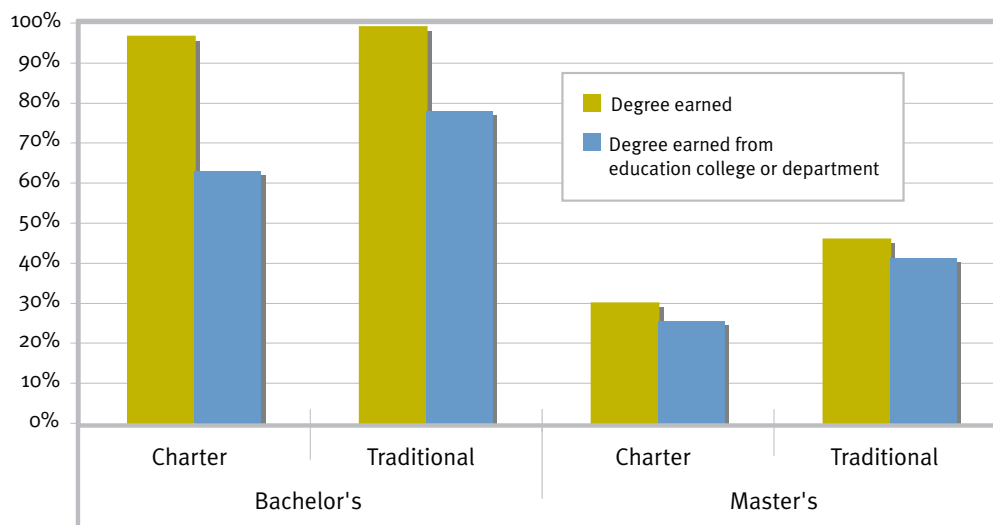


Compared to traditional public schools, charter schools are about twice as likely to have a school-wide focus on serving students with a history of difficulty in school, according to responding principals (8 percent versus 4 percent). Figure 5 refers to schools with a school-wide focus on students who have dropped out, have previously been suspended or expelled, or have had serious issues with behavior and acting out.

### CHARTER TEACHERS PRESENT DIFFERENT TEACHING CREDENTIALS

Most charter school laws provide at least some exemption from union hiring, pay, and work rules. Have charter schools taken advantage of that flexibility to draw from a different labor pool? It seems they have. Charter school teachers are less likely to have advanced degrees and less likely to have been trained in a college or school of education. Figure 6 provides the relevant data.

**FIGURE 6. DEGREES EARNED BY TEACHERS**



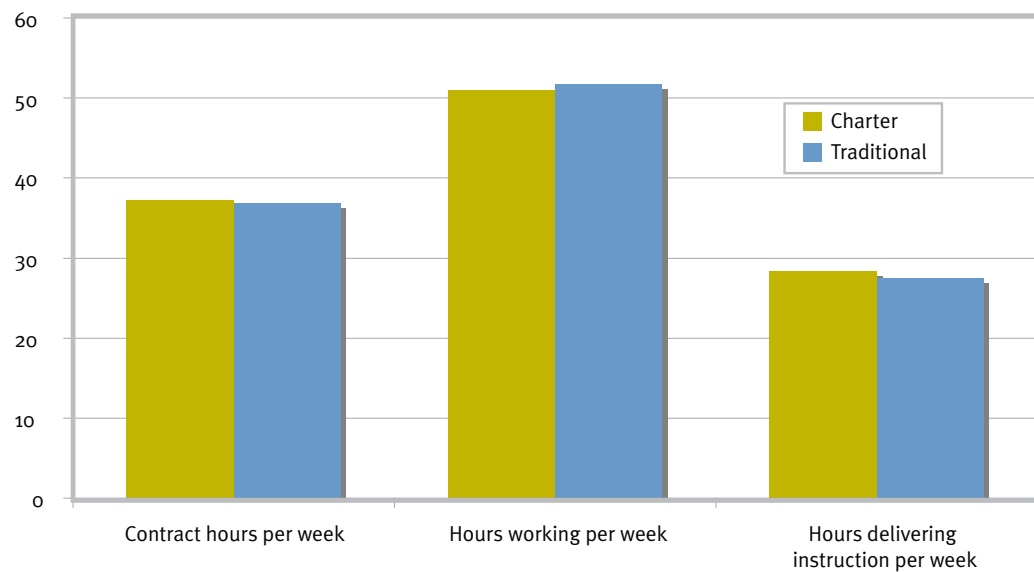
As figure 6 indicates, almost all teachers in charter schools (97 percent) and traditional public schools (99 percent) have earned a bachelor's degree. However, nearly half of traditional public school teachers (46 percent) hold a master's degree, compared to about a third of charter school teachers (30 percent). Teachers in traditional public schools are also considerably more likely to have earned their degrees in schools, colleges, or departments of education than charter school teachers: fully 78 percent of traditional public school teachers with a bachelor's degree earned their degree from an education program, compared to 63 percent of charter school teachers. Of those at the master's level, 41

percent of traditional public school teachers hold education degrees, compared to 26 percent of charter school teachers.

### WORKLOADS IN CHARTER AND TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS SIMILAR

Teachers in charter and other public schools report having similar workloads in terms of hours per week and the amount of time devoted to instruction (see figure 7).

**FIGURE 7. TEACHER WORKLOAD**



Both groups report that they are responsible for 37 total work hours per week. On average, charter school teachers report themselves responsible for delivering 28 hours of instruction each week, compared to 27 hours for traditional public school teachers. In terms of hours worked per week (including preparation, reviewing assignments, and homework), charter school teachers report 51 hours a week compared to 52 for traditional public school teachers.

While the workload may be nearly identical, the staffing patterns differ somewhat. A separate analysis of the SASS responses indicates that charter school teachers have to contend with slightly higher student-teacher ratios (15.3:1 in charter schools and 14.7:1 in other public schools). Beyond that, they are somewhat more likely to be

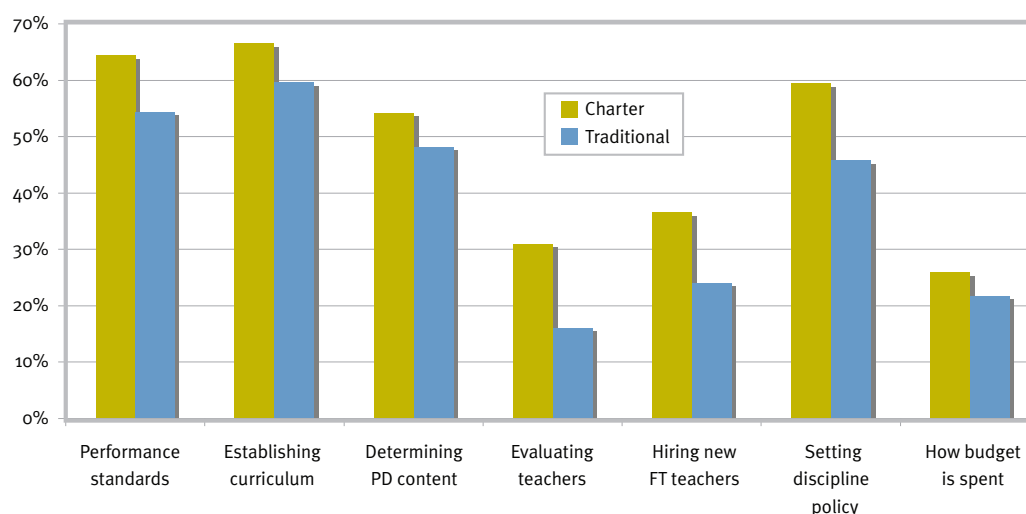


part-time teachers: 91 percent of traditional public school teachers report that they are employed full-time as teachers, compared to 87 percent of charter school teachers.

### INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL POLICY AND PRACTICE HIGHER IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

What about the issue of teacher influence on curriculum, school practice, and policy? Here, charter schools clearly seem to be delivering on their promise, judging by SASS teacher responses. It is not that teachers in traditional public schools have no influence on policy and practice; it is that, across the board, from setting standards and curriculum to establishing discipline and budget policy, more charter school teachers report having an influence than do traditional public school teachers (see figure 8).

FIGURE 8. TEACHER INFLUENCE



In general, the patterns of influence by topic for school-wide issues are similar. Teachers at both kinds of schools tend to report influencing the same within-school topics in about the same order. They have, for example, a much greater voice in establishing curriculum than in setting budgets.

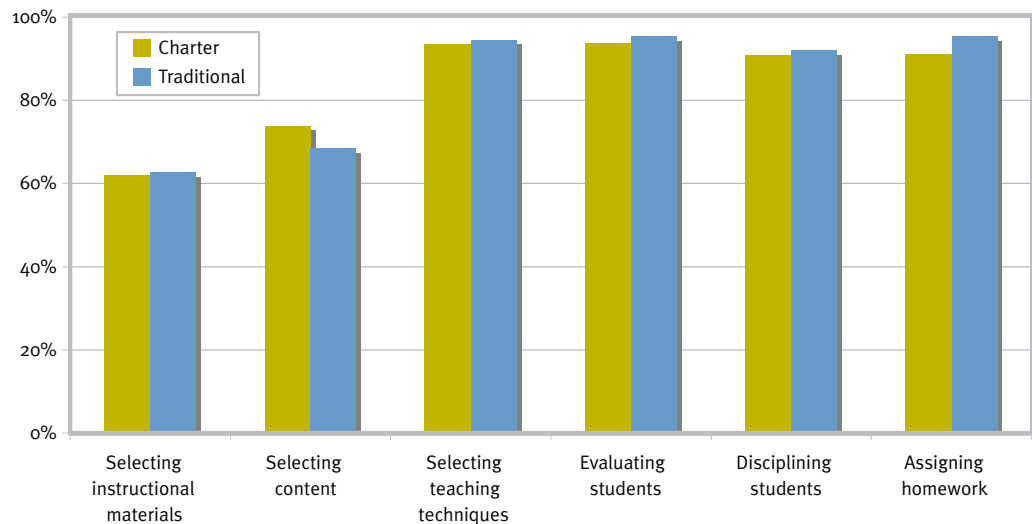
In some areas, teacher influence seems to be profound. At least 40 percent of both kinds of teachers report “moderate” or “great” influence over the same issues—setting performance standards, establishing curriculum, determining the content of professional development, and setting discipline policy. Typically, they report much less influence in areas such as hiring new full-time teachers and evaluating teachers.

Still, no matter the topic, charter school teachers consistently report having a great deal more influence over how their school is run than do teachers in other public schools. The greatest differences were in setting performance standards, establishing curriculum, hiring new teachers, and setting discipline policy. In a special analysis of rural charter school teachers, it is clear that they report having even greater levels of influence.

### SIMILAR INFLUENCE OVER CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Charter school teachers have about the same degree of influence over classroom practices as do teachers in traditional public schools (see figure 9). If 62 percent of charter school teachers report “moderate” or a “great deal” of influence over the selection of instructional materials, they are matched by 65 percent of traditional teachers. For charter school teachers, the proportion reporting influence over selecting teaching techniques (93 percent), evaluating students (94 percent), and disciplining students (91 percent) are practically mirrored in the traditional teacher responses. The largest differences concern selecting classroom content (74 percent of charter school teachers report influence, versus 68 percent of traditional public school teachers).

FIGURE 9. TEACHER INFLUENCE ON CLASSROOM PRACTICE



## CONCLUSIONS

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What seems to be clear from this review is that, as a national phenomenon, charter schools continue to grow, albeit at somewhat slower rates. The charter school model seems to be fairly well established as part of the public school landscape. Caps and funding restrictions hinder growth, but many states are loosening these constraints. Political and legislative strife is focused on issues of growth and effectiveness, not whether or not charter schools should exist.

What is also clear, however, is that the momentum for charter schooling is slow to moderate in most states where charter schooling is still considered a “sideline” reform, and very strong in a handful of states where charter schools are becoming a prominent feature of public education and a mainstream schooling option for urban families.

For the growing number of families who do have the option to attend charter schools, understanding what happens within the walls of the school is critical. This analysis shows that charter schools appear to be delivering on their promise of offering alternative approaches to instruction and targeting students who were falling through the cracks in the traditional system.

With regard to staffing, too, these new kinds of public schools are doing quite a few things differently. Based simply on the data available, it is hard to draw a distinction between how charter school teachers spend their time or how hard they work, compared to traditional public school teachers. However, on the basis of teacher responses, there seems to be little doubt that charter schools are hiring teachers with different credentials. Charter school teachers are more likely to lack traditional school of education backgrounds and less likely to hold master’s degrees. Charter schools are also more likely to experiment with unconventional school structures and to involve teachers more in school-based decisions. Charter schools, in short, appear to be fulfilling some of their early promise for innovation.

What accounts for these differences is hard to say. It may be that charter school principals and boards try to extend limited resources as far as possible and prefer to hire younger teachers, without graduate degrees, as a way to stretch payrolls. It may be that as the charter movement matures, and more young teachers complete graduate credits on a part-time basis, they will close the graduate degree gap. It could also be the case that, if charter leaders find themselves bound by the “highly qualified teacher” provisions

of *No Child Left Behind*, existing charter flexibility around teacher hiring and conditions of employment may be limited.

What is indisputable, however, is that charter schools have become a national policy fixture. Since first proposed in the 1980s by Albert Shanker, the late American Federation of Teachers president, and promoted by President Bill Clinton in 1994, charter schools have grown to approach 4,000 in number, enrolling more than a million students. Beyond establishing themselves, they have also demonstrated their ability to make good on at least some aspects of their promise of innovation.

The question now is whether charter schools can continue to grow and experiment or whether their growth has already peaked.

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#### NOTES

1. Robin J. Lake and Paul T. Hill, eds., *Hopes, Fears, & Reality: A Balanced Look at American Charter Schools in 2005*, National Charter School Research Project (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2005).
2. Ibid.
3. Lisa Stulberg, *Beyond the Battle Lines: Lessons From New York's Charter Caps Fight*, National Charter School Research Project (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2007).
4. Source: Figures on the number of charter schools, openings and closings, legislative activity, and student demographics come from NCSRP's annual survey of state charter school offices conducted between June and September 2007. Teacher and school characteristic comparisons of charter schools and other public schools are based on findings from the 2003-04 School and Staffing Survey, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics.
5. See for example Caroline Hoxby, "The Supply of Charter Schools," in *Charter Schools Against the Odds*, Paul T. Hill ed., (Stanford: Hoover Press, 2006) 15-44; National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education, "School Choice: Doing It the Right Way Makes a Difference" (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003); and James Harvey and Lydia Rainey, *High-Quality Charter Schools at Scale in Big Cities*, National Charter School Research Project (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2006).
6. Stulberg, *Beyond the Battle Lines*.
7. Fifty of the new slots are reserved for New York City, where the local teachers union, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, is generally supportive of charters.
8. The comparison of charter and other public schools in the Schools and Staffing Survey is based on analysis including only states that had both traditional public schools and charter schools in the SASS sample. All results reflect data weighted by the final weight variable in the SASS dataset. Results are drawn from responses to the School Questionnaire (typically completed by school principals) and the Teacher Questionnaire. All indicators discussed in this paper are statistically significant at the 0.01 level or better, using Pearson's chi-square test.
9. *Hopes, Fears, & Reality*, 2005.

10. Conceivably, nomenclature creates a problem here. Although the survey provides brief descriptions of each type of school, a charter school principal faced with a question about whether the school is a “regular school” might reject that description on the grounds that charter schools are not “regular” schools. Similarly, the principal might take it at face value that the charter is an “alternative” school.
11. *Hopes, Fears, & Reality*, 2005, 9-14. In 2004-05, nearly a third of charter schools (30.5%) were located in big city districts, compared to 10.4% of public schools. About a quarter of charter schools (24%) were located in small towns or rural districts, compared to 45% of public schools. Overall, 58% of charter school students and 45% of traditional public school students in the same states belonged to a racial/ethnic minority group, but there was almost no difference in the minority composition of charter schools and the districts where they were geographically located.



## CHAPTER 2

# Under New Management: Are Charter Schools Making the Most of New Governance Options?

*Joanna Smith, Priscilla Wohlstetter, and Dominic J. Brewer*

The charter school concept is a double-barreled attempt at school governance reform. It places decisionmaking power and responsibility at the school site. At the same time, it broadens the representation of individuals making those decisions. Champions of the charter school movement argue that if policymakers want to see real change in public schools, the system will need to be successful at attracting new individuals and organizations into educational leadership, empowering them with true site-based decisionmaking, and allowing them to apply their new and non-traditional perspectives so as to foster innovation in governance—and ultimately, improve school performance.

As unexciting as the topic of governance may be to non-specialists, it is far from a trivial issue. Most charter schools fail for non-academic reasons such as operational mismanagement and financial difficulties.<sup>1</sup> Creating an effective organizational structure is critical to charter schools' survival and success.

Establishing such a structure is no easy task. Charter leaders must figure out how to engage stakeholders in support of the school, how to involve teachers in decisionmaking, and how to involve community groups. The list of people to be consulted and brought on board is long.

Today, more than 15 years since the first charter school law was passed, several key questions remain. Have those who started charter schools taken advantage of their relative freedom to involve people and organizations in new and more productive ways?

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What challenges are presented by innovative governance arrangements? What have charter leaders learned about overcoming those challenges? Perhaps most complicated of all: Is placing decisionmaking power at the school site fundamentally at odds with attempts to empower teachers, community organizations, and charter school boards?

This essay examines those questions. It addresses three main areas of charter governance: teacher involvement, community partnerships, and charter boards. The analysis draws on early findings from a study by the National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance (NRC), with which the three authors are associated.<sup>2</sup> The NRC's research to date has included a review of all state charter laws and interviews with two charter school policy experts in each state. What seems clear from this research is the following:

- charter schools have produced some notable innovations in governance, especially in the areas of teacher empowerment, community partnerships, and formal board operations;
- despite these pockets of innovation, the movement as a whole employs fairly traditional governance models; and
- charter movement leaders and funders should encourage more experimentation and work to connect different governance practices to outcomes.

### EMPOWERING TEACHERS: FROM INCREASED DECISIONMAKING TO TEACHER COOPERATIVES

In 1988, Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, was one of the first to introduce the notion of charter schools to the nation.<sup>3</sup> He saw the creation of charter schools as a way to improve education for all students, and anticipated that the schools would be created by groups of teachers (or parents with teachers) who wanted to develop new curricula or teaching strategies to improve student learning.

Charter schools, in this conception, offered the prospect of involving teachers in governance in new ways, departing from the traditional industrial-style union model in which educators and school boards were separate entities pitted against each other. However, since charter schools would also be direct employers of teachers—in contrast to hiring through a district's central office—a tension existed in the concept at the outset. Teachers would be empowered in charter schools, but they would also be school

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employees. How would that tension work itself out? Could it be maintained in the long run, or would the internal contradiction undermine these schools?

There is some evidence that charter schools attract teachers who are more interested in participating in decisionmaking than those in traditional public schools. Although charter school teachers are much less likely to receive tenure, and some report working longer hours,<sup>4</sup> scholars exploring motivation for working in charter schools generally find that teachers value greater professional autonomy, the opportunity to work with like-minded peers, an educational mission that matches personal philosophy, and commitment to education reform.<sup>5</sup> Still, greater participation in day-to-day decisionmaking at a school site is a far cry from Shanker's original vision of charters as a creation of independent teachers. Moreover, as even Shanker himself understood, it is not clear how many teachers want full management responsibility.

Some models of what Shanker had in mind do exist. There are a handful of teacher-operated charter schools, in which groups of teachers hold the charter. They typically operate as a "professional practice" or as a formal worker cooperative. For example, in the 2006–2007 school year, 28 charter schools in eight states were affiliated with EdVisions, a cooperative established in Minnesota in 1992 with a mission to "create and sustain small, project-based, teacher-led, democratic schools."<sup>6</sup> These teacher-run schools minimize the traditional dichotomy between management and labor. It is not clear why more charter schools have not adopted a similar model. It may suggest that many teachers do not want the additional responsibility of making management decisions, time that could be otherwise spent on the core tasks of instruction, including curriculum planning, teaching, and assessment.

The reality is that in most charter schools it is more common for teachers to be treated as school employees. In most cases, for example, school management sets teachers' pay. This empowers management and makes it possible for school leaders to assemble like-minded teaching staffs and reward performance and loyalty. The theoretical scenario of empowered teachers has not always translated into practice; some teachers report they are treated no differently, and are given no greater power, than in traditional public schools.

Charters, therefore, seem to face an ongoing challenge of learning how to manage personnel issues in ways that empower both management and teachers. Lessons from decades of research on various types of site-based managed schools are fairly clear; they

*The prospect of charter schools being a significant vehicle for teacher empowerment remains, but it is a long way from being realized.*

suggest that, in the long run, charters that value teachers and involve them in decisions will probably do better than schools that keep a sharp line between labor and management.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the continuing interest in the concept of teacher-operated charter schools, teachers unions have played a founding role in a few charters. For example, in 2005 the United Federation of Teachers (the New York local from which Shanker launched his career in labor politics) sponsored two charter schools in Brooklyn. Recently, the Los Angeles-based charter management organization, Green Dot Public Schools, the only non-district public school operator in California that has unionized teachers, announced an agreement with the United Federation of Teachers to open a charter school in the South Bronx.<sup>8</sup>

However, despite these pockets of innovation and teacher empowerment, many charter schools do not involve teachers in decisionmaking. The prospect of charter schools being a significant vehicle for teacher empowerment remains, but it is a long way from being realized.

## EMPOWERING OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Permissive state laws and pervasive operational challenges have led many charter schools to pursue partnerships with public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations.<sup>9</sup> Such partnerships provide charter schools with a host of organizational, political, and financial resources. At the same time, partner organizations gain access to educational decision-making and school governance. In some cases, members of the partner organization participate on the charter school board; in other cases, they provide or supplement the curriculum that forms the focus of the school. For example, partnerships with museums offer resources that can become integrated into a charter school's curriculum.

Despite the benefits to both the charter school and the partnering organization, there are barriers that prohibit some partnerships from forming. Time, human resources, and costs can be an issue, but beyond that many charter school laws prohibit certain types of organizations from serving as partners, most notably sectarian organizations and for-profit organizations.<sup>10</sup> Separation of church and state is a fundamental characteristic of public policy in this country. Without eroding that principle, many resource-starved

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charter schools alleviate the high costs of renting, renovating, or purchasing their own facilities by partnering with a religious institution. Restricting the types of partners eligible to offer space to a charter school sometimes forces schools to spend a high portion of their operating budgets on facilities, or to “make do” in inadequate facilities.

While charter school laws often prevent for-profit organizations from applying to open a charter school, a host of educational management organizations (EMOs, generally for-profit entities that may also manage public schools under contract) and a handful of charter management organizations (CMOs, typically nonprofits that focus exclusively on charter schools) have formed partnerships with charter schools to handle everything from what and how students are taught, to “back office” tasks and whole-school management. These partnerships have proven beneficial in many cases, but can result in “turf wars” between charter school leaders and the management organization (MO). Some school leaders claim their MOs needlessly centralize decisions and make them functionaries. On the flip side, some MOs claim they cannot find charter leaders who will implement the organization’s program as it was designed. State-level administrators also note a tension between MOs intent on setting policy and charter school boards fulfilling that role according to the charter. The question remains as to how the organizational and support advantages of MOs can be obtained without sacrificing the advantages of local site decisionmaking.

Thus, while charter schools have gained significant experience with partnering over the past decade, tensions remain between management at the school site and management organizations. Working toward a solution, perhaps a legal framework or memorandum of understanding that would delineate a division of responsibilities, is worth the investment since partnering is an important mechanism through which many charter schools alleviate resource shortages.

### CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD PARTICIPATION: ONE VEHICLE TO EMPOWER DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

In all but a handful of states, charter schools are required to be governed by a board of directors. Such boards have a number of legal requirements, which vary by state. Common requirements include a board that is representative of the community and provides oversight of operations. In addition, boards typically hire and fire some staff, help raise funds, and generally promote the mission of the school.

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Unlike school district board elections, which typically attract very low voter participation and a great deal of rancorous special interest politics, the establishment of charter boards offers the opportunity of incorporating diverse stakeholders in a position of formal decisionmaking authority. In principle, charters encourage parents and other community members to be involved in the governance of their schools, thereby enhancing democratic participation in schooling. In some states, parental involvement on the charter governing board or other decisionmaking body is a requirement.<sup>11</sup>

Some states also require teacher representatives on the school's governing board. For example, Minnesota's charter law requires licensed teachers to constitute a majority of the school board by the end of the third year of operation. "Approximately 350 Minnesota charter school teachers are now serving on charter school boards and over one half of the boards have a teacher majority."<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, some states restrict teachers from serving on the school's governing board, citing a potential conflict of interest in having teachers set policy that affects the conditions of their own employment. In a few states, the legality of teachers serving on charter school boards is being challenged in the courts.<sup>13</sup>

Despite these challenges, charter school boards provide an opportunity to involve new stakeholders in the decisionmaking process. However, stories of malfunctioning boards are common. According to one study, "Many charter schools report serious difficulties in creating and operating good working boards. Tensions among board directors, conflict between board and staff, and non-functioning boards are among the problems that have plagued charter schools in many places."<sup>14</sup> Hill and Lake write that "many [boards] have become sources of instability and disruption,"<sup>15</sup> implying that the requirement to have a board is unhelpful given that schools are already accountable to an authorizing board and to parents who can transfer their children to another school.

Needless to say, difficulties with school boards are not unique to charter schools. Indeed there is a longstanding literature that has documented the difficulty of operating any organization through a board, be it corporate, nonprofit, or membership based. Traditional district school boards have often found it difficult to recruit talented individuals to serve on them, and have a hard time staying focused on high-level policy decisions rather than day-to-day management.<sup>16</sup> Many charter schools, particularly new start-ups, are focused on a core mission that drives the school.<sup>17</sup> While the mission can serve as a clear organizing principle, it can get diluted as board members are recruited and the founders move on. The practical problems involved with identifying and

*In principle, charters encourage parents and other community members to be involved in the governance of their schools, thereby enhancing democratic participation in schooling.*

recruiting board members, delineating their roles and responsibilities, providing training and development, and setting a structure for decisionmaking are never-ending and complex. Initially, charter schools frequently operate in a chaotic atmosphere of enthusiastic zeal coupled with the grinding day-to-day realities of securing funding and facilities, hiring staff, and recruiting students. Establishing the conditions under which a charter school board can function effectively may not be a priority.

One solution to these challenges has been to offer board training. In some cases, states have mandated board training as part of the charter contract, or have made training a condition tied to grant funds.<sup>18</sup> More commonly, states offer elective fee-based or free board training. This is sometimes run by the department of education charter school office, or by a state resource center. In, New York, for example, a charter school support organization provides “training for [charter] school leaders on governance, from the beginning of their planning. As they get closer to opening after they’re authorized, we do more training. And we host a quarterly forum of board chairs ... as a way for us to communicate to board chairs.”<sup>19</sup>

Although training can help boards function more effectively, one unanswered question is whether the advantages of school-site decisionmaking power are lost by the effort to empower diverse stakeholders through board participation. Real conflicts of interest persist, for example, between school managers, who under obligations of their charter contract must focus on the school’s performance, and others who have totally different agendas, such as parents whose interests may be limited to the few years their children attend the school. From the United Kingdom, some lessons are available about engineering board membership: In England, the equivalent of charter school board members are often selected specifically to augment or enrich the school’s expertise. New board members might be recruited to strengthen areas such as fund-raising, technology, public relations, or accounting.<sup>20</sup> Tracking exemplars of how best to engineer board membership will be crucial to the future development and sustainability of high-quality, effective boards.

## CONCLUSIONS

The charter movement has to some extent been fueled by the hopes and dreams of the parents, teachers, administrators, and community activists who have come to believe that schools of choice are part of the solution to reforming the nation’s public education sys-

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tem. The movement's early pioneers believed that charters were an innovation in educational governance, both because they were authorized by a local agency and operated by a private party, and because they would also develop models of how teachers, parents, and external organizations could be productively engaged in the decisionmaking and operations of schools. These two notions—school-based autonomy and stakeholder empowerment—need not always conflict, but there seems to be a clear tension between them that is often played out as the schools mature.

In particular, is placing decisionmaking power at the school site consistent with empowering teachers, outside organizations, and charter school boards? Charters have the challenge of learning how to manage their human resources in ways that empower both management and teachers. With outside management organizations in the mix, the possibility of tension between management at the school site and the CMO or EMO is introduced. The advantages of school-site decisionmaking power may be lost by the need to accommodate diverse stakeholders on governing boards. These various tensions magnify the governance challenges facing charter schools.

More than fifteen years into the charter movement, “hope” undoubtedly remains the operative word to describe school-level governance. In the areas of teacher empowerment, community partnerships, and formal board operations, progress has been made. There are pockets of innovation to be sure, but it would be fair to say that there has not been the widespread innovation some expected, and the status quo is more common in most charter schools. It may be that this will “naturally” change as charter schools overcome the inevitable complexities that come with starting any new enterprise; as charter schools mature, they may feel less tentative about innovating. But more can be done than waiting out this maturation process.

First, the charter school policy community could undoubtedly do more to encourage innovation in governance. Existing legislation tends to either mandate particular forms of governance (such as the requirement for a board) or is silent on the issue. The former limits the flexibility of charter founders to devise a governance structure best suited to their needs. The latter provides flexibility but little help in devising or implementing novel governance structures, nor any mechanism for learning about what has been successful elsewhere.

A more productive approach might be to devise incentives—contractual, financial, or in-kind resources—that encourage governance experimentation. It would also be pos-

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sible to reward certain kinds of policies or programs, such as the involvement of parents or teachers, the provision of board training, or the maximal use of community partnerships. This approach would be particularly useful if research were to demonstrate that a particular practice helped the school in terms of stability, accountability, or some other important attribute associated with good governance. It is probably time in the charter movement's development for such incentives to be created. Some serious thought needs to be applied to the question of what those incentives might look like in policy terms.

Second, the governance innovation that does exist tends to be spotty and is rarely visible or well known. Although formal and informal networks of charter schools exist, and organizations that provide technical assistance and professional development have sprung up, there is relatively little systematic dissemination of promising governance practices. For good ideas to spread—so that others can benefit from empowering new stakeholders in the schooling process—more systematic efforts would be helpful.

National organizations are beginning to provide such assistance. In addition, the federal government through the Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) is funding the National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance (2006–2009). This joint effort of the University of Southern California's Center on Educational Governance and two other nonprofit organizations (The Finance Project in Washington, D.C., and WestEd in San Francisco) will develop and disseminate information, tools, and technical assistance, helping charter leaders at all levels to take steps to improve charter school finance and governance.

Additionally, more systematic and rigorous evaluation of innovations in charter school governance—in terms of their effect on key outcomes, the processes involved, and how these innovations flourished or foundered—would be extremely helpful. This requires research sponsors to provide funds for such efforts, in conjunction with deliberate strategies of exploring the value of particular kinds of programs, such as board training and various ways of involving teachers.

Educational governance generally, and governing boards in particular, are problematic across both public and private entities. Charter school operators are now at the point of encountering a reality of organizational life: structure is a necessary but not sufficient correlate of organizational performance. Governance structures require constant attention and modification. Fortunately, while refining educational governance at the state or even district level is a daunting task, charter schools, as small laboratories of innova-

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tion, can adapt more easily as they grow and mature. While a “one best approach” is unlikely to present itself, charter schools can learn from the experience of others as they fine-tune their long-term efforts to provide meaningful learning opportunities for the students they serve.

## NOTES

1. Center for Education Reform, Charter Schools, <http://www.edreform.com/index.cfm?fuseAction=stateStatsandpSectionID=15&cSectionID=44> (accessed December 14, 2006).
2. The National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance is a three-year initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, visit [www.charterresource.org](http://www.charterresource.org).
3. Albert Shanker, “Restructuring Our Schools,” *Peabody Journal of Education* 65, no. 3 (1988): 88-100.
4. Dominic J. Brewer and June Ahn, “What Do We Know About Teachers in Charter Schools?” in *Taking Measure of Charter Schools*, ed. Paul T. Hill, National Charter School Research Project (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, forthcoming 2008).
5. Courtney L. Malloy and Priscilla Wohlstetter, “Working Conditions in Charter Schools: What’s the Appeal for Teachers?” *Education and Urban Society* 35, no.2 (2003): 219-241; Charter Schools Development Center, *Beyond the Rhetoric of Charter School Reform: A Study of Ten California School Districts* (Los Angeles: Charter Schools Development Center, UCLA, 1998); Nick Khouri et al., *Michigan’s Charter School Initiative: From Theory to Practice* (Lansing, MI: Michigan Department of Education, 1999); Paul T. Hill et al., *A Study of Charter School Accountability* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2001); Susan Moore Johnson and Jonathon Landman, “Sometimes Bureaucracy Has Its Charms: The Working Conditions of Teachers in Deregulated Schools,” *Teachers College Record* 102, no. 1 (2000): 85-124.
6. Edvisions, <http://www.edvisions.com/> (accessed May 31, 2007).
7. Priscilla Wohlstetter and Penny Bender Sebring, “School-based Management in the United States,” in *The Governance of Schooling: Comparative Studies of Devolved Management*, ed. Margaret A. Arnott and Charles D. Raab (London: Routledge, 2000); Priscilla Wohlstetter, Susan Albers Mohrman, and Peter J. Robertson, “Successful School-based Management: Lessons for Restructuring Urban Schools,” in *New Schools for a New Century: The Redesign of Urban Education*, ed. Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Viteritti (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).
8. Green Dot Public Schools, [http://www.greendot.org/driving\\_reform](http://www.greendot.org/driving_reform) (accessed September 25, 2007).
9. Priscilla Wohlstetter and Joanna Smith, “Improving Schools Through Partnerships: Learning from Charter Schools,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 87, no. 6 (2006): 464-467.
10. In their 2002 review of charter school laws, Wohlstetter and Smith found that over a third of the charter school laws prohibited for-profit organizations from applying to start a charter school and another six further prohibit for-profits from managing or operating charter schools. Partnerships with sectarian organizations are likewise limited, with four states banning partnerships with sectarian organizations and another 11 prohibiting sectarian organizations from applying to open charter schools. See Priscilla Wohlstetter and Joanna Smith, *Charter School Laws and Partnerships: Expanding Opportunities and Resource*, Policy Brief (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 2004).
11. For example, the Connecticut charter school law specifies, “The application shall include information concerning the charter school that describes: ... (4) parental involvement in the operation and decisions of the governing board.”



12. Jon Schroeder, *Ripples of Innovation: Charter Schooling in Minnesota, the Nation's First Charter School State* (Washington, DC: Progressive Policy Institute, 2004), 15.
13. For example, in California, a ruling in the sexual harassment case of *Knapp v. Palisades Charter High School* found that the school was not protected under the *Government Tort Claims Act* because the school is organized as a nonprofit 501(c)3. As one of the experts interviewed as part of this research noted, "The logical extension of that position could be troubling if, in the end, the courts in California, let alone nationwide, decided that any charter school that's a 501(c)3 is really not a public agency, but a private agency," which could mean that teachers serving on charter boards would be in violation of conflict of interest rules.
14. New York City Center for Charter School Excellence, *NYC Charter Schools Governance and Board Development Guidebook* (New York: NYCCCSE, 2006), 1.
15. Paul T. Hill and Robin Lake, "Charter School Governance," in *Charter School Outcomes*, ed. Mark Berends et al. (Washington, DC: National Center on School Choice, 2007).
16. Dominic J. Brewer and Joanna Smith, "A Framework for Understanding Educational Governance: The Case of California," *Education Finance and Policy* 3, no. 1 (forthcoming Winter 2008).
17. WestEd, *Innovations in Education: Successful Charter Schools* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, 2004).
18. In New Jersey, for example, newly approved charter schools must undergo board training as well as any new board members that come on once the school is operational. In Maryland, charter schools that receive program funds through the state department of education are required to attend a 1–2 day governing board training.
19. Anonymous quotation from NRC interviews conducted between February and August, 2007.
20. Priscilla Wohlstetter and Lesley Anderson, "What Can U.S. Charter Schools Learn from England's Grant-Maintained Schools?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 75 (1994): 486–491.



## CHAPTER 3

# Building a Pipeline of New School Leaders

*Christine Campbell*

In the spring of 2007, Cole College Prep, a Denver middle school run by the national charter management organization KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program), announced it would have to close at the end of the year because it was unable to find a suitable principal.<sup>1</sup> Good leaders are always hard to find, but it was surprising to hear that even KIPP, an organization that has its own leadership-training program, was forced to close its doors for this reason. The complete story of Cole's demise is complicated, but it highlights the difficulty of finding, training, and keeping strong leaders to support the expanding U.S. charter school movement.

New charter schools are opening at the rate of approximately 400 per year. Currently there are approximately 4,000 in existence.<sup>2</sup> Though many of the skills needed to run a charter school are similar to those of today's traditional public school principals—leading instruction, tending to the culture of the school, and managing people—charter leaders need an additional set of skills, similar in many ways to the additional skills required of parochial and private school principals. Charter leaders are required to ensure student enrollment sufficient to fund operations, to find and manage school facilities, to hire the right faculty for the school, and to negotiate relations with boards, parents, and authorizers.<sup>3</sup>

In the early days of the charter school movement, the leadership supply question consisted mainly of finding people foolhardy enough to want to start a completely new school and take on the superhero job described above. The supply then came mainly from renegade public school principals who wanted to start their dream school or teachers who wanted to run a school without a traditional administrator. As the charter

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movement matures, however, new pipeline issues arise that the movement may not be prepared to deal with:

- Where will the supply of leaders come from when the supply of renegades is fully tapped?
- How can the movement protect great charter leaders from the burnout that may accompany running a highly independent young school?
- How can good training help bring about high-quality school outcomes?
- What kinds of state and local policies are needed to strengthen leadership supply?

To begin to answer such questions, researchers at the National Charter School Research Project (NCSRP) interviewed Jonathan Schnur, co-founder of New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS). NLNS is often cited as the gold standard in principal recruitment and training and has won diverse awards, including *Fast Company Magazine's* "Top 25 Social Capitalists Set to Change the World."<sup>4</sup> A former education policy advisor for the Clinton administrations's Department of Education, Schnur was spurred into action by the realization that the pool of principals necessary for great urban schools was in short supply. His thoughts on the charter school leadership pipeline, how to best train charter leaders, and the emerging challenges of scaling up high-quality charter schools represent the thoughts of just one leader in the charter school field. They are, nonetheless, the insights of a visionary and entrepreneur grounded in experience.

Schnur's insights make up six major lessons:

- Ensuring a pipeline boils down to good recruitment.
- One-person-leadership training approaches are not enough.
- Training programs and trainees should be accountable for results.
- Hands-on training with support trumps coursework.
- District demand will drive true scale in innovative leadership training.
- Charter leadership training is the future of traditional public school training.

## NEW LEADERS FOR NEW SCHOOLS

New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) is a pioneering school principal training program whose mission is to improve the academic achievement of every child by recruiting, training, and placing talented principals in urban schools. NLNS hopes that building a critical mass of NLNS principals in large urban districts will transform the way these districts select, train, and support all principals. The program was founded in 2000 and has trained 430 people who are actively working to improve the achievement of 165,000 students. The training involves a one-year residency working alongside a mentor principal in a school much like the one a candidate hopes to run. For example, would-be charter leaders are placed in charter schools. Coursework is fairly limited—a summer’s worth of classes—and training is focused on developing instructional leaders, rather than executive directors. That is to say, no courses are offered on board development or operational issues. Developing these skills is left to the charter management organizations (CMOs), such as Aspire, where most NLNS charter leaders are placed.

NLNS is one of 11 alternative and innovative training programs that train traditional and charter school leaders. It also has some of the deepest reach in terms of dozens of principals trained and placed in each of the following large urban districts: New York City Department of Education, District of Columbia Public Schools, Chicago Public Schools, Memphis City Schools, Oakland Unified School District, Baltimore City Public School System, Prince George’s County, Milwaukee Public Schools, and New Orleans Public Schools. NLNS also has a relationship with Aspire Public Schools, a California CMO based in Oakland.

### NLNS AT A GLANCE

<b>Year founded</b>	2000
<b>Number of applicants last year</b>	1730
<b>Number enrolled this year</b>	100 (includes charter and district schools)
<b>Charter leaders trained to date</b>	430 (includes 28 leading charter schools)
<b>Length of program</b>	15-month residency and 5 total years of support
<b>Locations</b>	HQ in NYC, working with these districts: Chicago, NYC, Washington, D.C., Memphis, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Oakland, Baltimore, Prince George’s County
<b>Tuition</b>	No cost to trainee
<b>Cost to train each person</b>	About \$100,000 for recruitment and 15 months of training
<b>Cost to districts</b>	None, but they pay the salary of the assistant principal residency
<b>Sources of revenue</b>	Private foundations, U.S. Dept. of Education
<b>Measures of success</b>	Aims at 90–100% of students at NLNS schools at or above proficiency levels on state assessments

**SOURCE:** CRPE survey of charter school leadership training programs, July 2007; verified by NLNS staff.

## ENSURING A PIPELINE BOILS DOWN TO GOOD RECRUITMENT

As the charter school movement looks ahead to the next 15 years, issues of sustainability rise to the top. As NCSRP found in a survey of Midwest states, a significant proportion of charter schools are still run by their founders.<sup>5</sup> Few charter leaders, moreover, have given much thought to where to find the next generation of people to replace themselves. On this question, Schnur says the first essential step is creating ways to recruit people into training programs. Here are some of the lessons NLNS has learned about recruiting quality people:

### HAVING A BIG PRESENCE IN A DISTRICT IS BENEFICIAL, BUT RECRUITING MEANS WORKING MANY ANGLES, ALL THE TIME

NLNS has 60 principals in both traditional and charter public schools in Chicago. This translates into more educators and peers who know about the NLNS program and might consider it for themselves. But beyond name recognition, Schnur says it is about rolling up your sleeves and recruiting. “We have a staff that is focused on recruitment. We go to conferences, send out email blasts, get nominations for people and track them down and cultivate them over the course of several months or even years, in some cases.” In Schnur’s view, recruiting means working as many angles as possible, all at the same time.

### SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT REQUIRES OPENING THE CHECKBOOK

“We spend about \$18,000 a year for each person just on the recruitment and selection of that person,” Schnur points out.<sup>6</sup> “Some people might say that it’s too much, but we don’t think so. If you don’t get the right person in the first place, then the training isn’t going to help much. Charter schools will often pay this much in a headhunting fee. The point here is that you can’t do this well without a budget to do this.” NLNS’s selective and intensive approach is paying off. Fully 95 percent of all candidates trained are still on the job 3 years later, and no one has yet left the program during the training phase.

### THERE IS A RECRUITING ADVANTAGE TO WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOLS AS WELL AS WITH CHARTER SCHOOLS

NLNS wants to change the way cities educate students. As Schnur puts it:

*If you don't get the right person in the first place, then the training isn't going to help much.*

*Our theory of change is that to improve how cities educate kids, you need to start with cities where there are charter schools and a willingness to give increased levels of autonomy to existing traditional school leaders as well, because there are many more of them being hired. Only about 25 percent of our leaders go to charter schools and the rest go to district schools. We want to create a community of leaders across the district and charter sectors and we need to go where the kids are—that means working with both kinds of schools.*

Recruits also come into the program unsure about what kind of school they would like to lead. The NLNS program helps them think this through, steering some trainees who had never considered charters before toward them. Recruiting and placing both kinds of leaders is part of the goal of changing how cities educate students.

## THINK BEYOND A ONE-PERSON-LEADERSHIP TRAINING MODEL TO ADDRESS SUSTAINABILITY

Investing in leadership teams can eliminate the problems of burnout. In the world of schools, principals are often viewed as *the* source of leadership. The exceptional demands placed on principals are sometimes mastered, but in Schnur's view the model of a one-person leader is unsustainable.

Schnur argues that leadership needs to be redefined so as to focus more on the leadership team:

*The real issue we face in many schools, especially charter schools that are getting incredible results, is the risk that principals will leave without accelerating the work. We need to start thinking about this more strategically. As a society right now, we under-invest in school leadership teams. One principal cannot do this alone. Even though the principal is necessary, he or she is not sufficient. Instead of focusing more dollars in classrooms, we should be sending more dollars to the school, to really over-invest in these leadership teams. One of the keys to getting results over time and making it sustainable is to develop a really robust school leadership team. There hasn't been enough funding to do that in many schools, especially smaller schools. I think that's a key lever for success and sustainability.*

*In Schnur's view the model of a one-person leader is unsustainable.*

*Schnur argues that leadership needs to be redefined so as to focus more on the leadership team.*

Investing in the pipeline of leadership teams is something NLNS is beginning to do. The organization is spending more time training and coaching leadership teams across their cities so they can help a good principal engage others in the school. Over the life of the program, over 7,000 people have applied to be “New Leaders.” Some 430 have been trained, but another 500 or so have been “denied with encouragement,” reports Schnur.

*[Those] denied with encouragement were incredibly strong people who weren't ready to be a principal. But they could be an assistant principal or a lead teacher. We're looking at tapping that pool by offering training to them. Then we'd like to get them into a New Leader school in one of these other roles so that we can cluster more and more people with the same philosophy in these schools.*

*There are a lot of people who would stay in schools with the right support and encouragement.*

In terms of burnout along the pipeline, Schnur says it is the third-year teacher who is most vulnerable, and who seems increasingly to be lost to education. “But they are actually the ones you want to be moving into leadership roles, such as dean of students,” he argues. “Right now we’re looking at policy ideas to deal with this problem and when we solve it, it’s really going to address the pipeline issue. There are a lot of people who would stay in schools with the right support and encouragement.”

## TRAINING PROGRAMS AND THEIR TRAINEES SHOULD BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR RESULTS

### TRAINING IN THEORY AND ABSTRACTIONS IS NOT THE ANSWER

In recent years, many researchers, superintendents, and principals have been critical of traditional principal preparation in university colleges of education. They say it is too theoretical, misses the important topics, and offers few supports once people are on the job.<sup>7</sup> Jon Schnur’s impression of these programs is no different.

Schnur’s decision to create an entirely new training program, rather than trying to work with existing university-based programs, grew out of his belief that traditional programs were too abstract and removed from the work of the principal. In addition, he sensed that there was little interest on the part of colleges of education in a dramatic reshaping of the way they prepared principals. He notes:



*When we looked carefully at some of the university programs that are training principals, they seemed in general quite disconnected from what is needed to have principals who would be ready to lead dramatic improvement in schools. Operationally, the programs were a reflection of how a university would structure a program to teach the theory of something, but they weren't structured in a way that is actually looking at the best way to help people acquire the skills and knowledge they need to use in a very practical way to drive big improvements in education . . . No one was saying "We're going to look at the achievement results at the schools of the principals we've trained," much less describe how well they themselves were doing as an institution based on that.*

This lack of accountability or interest in seeking more accountability led Schnur away from colleges of education and toward an entirely new training institution with the following accountability components.

### **PRINCIPALS SHOULD SET DEMANDING GOALS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS**

Schnur's organization places all its principals in urban districts and asks them to agree to get 90–100 percent of their students to achieve proficiency on state assessments. This means they need to choose the right people to lead the schools in the first place—the recruitment piece NLNS focuses on so heavily. Once the organization has chosen its candidates, NLNS expects all of them to sign on to the achievement goal. This is the first step in the challenge. According to Schnur, "By naming it and tracking it, and getting people invested in it and signing on to it rather than feeling like it's something that's being done to them, that's not insignificant."

### **A RELENTLESS FOCUS ON TAKING STOCK AND LEARNING FROM WHAT WORKS ARE ESSENTIAL**

Schnur believes that setting the goals is the first step, and tracking them is the next. So far for NLNS, he says, there is both good news and bad news.

*Right now we can say that the early returns show that the schools led by our New Leaders for two years are generally making faster progress improving academic achievement than the other schools in the system they are in. But when you look at the pace of gain that's needed to get them there in five years,*

*Schnur's organization places all its principals in urban districts and asks them to agree to get 90–100 percent of their students to achieve proficiency on state assessments.*

*we've only got 25 percent of our schools making the kind of dramatic progress that's necessary to meet the five-year goal.*

How can NLNS raise those numbers, a quest similar to those pursued by every district in the country? Schnur is betting that reverse engineering “what works” is the answer. “We study the small number of schools that have been able to do this and look at the practices, people, and skills needed to do this. Their leaders share what’s worked for them.” This is not easy, however. He notes that they usually do not “get it right” the first time. “It usually takes a couple of years to refine the lessons; to figure out how it works and how people acquire those skills and work to get it to a shape that other people can actually learn from it.” Sharing what works between sites is key. “We also document the schools and classrooms that are making the most dramatic achievement gains through video of classroom practice, formative assessments, and other ways. Then we make these available to everyone to learn from.”

#### TARGETED AND STRATEGIC SUPPORT IS THE NECESSARY FOLLOW-UP

“If the first front was to prepare a pipeline of new leaders,” says Schnur, “then the second is to invest about a third of our budget in what happens to support the schools led by our new principals once they are on the job.” To that end, he feels that the most important work is to get data-driven instructional improvement support available. NLNS now offers, free and online, the tools, assessments, and organizational systems from some of their best schools so that principals and school leadership teams can locate and apply them. Why does a recruitment and training program care about this? “Because,” Schnur says, “ultimately it’s about results. We think this is one of the most important levers to drive those results.”

#### HANDS-ON TRAINING WITH SUPPORT TRUMPS COURSEWORK

With a focus on accountability for student achievement, NLNS quickly concluded that because a principal’s job is very applied and hands-on, the organization should build its training around a year-long residency with a mentor principal in a school similar to the school the new principal would be leading. Schnur notes:

*The year-long residency is an absolute cornerstone of our training. Aspiring charter leaders do their residency in a charter school. So they are taking on a*

*If the first front was to prepare a pipeline of new leaders,” says Schnur, “then the second is to invest about a third of our budget in what happens to support the schools led by our new principals once they are on the job.*

*very structured leadership role in a charter school, and getting feedback from both a principal on-site, as well as a leadership coach, while they are leading and learning about what it takes to lead a charter school.*

What about coursework? NLNS condenses the coursework element to six weeks during the summer and brings in the most successful and talented leaders from the field to teach. “We use this opportunity to learn about what has made those leaders so successful, so we can better understand them and scale them in both charter schools and district schools.” When national surveys of principals show that principals find they learned more on the job than they did in school, Schnur is not surprised.<sup>8</sup> “Not everything can be taught in a classroom. Being a principal is such an applied job, you really should be learning most of it on the job. NLNS believes that the residency year is the solution.” In fact, his experiences of the trials and setbacks of starting a nonprofit have proven to be the best fodder for helping develop the training for principals at NLNS. “Every time something big happens at NLNS, we say, “Now, how can our principals learn from this experience?”

## DISTRICT DEMAND WILL DRIVE TRUE SCALE IN INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING

When NLNS was in its infancy and building its plan, the founders reassured themselves with the knowledge that, compared to training teachers, training the principal corps is a more “doable” job. “It’s not like trying to find and train 3 million teachers!” Schnur and his colleagues believe that, by 2008, they will meet their goal of recruiting and training at least a critical mass of principals in most of the cities in which they have invested time and energy. They believe that goal was already met in six of their cities by 2006. They added three new cities in 2007, and plan to add one city per year for the foreseeable future. “Adding new cities helps us refine what we do with all of our cities.” Even at 330 schools, however, NLNS serves only a small fraction of all urban schools. There are other excellent charter leadership training programs, but they serve an even smaller segment of all schools. What will it take to dramatically expand the supply?

### DISTRICTS AND CITIES WILL HAVE TO DEMAND BETTER TRAINING

Very few traditional principal training programs have talked with NLNS about learning from or emulating their model, according to Schnur. However, in Chicago, where

*Being a principal is such an applied job, you really should be learning most of it on the job.*

NLNS has the most presence, the University of Illinois-Chicago has made changes to its program. “The competition between our institutions helped them to think about changing what they do,” notes Schnur. But by far the most energy spent on rethinking principal training originates in cities and school districts. They want to learn what NLNS does and how to make it happen in their own training and principal development efforts. Districts across the country have come to NLNS, says Schnur, studied what NLNS is doing, and have taken it home to try locally. “These districts are not being well served by the local universities and they are interested in taking matters into their own hands,” he observes.

### **EVEN THE BEST TRAINING CANNOT OVERCOME DISTRICT OR STATE POLICIES AT ODDS WITH SUCCESS**

After working with many districts, Schnur contends there is a need to change policy and practice in districts. “Sometimes for the best training in the world to help train great leaders, you still need to transform the job of the principalship so that the school system is ready to accommodate the kinds of leaders and skills that they need in their buildings.” Before they go into a district, NLNS negotiates many things up front, such as changing contracts around autonomy for school leaders, and principal certification. “Before we go in, the state has to agree to changes that allow (our trainees) to become certified principals going through NLNS rather than through colleges of education.” NLNS views these changes as not just important for its trainees and principals, but as opportunities to influence the conditions of success for everyone in the district.

Autonomy for all principals is one approach to improve the chances of success. Another lies in sharing NLNS’ principal selection criteria with districts as a model for identifying and training other district principals. Finally, NLNS believes that a critical mass from their training program can make dramatic changes in a city. By working in a small number of cities, NLNS trainees are poised to make up a significant percentage of school leaders in some of the nation’s biggest cities. By 2008, NLNS expects to reach critical mass in Washington, D.C. (55 percent of school leaders), Memphis (45 percent), and Oakland (40 percent). Schnur and his colleagues view reaching critical mass in these communities as an opportunity to bring about district-wide as opposed to school-level change.

*NLNS believes that a critical mass from their training program can make dramatic changes in a city.*

## CHARTER LEADERSHIP TRAINING IS THE FUTURE OF TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL TRAINING

In the end, although there are many daily differences between the job of a charter school principal and a traditional public school principal, Schnur believes there are more similarities than differences. District schools can benefit from the entrepreneurial drive and data-driven focus of great charter leaders, he argues.

*We believe that district principals need to be leading schools in much the same way that these very successful charter leaders do. It's not in any way similar to what districts are like now, but I really think that is where a lot of district principals will need to go. . . . When you look at what it takes to get dramatic improvement in a charter school, it actually is very similar to what it takes to get that improvement in a traditional public school.*

What he implies is that cross-pollination between charter and traditional public schools has many advantages and, if done thoughtfully and carefully, can benefit students in both types of schools.

### IMPLICATIONS

The experience of the New Leaders for New Schools leadership training program suggests lessons for any district or city struggling to raise student achievement. Strong leadership in charter schools and traditional public schools is a necessary part of any answer. Mayors and school superintendents who wonder where this supply of leaders will come from, how best to train them to ensure their success, and how to keep them from burning out, can apply the lessons described here if they:

- *Aim for a menu of high-quality training options.* NLNS is one way to train leaders who will go to existing district or charter schools, but NLNS does not offer training for leaders who want to start a new independent public school. Other national training programs, like Building Excellent Schools, train people who want to open and run a start-up charter school. In addition, organizations that are trying to replicate successful schools often offer leadership fellowships. Savvy locales will explore all of these national options as well as create high-quality local leadership development programs.

*When you look at what it takes to get dramatic improvement in a charter school, it actually is very similar to what it takes to get that improvement in a traditional public school.*

- *Create a local recruitment strategy.* Recruiting from outside, grooming from within, and providing future leaders with access to high-quality training and residency options is key.
- *Look closely at the policies that support or hinder strong leadership.* At a minimum, states need to allow for principals to be certified by alternative training programs, not just through schools, colleges, and departments of education. On a broader scale, districts and states should be examining policies and procedures that limit principal autonomy; the goal should be providing principals with as much autonomy as possible within a framework of accountability.
- *Create mechanisms for schools to learn from leadership practices of any school that is beating the odds.* Whether it is a charter school or a traditional public school, leadership practices that help students beat the odds and help educators close the achievement gap should be celebrated and shared in public, not hoarded as “our approach” or “our program.” Teaching and learning is a collaborative endeavor, and leadership development should be, too.
- *Hold training programs accountable.* Setting a common accountability standard and measuring programs’ effectiveness through the success or failure of their graduates in meeting the bar should be standard district practice.

*In the end, leadership is about pointing people in the right direction and persisting toward well-defined goals in the face of evasion, denial, scapegoating, and personal attacks.*

In the end, leadership is about pointing people in the right direction and persisting toward well-defined goals in the face of evasion, denial, scapegoating, and personal attacks. As the NLNS experience indicates, the right direction for school leadership training rests on setting a high bar, supporting candidates as they learn and settle into their new jobs, making adjustments based on experience and data, and holding individuals, schools, and the system accountable. School districts, states, and independent agencies such as NLNS that pursue that direction, under those guidelines, will not go far wrong.

## NOTES

1. Allison Sherry, “New start at Cole ends this spring,” *Denver Post*, March 15, 2007.
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Lessons from Charter Schools,” CPRE Occasional Paper Series, OP-03 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1998).

4. [http://www.fastcompany.com/social/2006/index.html#social\\_list](http://www.fastcompany.com/social/2006/index.html#social_list)
5. Betheny Gross and Kirsten Martens, “Leadership To Date, Leadership Tomorrow: A Review of Data on Charter School Directors,” NCSRP Working paper #2007-2 (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, June 2007), 6-9.
6. The total cost of training each person is approximately \$100,000, which includes recruitment costs, room and board during three months of summer training, coursework, instructors, and support and follow-up during the following 12 months.
7. See Frederick Hess and Andrew Kelly, “Learning to Lead: What Gets Taught In Principal-Preparation Programs,” *Teachers College Record* 109, no. 1 (January 2007): 246; Arthur Levine, *Educating School Leaders* (Washington, DC: The Education Schools Project, 2005); and Steve Farkas et al., *Rolling Up Their Sleeves: Superintendents and Principals Talk About What’s Needed to Fix Public Schools* (New York: Public Agenda, 2003).
8. See Levine, *Educating School Leaders*; Farkas et al., *Rolling Up Their Sleeves*.





## CHAPTER 4

# Look Familiar? Charters and Teachers

*Michael DeArmond, Betheny Gross, and Dan Goldhaber*

One hope that many advocates had for charter schools is that they would pioneer new ways of employing and paying teachers, in the expectation that this might lead the way toward a higher-quality teaching force. By hiring nontraditional teachers and leaders, charter schools could, in theory, create “a new education profession where individuals are paid (and retained) on the basis of their performance and are encouraged to innovate.”<sup>1</sup> Descriptive studies suggest that charter schools, on average, do employ teachers with different characteristics than traditional public schools. Charter school teachers are somewhat younger, less experienced, and less likely to be certified.<sup>2</sup> According to some data, they are also more likely to have graduated from a selective college.<sup>3</sup> But when it comes to teacher compensation, it is not clear that charter schools are innovating in the ways that advocates had hoped.

### A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO PAYING TEACHERS

In traditional public schools, teacher pay is driven by formulas. These formulas—known as salary schedules—typically do not distinguish between low and high performers. They do not take into account hard-to-fill subject areas or difficult teaching assignments. For decades, people have argued that this inflexibility makes teaching a costly career choice for people with the best skills or technical expertise.<sup>4</sup> As a result, it is argued that the “brightest” college graduates tend to avoid teaching, and if they teach, they are more likely to leave.<sup>5</sup> Similar factors are thought to be at work, with particular intensity, around math and science teachers.<sup>6</sup>

Charter schools, by design, were an invitation to try a different approach. Compared to traditional public schools, charter schools enjoy wide-ranging flexibility around staffing

*When it comes to teacher compensation, it is not clear that charter schools are innovating in the ways that advocates had hoped.*

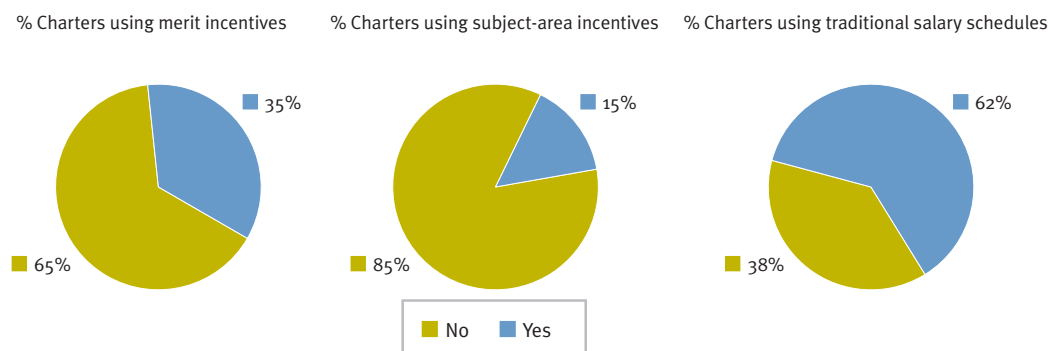
and budgets. It was hoped that this freedom from many rules, along with the pressure created by choice and accountability, would set the stage for charter schools to experiment. In addition to tapping a broader labor pool, charter schools would be free to try compensation policies that, among other things, recognized and rewarded performance and skill. By paying teachers differently, the hope was that charter schools would marshal their resources more effectively and efficiently to meet their schools' goals and get results.

In some ways, it looks like charter schools are delivering on their promise to innovate. Economist Michael Podgursky's 2006 analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education's 1999–2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), for example, suggests that charter schools are more likely to pay extra for particular skills or qualifications than are traditional public schools. Fully 38 percent of charters say they offer teachers incentives or bonuses for "excellence in teaching," compared with just 6 percent of traditional public schools. Charter schools are also more likely to offer extra incentives for teachers with hard-to-find skills, for example, working in hard-to-hire subjects and, somewhat surprisingly, for certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.<sup>7</sup>

## HOW DIFFERENT ARE THEY?

*By paying teachers differently, the hope was that charter schools would marshal their resources more effectively and efficiently to meet their schools' goals and get results.*

While there is little doubt that more charter schools are experimenting with pay relative to traditional public schools, the National Charter School Research Project's (NCSR) analysis of the 1999–2000 SASS data reveals that charter schools themselves could clearly do more. For example, the majority of charter schools (two-thirds) still report paying their teachers according to a salary schedule based on experience and education. Only a minority of charter schools use incentives for performance or expertise in shortage fields: about one-third use merit incentives, and just 15 percent use subject-area incentives (see figure 1). It is reasonable to expect that charter schools, most of which are free from union and state hiring requirements, might have embraced pay-for-performance and differential pay in much greater numbers.

**FIGURE 1. COMPENSATION POLICIES IN CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Generalizations like these, however, can only tell us so much. It may be, for example, that the absence of teacher tenure in charter schools means that salary schedules do not operate in the same way that they do in traditional public schools. If charter schools are more likely to dismiss teachers early in their careers (which the SASS data seem to suggest<sup>8</sup>), and if these dismissals are due to poor performance, charter school salary schedules may, in effect, reward both experience *and* performance.

Figure 1 may also mask important variations within the charter sector. Although it is not possible, in this short essay, to disentangle the many external and internal forces that affect schools' decisions about how to pay teachers, a quick look across the charter sector suggests that state policy and institutional context constrain non-traditional approaches toward compensation.

## DIFFERENT CONTEXTS, DIFFERENT APPROACHES

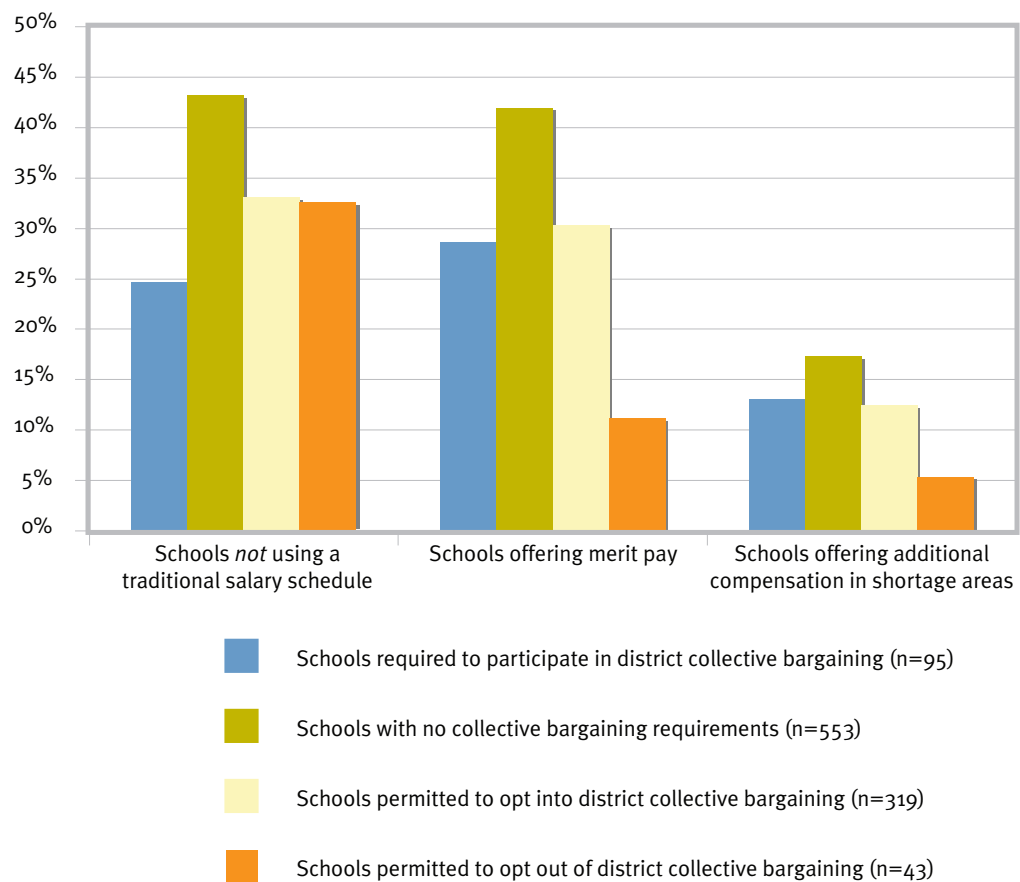
Although they are often lumped together, charter schools operate in different policy environments that might affect how they approach paying teachers. Consider one example: the different collective bargaining requirements that charter schools in different states face. Using data from the Education Commission of the States' State Policies for Charter Schools Database,<sup>9</sup> NCSR put states into four categories. At one end of the spectrum are states that require charter schools to join local school district bargaining units; according to 1999-2000 SASS data, 10 percent of all charter schools operate in these states. In the middle are two groups, states in which charter schools are assumed to participate in district collective bargaining agreements unless they opt out and states that allow charter schools to opt into district collective bargaining agreements. Four percent of charter schools are in the "opt out" states and 32 percent are

*Charter school salary schedules may, in effect, reward both experience and performance.*

in the “opt in” states. At the far end of this continuum are states that have no collective bargaining requirements for their charter schools. Fifty-four percent of all charter schools operate in these states. These differences in policy appear to be critical when it comes to teacher compensation.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of charter schools in each category that report using incentives for “excellence in teaching,” incentives for subject-area expertise, and salary schedules. As the chart shows, charter schools without collective bargaining requirements are much more likely to steer clear of the salary schedule and use incentives. Although collective bargaining agreements do not preclude alternative compensation approaches, they may make them less probable, as schools must obtain waivers from the teachers union.

**FIGURE 2. COMPENSATION POLICIES IN CHARTER SCHOOLS BY COLLECTIVE BARGAINING REQUIREMENTS**



Charter schools' organizational characteristics are also associated with different pay plans. Figure 3 is similar to figure 2 in that it shows the percentage of schools that report using incentives and salary schedules. This time, however, the results are separated into conversion schools (traditional public schools that became charter schools) and start-ups. Unsurprisingly, conversion schools appear more wedded to salary schedules, and are far less likely to offer wage differentials than start-ups.

**FIGURE 3. COMPENSATION POLICIES IN CHARTER SCHOOLS BY SCHOOL ORIGIN**

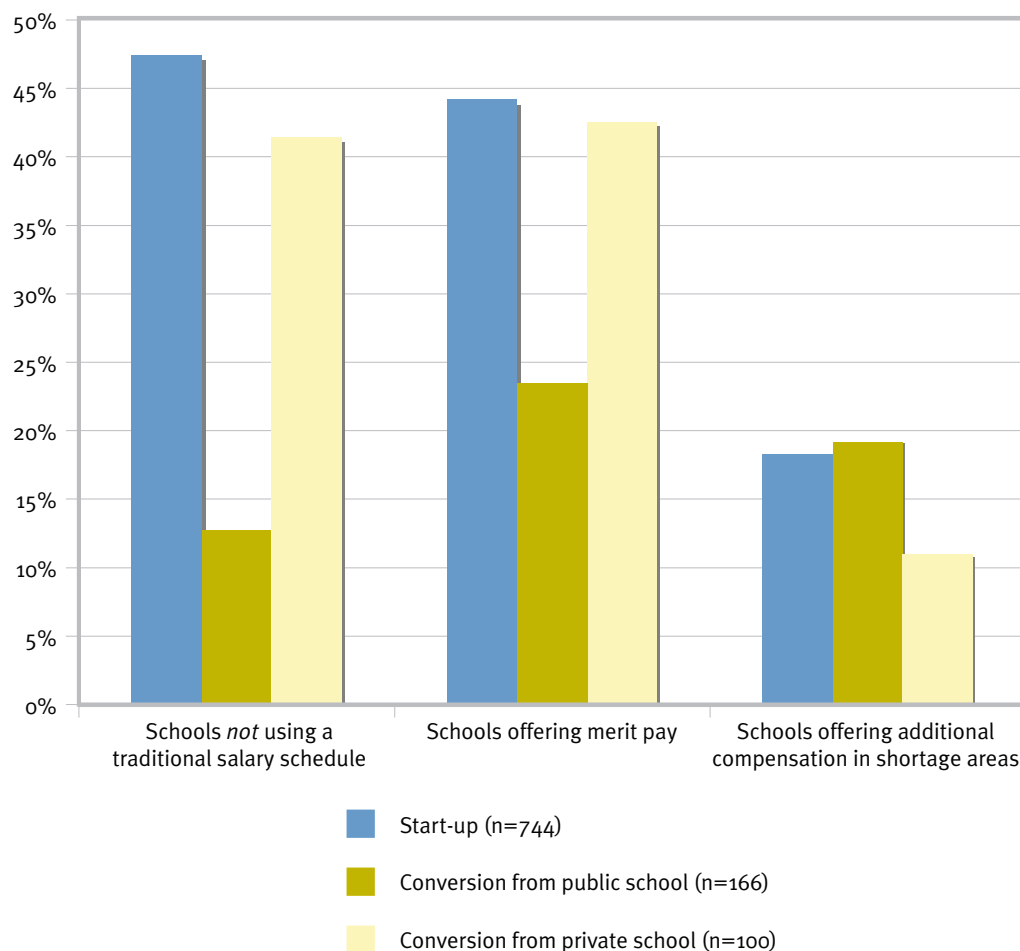
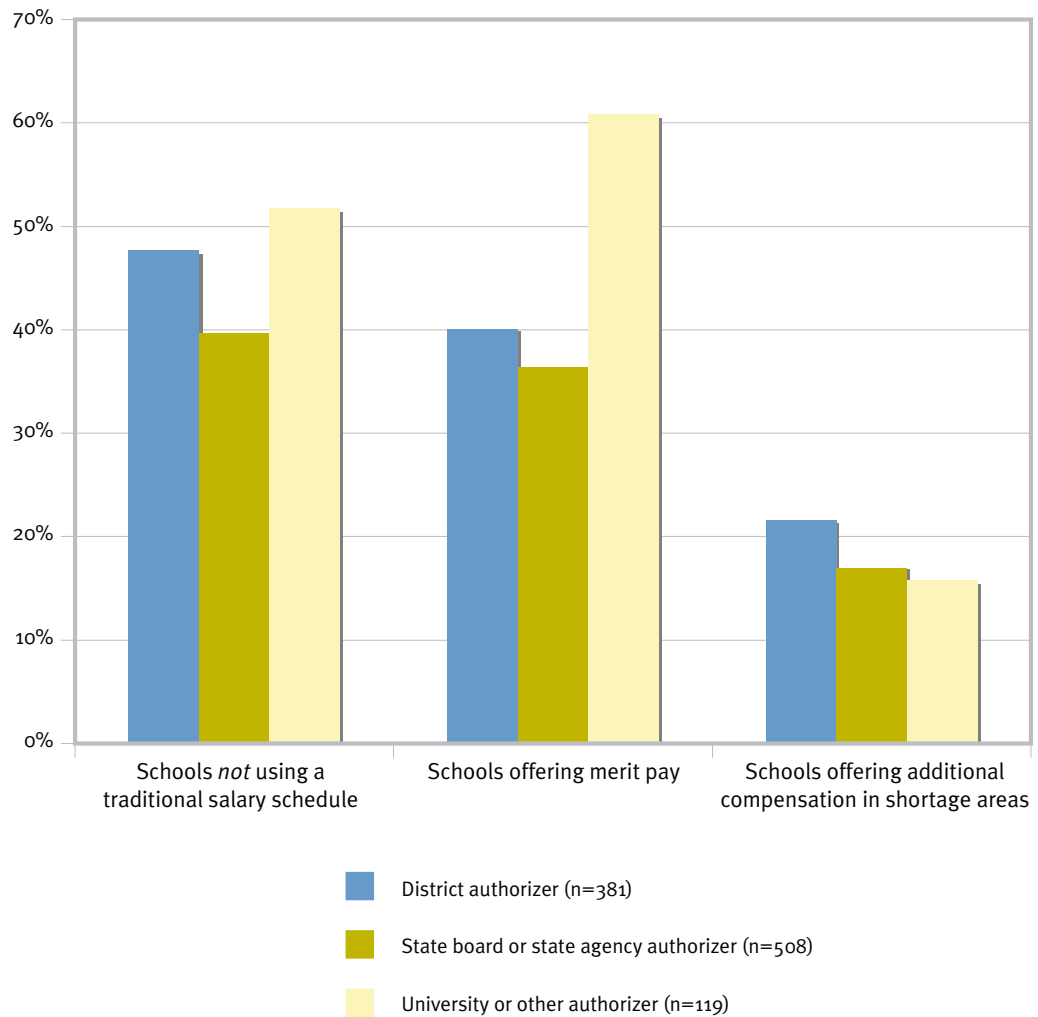


Figure 4 analyzes charter schools under yet another lens, by authorizer type. It suggests that charter schools that have non-district authorizers are more likely to experiment with compensation than those that are authorized by school districts or states. It is worth noting, however, that provisions of state law may trump the differences in figures 3 and 4. In states with more restrictive policy environments, there are no statistically significant differences in compensation policies by authorizer or origin.

FIGURE 4. COMPENSATION POLICIES IN CHARTER SCHOOLS BY AUTHORIZER



*Charter schools in less-restrictive policy environments, charter schools that are start-ups, and those that have non-district authorizers seem more likely to experiment with alternative compensation policies for teachers.*

State policy environments and organizational characteristics are intimately intertwined, so these four figures should be read with a heavy dose of caution. It is also possible that charter practices mirror traditional public school practices because these practices are more effective, practical, or help schools survive. Nevertheless, a quick look inside the charter sector suggests that charter schools in less-restrictive policy environments, charter schools that are start-ups, and those that have non-district authorizers seem more likely to approach the original hope that charters would experiment with alternative compensation policies for teachers. What does this mean for policymakers who want to encourage charters to become a source of experimentation?

## ENCOURAGING EXPERIMENTATION

Policymakers and school operators interested in encouraging experimentation in teacher pay might help set the stage for innovation with actions such as the following:

- *Address the constraints of state laws.* There is considerable variation in charter laws across the states, creating both more and less regulated policy environments for charter schools. States that require charter schools to honor existing district or state collective bargaining agreements should not be surprised if their charter schools resemble traditional public schools. Lifting these requirements may make it more likely that charter schools will experiment with compensation. For teachers and schools worried about losing job protections that come with collective bargaining, labor agreements like those used in some charter school networks (for example, Green Dot in Los Angeles) offer a middle ground, and may balance the risks associated with merit pay with other job securities.
- *Encourage “new blood” via start-ups and innovative proposals.* Given the difficulty of breaking with past practice, it stands to reason that start-ups hold more promise regarding human resource innovation than conversion schools. In addition, charter school developers and boards should continue to encourage the participation of people from outside traditional public school markets as part of charter school leadership teams and governing boards. In this way, charter leaders can hope to encourage a broad range of perspectives and experiences with compensation policy around charter school governance and leadership.<sup>10</sup> Start-up charter schools are allowed in the overwhelming majority of states, but the start-up process is costly. Increased state investment in incentives for starting charter schools, as well as authorizers that encourage innovative proposals, may promote a more diverse charter sector.

Of course, these approaches alone will not guarantee that charter schools break away from traditional compensation traditions. States, authorizers, and other organizations have a role to play providing technical assistance about human resource practices. The knowledge constraints around how to design an effective compensation system for teachers are formidable, for both charter *and* traditional public schools. Charter authorizers and other support organizations might help charter school leaders by providing information on alternative approaches to compensation and evaluating the effects of policies once in place.<sup>11</sup>

There is also an argument to be made that as long as charter schools face severe resource constraints, it is unlikely they will experiment with teacher compensation. Balancing capital costs through operational budgets, for example, may make it hard to find the

*The knowledge constraints around how to design an effective compensation system for teachers are formidable, for both charter and traditional public schools.*

energy (or the resources) to offer merit pay or incentives in hard-to-staff areas, especially when these plans are not cost neutral, as is likely the case with merit pay. If we assume that teachers are risk averse, inducing teachers to accept a more risky compensation scheme like merit pay will require more money than the costs associated with the certainty of a salary schedule. In addition, if performance pay produces the results it is intended to—increased teacher effort and better results—salaries and associated costs are likely to increase.<sup>12</sup> Although it is easy to ignore calls for more money, especially when they are associated with across-the-board salary increases, additional resources in the form of transition grants (much like the federal government has just awarded to charter schools in New York City) may be part of what is needed to drive innovation, especially regarding performance pay.

In the end, if chartering hopes to truly move student achievement forward, recruiting and developing human capital has to be a critical component. Part of developing human capital involves moving beyond the pay practices that have been used for decades in traditional public schools. In pursuit of that change, charter schools and policymakers face important challenges. For charter schools, the challenge is to overcome traditional thinking and make full use of their autonomy to attract and retain the highest-quality teachers. For policymakers, the challenge is to make sure that laws and regulatory environments support innovation. If neither challenge is met, personnel policies in charter schools may end up looking a lot more familiar than advocates once hoped.

*For charter schools, the challenge is to overcome traditional thinking and make full use of their autonomy to attract and retain the highest-quality teachers.*

*For policymakers, the challenge is to make sure that laws and regulatory environments support innovation.*

#### NOTES

1. Chester E. Finn, Bruno V. Manno, and Gregg Vanourek, *Charter Schools in Action: Renewing Public Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 72.
2. E.g., on national data see Marisa Burian-Fitzgerald, Michael T. Luekens, and Gregory A. Strizek, “Less Red Tape or More Green Teachers: Charter School Autonomy and Teacher Qualifications,” in *Taking Account of Charter Schools: What’s Happened and What’s Next?* ed. Katrina E. Bulkeley and Priscilla Wohlstetter (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003); on state data see Debbi C. Harris and David N. Plank, *Who’s Teaching in Michigan’s Traditional and Charter Public Schools*, Policy Report (East Lansing: Education Policy Center, 2003); Gary Miron, Christopher Nelson, and John Risley, *Strengthening Pennsylvania’s Charter School Reform: Findings from the Statewide Evaluation and Discussion of Relevant Policy Issues, Year Five Report* (Kalamazoo, MI: The Evaluation Center, 2002); and Bruce Fuller et al., *Charter Schools and Inequality: National Disparities in Funding, Teacher Quality, and Student Support* (Berkeley, CA: Policy Analysis for California Education, 2003).
3. E.g., see Burian-Fitzgerald, Luekens, and Strizek, “Less Red Tape”; Caroline M. Hoxby, “Would School Choice Change the Teaching Profession?” *Journal of Human Resources* 37, no. 4 (2002): 846-891; and Bruce D. Baker and Jill L. Dickerson, “Charter Schools, Teacher Labor Market



- Deregulation, and Teacher Quality: Evidence from the Schools and Staffing Survey,” *Education Policy* 20, no. 5 (2006): 752-778. By contrast, Harris and Plank’s (2003) study of Michigan charter schools found that charter teachers were likely to graduate from less competitive colleges than traditional public school teachers.
4. Increasingly aware of these problems, policymakers have put compensation reform in traditional schools near the top of the education reform agenda. See, for example, the U.S. Department of Education’s recent investment of \$80 million in local experiments with incentive pay. See Sam Dillon, “Long Reviled, Merit Pay Gains Among Teachers,” *New York Times*, June 18, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/18/education/18pay.html>.
  5. Drew H. Gitomer and Adam S. Latham, *The Academic Quality of Prospective Teachers: The Impact of Admissions and Licensure Testing* (Princeton, NJ: ETS, 1999); Michael Podgursky, Ryan Monroe, and Donald Watson, “The Academic Quality of Public School Teachers: An Analysis of Entry and Exit Behavior,” *Economics of Education Review* 23, no. 5 (2004): 507-518; Dale Ballou, “Do Public Schools Hire the Best Applicants?” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 111, no. 1 (1996): 97-133; Donald Boyd et al., “How Changes in Entry Requirements Alter the Teacher Workforce and Affect Student Achievement,” *Education Finance and Policy* 1, no. 2 (2006): 176-216; Richard J. Murnane et al., *Who Will Teach?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Robin R. Henke, Xianglei Chen, and Sonya Geis, “Progress Through the Teacher Pipeline: 1992-93 College Graduates and Elementary/Secondary School Teaching as of 1997,” Postsecondary Education Descriptive Analysis Reports (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2000).
  6. Richard Ingersoll, “Teacher Turnover and Teacher Shortages: An Organizational Analysis,” *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 3 (2001), 499-534; Sheila Nataraj Kirby, Scott Naftel, and Mark Berends, *Staffing At-Risk School Districts in Texas: Problems and Prospects* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999); Robin Henke and Lisa Zahn, “Attrition of New Teachers Among Recent College Graduates,” Postsecondary Education Descriptive Analysis Reports (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2001); and Murnane et al., *Who Will Teach?*
  7. Michael Podgursky, “Teams Versus Bureaucracies: Personnel Policy, Wage-Setting, and Teacher Quality in Traditional Public, Charter, and Private Schools,” paper presented at the National Conference on Charter School Research, Vanderbilt University, National Center on School Choice, Nashville, TN, 2006. These findings echo other surveys of charters. See Michael Podgursky and Dale Ballou, *Personnel Policy in Charter Schools* (Washington DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2001). It is worth noting that on the SASS instrument, schools only indicate whether or not they use these incentives; it is not known how extensively they use them.
  8. Podgursky, “Teams Versus Bureaucracies.”
  9. <http://www.ecs.org/html/offsite.asp?document=educationIssues%2FCharterSchools%2FCHDB%5FIntro%2Easp>
  10. A recent survey of charter school directors in six states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Texas) found that 60 percent of directors had prior experience in public schools as a teacher, assistant principal, or principal. As one charter school director recently told us when presented evidence about the limited use of alternative compensation in charter schools, “We do what we know to do.” For many, that is the traditional public school model.
  11. Ironically, given the hope that charter schools might be the source of experimentation in teacher compensation practice, charters might do well to examine recent reform efforts in some traditional public schools. Denver’s ProComp compensation reforms, for example, and the Milken Family Foundation’s Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) might provide useful models.
  12. See Dan Goldhaber et al., “Why Do So Few Public School Districts Use Merit Pay?” forthcoming in the *Journal of Education Finance*. On the other hand, it is possible that a successful merit pay plan might reduce turnover and training costs associated with low-performing teachers.



## CHAPTER 5

# Safety and Order in Charter and Traditional Public Schools

*Paul T. Hill and Jon Christensen*

Many parents say they choose charter schools because of the climate they offer. Parents consider charters to be safer and more conducive to learning. What do we know about charter school climates?

The best evidence suggests that charter schools are indeed quieter and less disruptive than traditional public schools serving similar students, but it is hard to say why this is the case. Charter schools may simply provide safe havens for students and parents who care most intensely about their children's schooling experience. Or they may do something to change behavior. If so, what are they doing? And can other schools imitate them? This chapter suggests at least preliminary answers to these questions.

As an earlier report from the National Charter School Research Project (NCSRP) shows, charter schools, on average, experience fewer disruptions and incidents of violence.<sup>1</sup> A separate study of charter schools in one large urban district draws the same conclusions.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 draws from NCSRP's analysis of teacher survey data on serious student misbehavior and the frequency of such behavior.

*Charter schools, on average, experience fewer disruptions and incidents of violence.*

FIGURE 1. TEACHER REPORTS OF THREATS TO PERSON OR PROPERTY

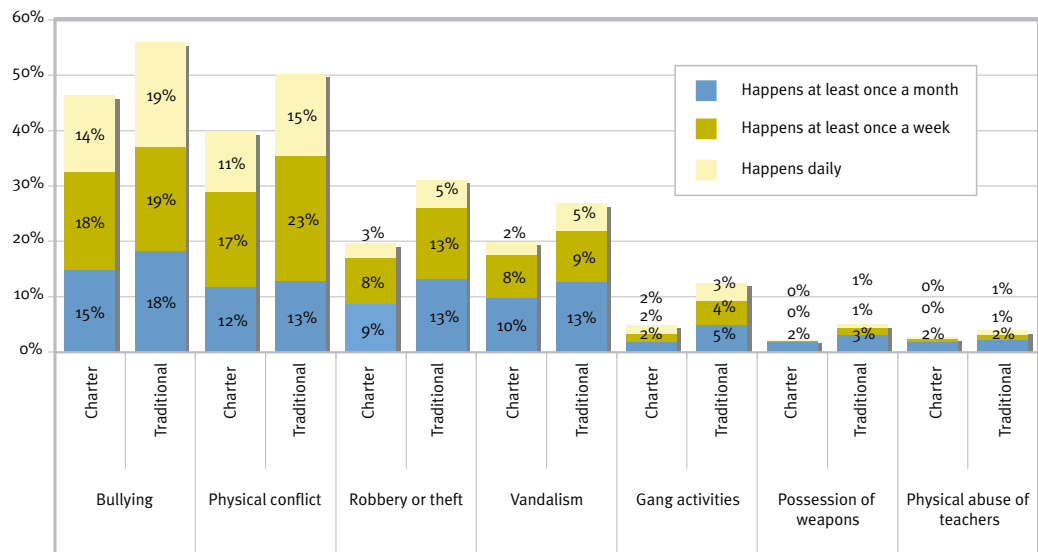
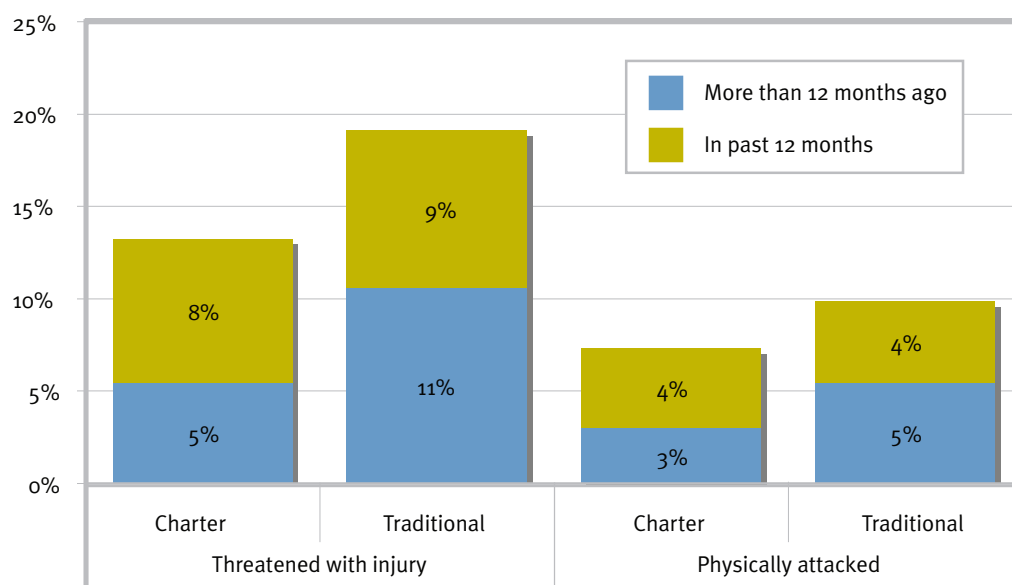


Figure 1 indicates that, according to teacher reports, serious threats to person and property are evident in both traditional public and charter schools. The figure also reveals that, across the board, teachers report these problems more frequently in traditional public schools than in charter schools. In both kinds of schools, vandalism, robbery or theft, physical conflict (fights), and bullying are the most frequently reported problems. Gang activities, possession of weapons, and physical abuse of teachers are reported less frequently in both kinds of schools. Still, it remains true that on every one of the behaviors listed in figure 1, teachers in traditional public schools report occurrences of these difficulties considerably more frequently than do charter teachers.

Surveys of principals produce similar results, although principals in general report fewer incidents than do teachers. Principals, whether in charters or traditional public schools, are not as close to the action as teachers, and they may have incentives to make the best case for their schools. As Ted Sizer suggested in his review of this chapter, principals sometimes discount student threats as posturing, not evidence of serious intention to harm students or other teachers.

The behaviors listed in figure 1 represent serious disciplinary issues. No one can take bullying, fighting, weapons possession or the like lightly. Beyond the issue of physical abuse of teachers listed in figure 1, teachers were asked whether a student from their current school had ever threatened them with injury or physically attacked them. These responses are presented in figure 2.

FIGURE 2. TEACHER REPORTS OF THREATS OR ATTACKS AT CURRENT SCHOOL

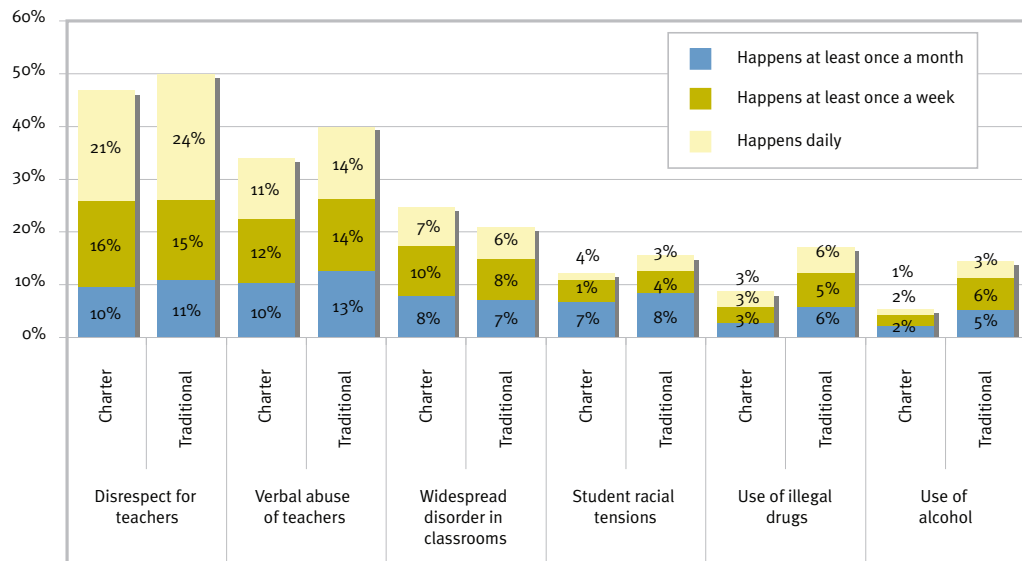


The results are sobering. As figure 2 reveals, one in seven charter school teachers and nearly one in five traditional public school teachers reported receiving threats from students (sometimes in the last 12 months, sometimes more than a year ago) in their current school. What about physical attack? About one in sixteen charter teachers and one in nine traditional public school teachers reported actually being attacked, with the results in this case about evenly divided between attacks in the last 12 months and attacks a year or more ago. The survey questions about attacks on teachers are broad enough to encompass everything from light physical contact to serious assault. Based on the survey data alone it is impossible to say how serious the reported attacks are, or whether more forceful attacks are more prevalent in one kind of school or the other. Yet any teacher reporting that they had been attacked is cause for concern.

Figures 1 and 2 relate to behaviors that everyone would agree are completely unacceptable in any school or classroom. In addition to incidents such as those, teachers clearly have to deal with a host of less violent behavioral challenges—ranging from disorder in the classroom to verbal abuse of teachers. The survey also explored those issues. Teacher responses are presented in figure 3.

*One in seven charter school teachers and nearly one in five traditional public school teachers reported receiving threats from students (sometimes in the last 12 months, sometimes more than a year ago) in their current school.*

FIGURE 3. TEACHER REPORTS OF BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS



In general, figure 3 reveals that, based on teacher reports, disrespect and verbal abuse of teachers along with widespread disorder in the classroom are the most frequently cited issues in both kinds of schools. At least 20 percent or more of teachers in both kinds of schools reported such problems at least once a month. By comparison, student racial tension and use of illegal drugs and alcohol are less common, according to teachers. Across the indicators displayed in figure 3, teachers in traditional public schools report more problems than charter school teachers in five of the six indicators. Only classroom disorder is reported to be more common in charter schools than in traditional public schools.<sup>3</sup>

### ARE CHARTER SCHOOL CLIMATE RESULTS SOLELY DUE TO STUDENT SELECTION?

*Teachers in traditional public schools report more problems than charter school teachers.*

The question naturally arises: Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Are teacher reports indicating that charter schools generally seem to be safer and more orderly a result of student selection? Or are these results something charter schools establish through their actions?<sup>4</sup>

It is hard to say, absent the sort of close scrutiny that the Center on Reinventing Public Education has sponsored around claims about charter schools' effects on student

achievement. Judging whether charter schools are safer or more orderly is a lot like determining whether they are more effective for students.

There are many ways to get the wrong answer. Just looking at school-wide data (the only kind now available on safety and climate nationwide) can hide important considerations. For example, if charter schools admit or attract a different group of students—say those who have always behaved better in school than others of similar age and background—then results on safety and climate could be caused by student selection, not by the schools themselves. If, on the other hand, the students in the two kinds of schools are roughly or nearly identical in terms of background and prior behavior, the attractiveness of charter schools in terms of safety and student behavior is likely to be a result of something the schools themselves are doing.

As in studies of student achievement, definitive research requires close attention to the backgrounds and performance of individual students. Ideally, researchers would be able to compare individual students' deportment before and after enrolling in a charter school. The results of such an analysis would be invaluable. Unfortunately, such an analysis is impossible at this time because districts do not report detailed student-based records on disruptive behavior (and may in fact be precluded from doing so by federal requirements governing student privacy).

It might be possible to assign students at random between charter and regular public schools, and track their subsequent behavior in school. To date, such a study has not been completed. The cost of such research would be high because it would require detailed observation of student behavior in many schools.

For reasons explained in the next section, such studies, even if done rigorously, might not be able to establish definitively whether the teacher reports discussed here are a consequence of student selection or of charter school actions. Indeed, it is highly likely that both factors are simultaneously at work.

## CLIMATE: A JOINT RESULT OF PREFERENCES AND SCHOOL ACTIONS

Even if we knew that students' behavior changed after entering charter schools, it would be difficult to pull apart the results of student characteristics and preferences from

*As in studies of student achievement, definitive research requires close attention to the backgrounds and performance of individual students.*

school actions. Even if current charter school students were just as disruptive as other students in their former schools, they might have been disruptive largely to avoid being bullied. Given the chance to start over in a charter school with classmates disinclined to be disruptive, such students might tone down their behavior considerably, giving charter schools superior results on climate and safety. In this example, charter schools would have contributed to better student behavior, if only by giving students a chance to realize their own preferences.

In a similar vein, student behavior might change, not because of students' preferences but those of their parents. The switch to charter schools could strengthen parents' hands, allowing them to say, "This is a safer and quieter place and you are not going to be the one to disrupt it."

The late James Coleman, a sociologist, illustrated how student and family preferences can combine with school actions to produce an orderly climate.<sup>5</sup> As he explained, most parents want their children to be in safe, quiet schools and most students want to avoid disruptions or threats from others.<sup>6</sup> But even a child of such parents is likely to misbehave at some time or other. When a child misbehaves, his or her parents often want an exception made, to prevent a suspension, expulsion, or blemish on the child's record.<sup>7</sup> In that case, which arises in every school, the school head's actions are crucial. School leaders who make the requested exceptions often find themselves forced to excuse other infractions as well, so that in the long run actual standards of safety and order fall below the standards all the parents want. On the other hand, school leaders who enforce the school's standards might annoy the parents who are pleading for an exception, but they keep faith with the other parents and do not encourage future appeals.

As Coleman explained, parents are unlikely to get as safe and orderly a school environment as they think appropriate, unless that school helps them attain their preferences. On the other hand, a school probably cannot forcibly maintain a quieter environment than parents want. Moreover, even if a school expels students who constantly violate standards of behavior, the school still needs to say "no" to the remaining parents when they seek exceptions.

The process Coleman describes has little to do with "creaming." If the vast majority of parents and students want safer schools than those now available to them, and seize the chance to cooperate with a school that promised such an environment, there is virtually

*The switch to charter schools could strengthen parents' hands, allowing them to say, "This is a safer and quieter place and you are not going to be the one to disrupt it."*

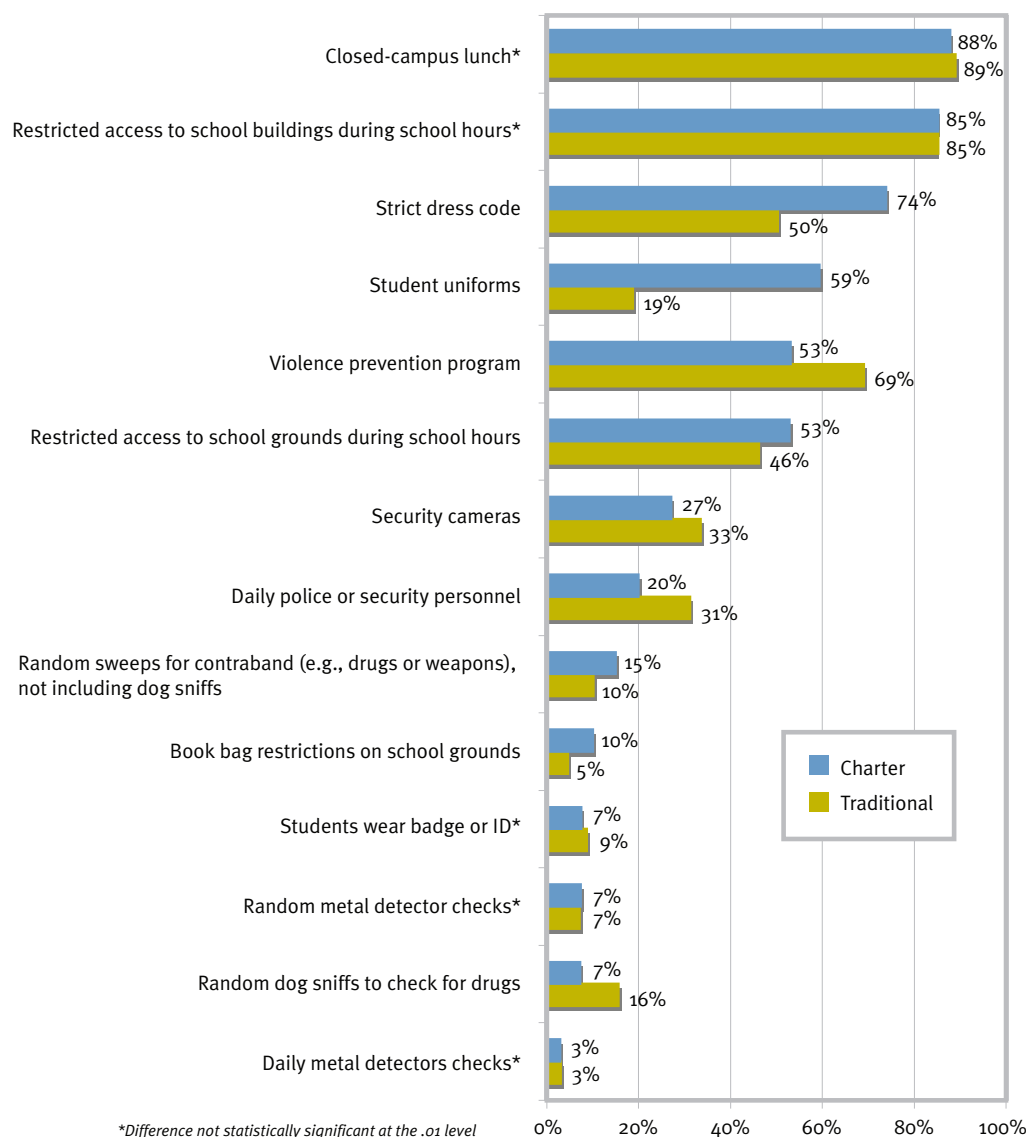


no limit to the number of students who would behave better under the right circumstances, or of parents who would support such schools.

## WHAT CHARTER SCHOOLS ACTUALLY DO

Theory aside, do charter schools do anything noticeably different from traditional public schools with regard to promoting safety or emphasizing discipline and order? The 2003–2004 School and Staffing Survey provided useful data from school principals that can be used to illuminate this question. Figure 4 provides the results.

**FIGURE 4. PRINCIPAL REPORTS OF SCHOOL SECURITY POLICIES**



*Theory aside, do charter schools do anything noticeably different from traditional public schools with regard to promoting safety or emphasizing discipline and order?*

As figure 4 shows, charters and traditional public schools emphasize different school security policies. Traditional public schools are more likely than charters to offer violence prevention programs, provide for the daily presence of police and security on campus, and mount random dog sweeps to detect drugs. Charter schools, on the other hand, are considerably more likely to enforce strict dress codes and require uniforms.

If charter schools do anything special about safety and order it might well be, as Coleman suggested, based not on specific programs but on the basic rules of behavior set on admission and enforced in daily transactions among students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

The fact that charter schools are smaller than public schools on average is also probably an advantage.<sup>8</sup> Small schools make it easier for adults to know individual students and make student actions more visible. Most adults in small schools work as generalists, not specialists, so they cannot defer handing disruptions to deans or discipline specialists.<sup>9</sup> As table 1 shows, charter schools are safer and more orderly than regular public schools of the same size.

*Charter schools are safer and more orderly than regular public schools of the same size.*

TABLE 1. TEACHER REPORTS OF DAILY, WEEKLY, OR MONTHLY INCIDENTS BY SCHOOL SIZE

		Fewer than 200 students	200 - 749 students	750 - 1199 students	1200 or more students	
Threats to Property	Bullying	Charter	43%	48%	43%	52%
		Traditional	46%	53%	59%	60%
	Physical conflict	Charter	43%	37%	37%	57%
		Traditional	50%	44%	53%	59%
	Robbery or theft	Charter	15%	19%	18%	42%
		Traditional	20%	21%	33%	50%
	Vandalism	Charter	15%	19%	19%	36%
		Traditional	20%	18%	29%	44%
	Gang activities	Charter	8%	4%	2%	7%
		Traditional	18%	6%	12%	27%
Possession of weapons	Charter	2%	3%	1%	3%	
	Traditional	4%	2%	4%	12%	
Physical abuse of teachers	Charter	1%	4%	1%	3%	
	Traditional	11%	4%	3%	5%	
Behavioral Problems	Disrespect for teachers	Charter	56%	45%	42%	49%
		Traditional	46%	42%	51%	65%
	Verbal abuse of teachers	Charter	42%	32%	31%	35%
		Traditional	43%	30%	42%	57%
	Widespread disorder in classrooms	Charter	28%	25%	22%	18%
		Traditional	25%	15%	25%	29%
	Student racial tensions	Charter	11%	12%	9%	23%
		Traditional	18%	10%	16%	27%
	Use of illegal drugs	Charter	13%	7%	6%	16%
		Traditional	19%	5%	14%	45%
Use of alcohol	Charter	8%	4%	3%	16%	
	Traditional	15%	4%	12%	39%	

## LEARNING MORE ABOUT SAFETY AND ORDER

Given the difficulty of making valid comparisons between charter and traditional public schools, there is little hope that a study can prove definitively whether charter schools are intrinsically safer and more orderly. There will always be questions about student selection, accuracy of reporting, and the special advantages of schools of choice. However, there is a lot more to be learned about how school leaders (in charter and traditional schools) can use their leverage in hiring, student counseling, parent relations,

and day-to-day school management to promote safety and order. This would require close observation of schools in action, not just national surveys.

Coleman argued that principals in highly bureaucratic school systems have incentives to accommodate individual parents' demands for exceptions, lest controversy cause trouble for the principal with the district central office or school board. On the other hand, he argued, heads of more independent schools have incentives not to accommodate such demands but to keep faith with the rest of the parents, who want to maintain the school's department standards.

Much depends on the incentives created for school leaders. Chartering creates good incentives, but so can school district leaders if they support school heads who refuse to make compromises about school climate. In Coleman's analysis, the key to safety and order is not careful selection of children or parents according to their preferences, but careful management of school culture. What matters is how schools enlist the natural support that exists for a positive climate and respond to threats when they occur.

Charter schools have opportunities and incentives to use this leverage, but they are not the only schools that do. Traditional public schools, particularly those competing against charter schools for students, have strong incentives to improve school climate. Moreover, as the data reported here reveal, charter schools can improve also, especially in avoiding classroom disruptions. All schools could learn from the example of the charter schools that have dealt well with these issues.

Safety and order do not cause student learning, but their absence can prevent it. Parents are right to seek safe, orderly schools, and school leaders have a responsibility to do all they can to manage school climates in children's interest.

## IMPLICATIONS

Future research on safety and order in charter schools can provide ideas that all schools can use. School districts should also learn from charter experience and support, not abandon, principals who take risks to maintain school climate. Finally, state legislatures should think twice about granting demands to regulate charter schools or force them to follow onerous student discipline requirements. Charter schools demonstrate that public schools can provide the kinds of climates families want and need. The ability to offer

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parents that kind of climate might be compromised if officials force charter school leaders to avoid controversy at all costs.

## NOTES

1. Jon Christensen, *School Safety in Urban Charter and Traditional Public Schools*, NCSRP working paper #2007-1 (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, March 2007). That report, and this chapter, was developed around data from the National Center on Education Statistics' 2003-04 School and Staffing Survey (SASS). See Gregory A. Strizek et al., *Characteristics of Schools, Districts, Teachers, Principals, and School Libraries in the United States: 2003-04 Schools and Staffing Survey*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006), <http://nces.ed.gov/Pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006313>.
2. Scott A. Imberman, *Achievement and Behavior in Charter Schools: Drawing a More Complete Picture*, Occasional Paper #142 (New York: National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, 2007).
3. Principals' responses on this issue differed. Charter school principals reported widespread classroom disorder happening less frequently than principals in traditional public schools. This may be an area in which teachers are closer to the classroom reality than principals.
4. Imberman (2007) examines these same issues and concludes that both student characteristics and attributes of the schools themselves contribute to the lower incidence of disruptive behavior in charter schools.
5. James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
6. This argument is backed up by Public Agenda findings about parents' preferences for safety and order. African-American parents, whose children are more likely to attend more dangerous and turbulent schools, nonetheless have stronger preferences for safety and order than other parents. See Steve Farcas and Jean Johnson, *Time To Move On: African-American and White Parents Set an Agenda for Public Schools* (New York, NY: Public Agenda, 1990).
7. In effect, parents reveal one kind of preference—about the environment they want for their children—when they choose a school, and quite a different preference—about the conditions under which they want their child to be punished—when a disciplinary issue arises. This would not be news to the heads of parochial and elite private schools.
8. In Imberman's data (2007) the small size of start-up schools explains most of the charter school advantage with respect to student behavior.
9. As reviewer Ted Sizer notes, larger schools can gain a comparable advantage by creating smaller, more intimate sub-groupings for student advising and some coursework.

*Charter schools demonstrate that public schools can provide the kinds of climates families want and need. The ability to offer parents that kind of climate might be compromised if officials force charter school leaders to avoid controversy at all costs.*



## CHAPTER 6

# Smart Charter School Caps: A Third Way on Charter School Growth

*Andrew J. Rotherham*

In many states, the debate about charter schools has come to focus on the question of “caps”: Should there be a cap on the number of charter schools? How many charter schools should be allowed to open statewide? Or in a locality? Or in a particular year? These debates are vestiges of early charter school politics, under which charter supporters reassured skeptics by promising that the numbers of charter schools would grow slowly after demonstrating their value. Many legislators who voted for the first charter bills wanted to make sure that chartering would grow at a measured pace to allow quality control and to give school districts time to adjust to competition.

Currently, twenty-five states and the District of Columbia cap the growth of charter schools in some fashion.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, in states with charter school caps, the result is a contentious political debate, generally between teachers unions and charter school supporters, about whether or not to have a cap or how many schools should be allowed. However, as Lisa Stulberg demonstrates in a recent report from the National Charter School Research Project (NCSRP), other factors bear on this debate as well, including less obvious constituencies that for different reasons can also be hostile to charter schools.<sup>2</sup>

In New York, for instance, for several years the debate over charter schools largely focused on whether or not to lift the cap of 100 schools. Little attention was paid to broader issues of charter school policy. How charters can play a role in broader systemic reform or how authorizers can most effectively regulate charter school quality were issues that went largely unexamined.<sup>3</sup> For many parents, the immediate result of this

*Debates about caps are vestiges of early charter school politics, under which charter supporters reassured skeptics by promising that the numbers of charter schools would grow slowly after demonstrating their value.*

logjam is a persistent lack of high-quality public education options in their communities and long waiting lists at existing charter schools.<sup>4</sup> In New York, while the legislature debated the cap, 12,000 students were on waiting lists to attend existing public charter schools.<sup>5</sup> In Illinois 10,000 are on waiting lists, and the number has reached 16,000 in Massachusetts.<sup>6</sup>

Today, there is reason to question whether the original rationales for caps are still valid. By now school districts have had a decade to adjust to charters. And, in communities where the public schools are failing to educate significant numbers of students, it is worth asking why existing institutions should be shielded from competitive pressures brought on by new providers. At the same time, government oversight of charter schools has also developed. Many (though far from all) authorizers exercise quality control over the schools they allow to open, while resources to support authorizers, including a national association, have developed. It is plausible to believe that it makes sense to expand the numbers of charter schools gradually, without setting finite limits on their numbers. This essay tries to go beyond the debate over numbers of charter schools to ask: What is the best way to ensure charter school quality and most effectively give parents and students more options within public education?

Existing approaches to charter school caps are the wrong tool for that job. Assuming charter school critics are concerned with school quality (rather than simply seeking to curb the spread of charter schools), statutory caps as a policy approach are too blunt an instrument to address quality. Today's charter school caps fail to differentiate between good schools and bad ones, and between successful charter school authorizers and those with a poor track record. Meanwhile, they limit public schooling options and choices for parents. As Stulberg points out, caps are products of political "horse trading," not primarily an educational solution.<sup>7</sup>

Finite caps should be replaced by "Smart Charter School Caps," described below. This new approach promises to sensibly manage the growth of charter schools, while fostering public school quality overall. Smart Charter School Caps offer a political and substantive grand bargain that moves beyond today's tired back and forth about caps and expands opportunity for underserved students. The experience of the past 15 years offers policymakers clear lessons about how to design more effective charter policy.

*Today's charter school caps fail to differentiate between good schools and bad ones, and between successful charter school authorizers and those with a poor track record. Meanwhile, they limit public schooling options and choices for parents.*



## CHARTER SCHOOLING IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

In theory, there is no need for statutory caps on the number of charter schools in a state; the marketplace should determine supply. If schools are not popular with parents, the schools will have insufficient resources to operate because money will follow students to other schools. In practice, however, three issues complicate what looks so straightforward in theory: (1) the capacity of those seeking to open schools may be limited; (2) the agencies charged with overseeing charter schools may run into difficulties; and (3) parental information about charter schools may be lacking. In different ways, each of these issues can contribute to the existence of low-performing charter schools and hinder the growth and development of outstanding ones.

First, uneven capacity among charter school authorizers to open good schools has contributed to the uneven charter school quality. Entities authorized to open charter schools vary from state to state and are defined by state law. School districts, state boards of education, other statewide institutions, and public universities are common authorizers.<sup>8</sup> Through work by organizations like the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, charter school authorizing is rapidly improving and there are many examples of outstanding authorizers. But overall capacity and quality remain uneven. A 2005 analysis found that 90 percent of authorizers were local school districts and two-thirds lacked a dedicated office or staff to oversee charter schools. Half of all authorizers had authorized just a single school.<sup>9</sup> Just like running a school district, quality authorizing is an intensive and data-driven process that requires resources and focus. It cannot be a sideline to other school district operations.

At the same time, opening and operating high-performing public schools, especially schools serving disadvantaged students, is intense and challenging work. Not everyone seeking to open a charter school has sufficiently thought through and planned for the challenges of running a school in a challenging, high-poverty environment—nor has everyone the ability to run such a school. As authorizers have become better at their work, an increasing number of charter applications are rejected or substantially revised to ensure quality. For instance, Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson, who is widely regarded as an excellent authorizer and is a recipient of Harvard’s prestigious Innovations in American Government Award for his charter school work, has authorized only 19 of the more than 90 charter school applications he has received.<sup>10</sup>

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Likewise, the contentious political environment around charter schools creates perverse incentives for focusing on quality or closing low-performing charters. In an environment of politically constrained growth due to charter school caps, some charter school proponents and parents fight against any effort to close charter schools.<sup>11</sup> Understandably, parents will fight to keep a low-performing but safe school open when they perceive other neighborhood schools to be unsafe. In theory, a cap on the number of charter schools should make authorizers willing to shut down low-performing schools to make room for more promising schools, but, in practice, matters are more complicated as politics, stakeholder resistance, and the legal challenges of closing schools come into play.<sup>12</sup> Further complicating the politics, some charter school advocates see quality as a secondary issue to growth when charter schools are almost constantly under attack by opponents of charter schooling. Why, they ask, would charter supporters seemingly attack some charter schools and call attention to problems while all charter schools—good and bad—face such vociferous and organized resistance from opponents?

Finally, substantially expanded choice in education is a relatively new phenomenon, so the marketplace remains relatively unformed. Today's wave of choice-based reforms only dates to the early 1990s. Consequently, parents still struggle to find good information about schools, and especially information in a format that is useful for them. Parents are also still learning to navigate a more choice-driven environment. As a result, while parents want what is best for their children, a gap sometimes remains between this desire and actual decisionmaking. In other words, parents sometimes choose lousy schools.

These factors account for why, to date, charter schools have had mixed success in terms of outcomes and why “average” charter school test scores are often no better than other public schools. Yet these averages obscure a substantial number of higher-performing charter schools, which offer an opportunity for policymakers to expand schooling options for students while enhancing quality.

Research shows, for example, that substantial performance variation exists between different types of charter schools. For instance a 2007 report found that in California, charter schools managed by charter management organizations (CMOs) generally out-performed other charter schools.<sup>13</sup> CMOs are nonprofit networks of schools and include high-profile organizations such as the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) and Achievement First, as well as numerous smaller CMOs operating around the

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country. In similar fashion, an analysis by education analyst Bryan Hassel found that longitudinal studies show that many charter schools are in fact outpacing similar public schools.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the charter school landscape shows that while some failure is inevitable in any human endeavor like schooling (and in education, school failure is hardly unique to the charter sector), low-performing charter schools are not, in fact, a randomly occurring phenomenon. Instead, quality is keenly related to state policy and authorizing practices.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, almost from the inception of charter schools, the debate about them has been political. Some early charter school laws were compromises to head-off proposals to create private school voucher programs.<sup>16</sup> And, school districts, teachers unions, and many state policymakers have, understandably, never embraced an idea such as charter schools that promises to significantly alter the power arrangements in education. That is why, for example, teachers unions and school districts in Washington State fought to overturn that state's charter school law before even a single school had a chance to open and demonstrate results.

Yet in the 15 years since the first charter school opened its doors in Minnesota and President Bill Clinton championed the idea as a way to expand choice within public education, researchers and policymakers have learned a great deal about charter schooling. Those lessons include better charter school authorizing, more effective accountability strategies, and a more textured understanding of how charter schooling works in practice. This learning can be applied to make charter school policies more effective for students than they are today and move past the political stalemate that characterizes the charter school caps debate.

## SMART CHARTER SCHOOL CAPS

As a public policy, some constraints on the growth of charter schools make sense. At the most general level, one characteristic of charter schooling that differentiates the reform from school vouchers is greater public sector involvement and oversight. Not just anyone can open a charter school. More specifically, states that have allowed relatively unfettered growth of charter schools have experienced quality and accountability problems in their charter school sectors, and many have been forced to revisit their laws.<sup>17</sup> But, today's caps on charter schools are a crude and simultaneously ineffective

*Low-performing charter schools are not, in fact, a randomly occurring phenomenon. Instead, quality is keenly related to state policy and authorizing practices.*

way to address quality problems, and they unnecessarily limit publicly available options for parents.

One strategy for moving past today's political stalemate is to embrace Smart Charter School Caps. By applying the basic principle of intervention in inverse proportion to success, states could create a more vibrant charter sector and a higher-quality one. Smart Charter School Caps allow for deliberate capacity-driven growth of charter schools, direct new resources to high-quality schools, and work within today's political reality that charter schools remain a controversial and leading-edge reform.

Here's how Smart Charter School Caps would work:

- *Deliberately support and grow proven models.* Rather than today's absolute caps, states would eliminate any cap for "proven" schools that have demonstrated outstanding gains for students based on state assessments. For instance, there could be no cap on proposals to replicate schools that, over multiple years, perform in the top 10 or 15 percent of similar public schools or in the top quartile of public schools overall for several years. States could base their performance requirements only on intrastate data or could also consider schools that have performed well elsewhere, for instance interstate networks such as KIPP or Achievement First. At the same time, states would provide funding and support for facilities and planning to help such schools replicate and grow in under-served communities.
- *Allow new schools to open.* To promote innovation and a diverse set of charter schools, states would leave an annual cap on the number of new schools with a plausible and well-developed application and operating plan but no track record yet. States could also provide support for them through funding and ideas like charter school incubators.<sup>18</sup>
- *Be realistic about authorizer capacity.* Ideally, Smart Charter School Caps should recognize that authorizers, whether districts or state-wide agencies, would have to demonstrate the capacity to sponsor more schools. To do this, states could eliminate any cap for authorizers that have a proven track record of (1) opening high-quality charter schools meeting some performance threshold for student performance and (2) closing persistently under-performing schools.
- *Make charters part of systemic reform.* Smart Charter School Caps should result in the creation of more high-quality public charter schools, including substantially more options in communities where good options for parents do not now exist. This would raise short-term challenges for school districts that lose a significant number of students to public charter schools. Transitional aid—funds to help these districts transition through the loss of students—is a reasonable intermediate step because school districts do have some temporarily fixed costs during transitional periods. However, unconditional aid to districts facing charter com-

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petition may actually discourage systemic reform by allowing districts to avoid addressing the problems that caused them to lose students.

- *Link aid to space.* To encourage districts to cut excess fixed costs and develop the capacity to compete for students, transition aid should be linked to requirements that school districts make excess facilities available for new public charter schools. A recent NCSR report suggested that districts should also have to “earn” transition aid by presenting a convincing plan to respond to charter competition rather than being paralyzed by it.<sup>19</sup> It is unrealistic to expect school districts to adapt overnight to a substantial loss of students, but it is likewise unrealistic to expect taxpayers to finance costs for students who are being served by other public schools. Conditional transitional aid addresses both problems at once. The threshold at which districts lose enough students to need transitional assistance is also when they should begin to lease or sell existing facilities to reduce fixed costs and develop plans to attract more students.

Some states incorporate different aspects of these proposals into their charter caps now, for instance authorizer-specific caps. And small elements of these ideas exist around the country. For example, Ohio provides flexibility on charter granting to schools with solid performance records. However, no state has adopted an intentional policy to deliberately grow their charter school sector by adopting quality-sensitive caps while aggressively supporting proven school models. Smart Charter School Caps mean that the growth of charter schools, while still driven by parent demand, is steadier and without the potential for a “gold rush” to open new schools when caps are lifted or substantially modified.

In the short term, Smart Charter School Caps would favor larger networks of charter schools like CMOs. But by annualizing caps on new schools, rather than making them fixed and permanent, new schools aspiring to be “one-offs” rather than replicable networks could continue to open each year, and authorizers would be able to focus more resources on working with such schools.

Politically, Smart Charter School Caps take away the argument that charters are no better than other public schools by focusing on quality and giving clear priority to proven models that have cleared the quality threshold. Against the backdrop of today’s educational challenges it is hard to argue for limiting schools that have proven to be substantially better than average and much better than the status quo. This is why, although many charter advocates do not want any caps on charter schools, Smart Charter School Caps offer a politically deft compromise with the potential to move past today’s logjam in states with arbitrary caps.

*No state has adopted an intentional policy to deliberately grow their charter school sector by adopting quality-sensitive caps while aggressively supporting proven school models.*

To make determinations about quality, many states will have to improve their data systems. Prodded by *No Child Left Behind* and efforts like the Data Quality Campaign, states are already moving rapidly in this direction and can increasingly make better evaluations of school performance.<sup>20</sup>

The federal government could also encourage states to adopt Smart Charter School Caps by favoring them in grant criteria for the federal Public Charter Schools Program or other support for charter schools and charter-like schools. The federal government could also launch a specific new schools effort incorporating this strategy as a complement to existing programs.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, caps are not the only state policies constraining the growth of charter schools. For instance, some states also effectively cap charter schools by starving them of resources, or by not allowing any entity besides local school districts to charter schools.<sup>22</sup> Addressing these issues, as well as the problems with caps today, is integral to good state charter school policy.

## CONCLUSIONS

*Although many charter advocates do not want any caps on charter schools, Smart Charter School Caps offer a politically deft compromise with the potential to move past today's logjam in states with arbitrary caps.*

Smart Charter School Caps will hardly eliminate all the challenges associated with charter schooling. But they are a step toward better public policy for charter schools and more options for parents and students. Smart Charter School Caps offer something for all sides in the charter school debate. While charter advocates do not “win” the cap debate through the elimination of caps, they get a clear path to more high-quality public charter schools and a more deliberate strategy to open and replicate effective models while still allowing new “mom and pop” charter schools to thrive as well. Critics of charter schooling do not get the outright ban on charters that some seek, but they do get a regulatory structure that emphasizes quality and manages charter school growth on a rational basis, which is what everyone wants.

Most importantly, students in underserved communities get the chance to have more good public schools open where they live. Considering the educational status quo, on-time high school completion rates of only about 50 percent for minority students and a four-grade-level racial achievement gap for 17-year-olds, the question for policymakers is not whether to expand schooling options in underserved communities, but how.<sup>23</sup> Smart Charter School Caps point a way.



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**NOTES**

1. Todd Ziebarth, *Peeling the Lid Off State-Imposed Charter School Caps* (Washington, DC: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2007).
2. Lisa Stulberg, *Beyond the Battle Lines: Lessons From New York's Charter Caps Fight*, National Charter School Research Project (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2007).
3. Ibid.
4. Todd Ziebarth, *Peeling the Lid Off*.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Stulberg, *Beyond the Battle Lines*.
8. See National Association of Charter School Authorizers, [www.qualitycharters.org](http://www.qualitycharters.org), for more information. See also Louann Bierlein Palmer, *“Alternative” Charter School Authorizers* (Washington, DC: Progressive Policy Institute, 2006).
9. Gregg Vanourek, *State of the Charter Movement 2005: Trends, Issues, & Indicators*, (Washington, DC: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2005).
10. Andrew J. Rotherham and David Harris, *Get Mayors In the Schooling Game* (Washington, DC: Education Sector, 2007), [http://www.educationsector.org/analysis/analysis\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=471201](http://www.educationsector.org/analysis/analysis_show.htm?doc_id=471201).
11. Andrew J. Rotherham, “The Pros & Cons of Charter School Closures,” in *Hopes, Fears, & Reality: A Balanced Look at American Charter Schools in 2005*, ed. Robin J. Lake and Paul T. Hill, National Charter School Research Project, 43-52 (Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2005).
12. I have argued elsewhere that the one strategy to create a better climate for closing low-performing charter schools is actually more good charter schools, thus reducing the zero-sum dynamic for parents. See Rotherham, “The Pros and Cons of Charter School Closures.”
13. EdSource Online, [http://www.edsource.org/pub\\_abs\\_charterperf07.cfm](http://www.edsource.org/pub_abs_charterperf07.cfm).
14. Bryan C. Hassel and Michelle Godard Terrell, *Charter School Achievement: What We Know*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2006).
15. Sara Mead and Andrew J. Rotherham, *A Sum Greater Than the Parts: What States Can Teach Each Other About Charter Schooling* (Washington, DC: Education Sector, 2007).
16. Bryan C. Hassel, *The Charter School Challenge* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1999). See also Lance D. Fusarelli, *The Political Dynamics of School Choice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
17. Bryan C. Hassel and Michelle Godard Terrell, *The Rugged Frontier: A Decade of Charter Schooling in Arizona* (Washington, DC: Public Policy Institute, 2004); Nelson Smith, *Texas Roundup: Charter Schooling in the Lone Star State* (Washington, DC: Public Policy Institute, 2005); Alexander Russo, *A Tough Nut to Crack in Ohio: Charter Schooling in the Buckeye State* (Washington, DC: Public Policy Institute, 2005). See also Gary Miron, “Strong Charter Schools Are Those That Result in Positive Outcomes,” paper presented at AERA Annual Conference, April 11-15, 2005.
18. Charter school incubators are facilities where new schools can start, attract students, and subsequently move into larger and more permanent space.
19. Stulberg, *Beyond the Battle Lines*.
20. See <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/>.
21. Education Sector, “Open New Schools in Low-Income Neighborhoods” in *Eight for 2008: Education Ideas for the Next President* (Washington, DC: Education Sector, 2007), [http://www.educationsector.org/research/research\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=464943](http://www.educationsector.org/research/research_show.htm?doc_id=464943).
22. Meagan Batdorff et al., *Charter School Funding: Inequity's Next Frontier* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2005).
23. National Assessment of Educational Progress and *Education Week* Research Center.





## APPENDIX A

# About the Authors

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**CHRISTINE CAMPBELL** is a Research Analyst at the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education. She has researched and analyzed district-wide reform efforts for use by both districts and philanthropies. Within reform efforts she has also studied district response to choice, the role of superintendent leadership, and central office operations. She has written teaching cases for school board training, and is currently studying charter school leadership sustainability.

**JON CHRISTENSEN** is a Research Coordinator at the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education. His work on the National Charter School Research Project has focused on student achievement in charter schools, analysis of the national Schools and Staffing Survey, and tracking charter school growth in each state. Currently, he is working on NCSRP's *Inside Charter Schools* project, which aims to increase understanding of how charter schools differ from each other and from other public schools by examining instructional methods and programmatic offerings, teacher human resource management, and leadership strategies.

**MICHAEL DEARMOND** is a Research Associate at the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education. He has conducted research on the reform of district-level operations, including facilities management and human resource management. His current work looks at school-level hiring decisions.

**DAN GOLDHABER** is a Research Professor at the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education, an Affiliated Scholar at the Urban Institute, and a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at Education Sector. His work focuses on issues of educational productivity and reform at the K-12 level, and the relationship between teacher labor markets and teacher quality. Dr. Goldhaber's current research addresses teacher labor markets and the role that teacher pay structure plays in teacher recruitment and retention; the relationship between teacher licensure test performance and student achievement; the stability of teacher effectiveness measures over time; the influence of human resource practices on teacher turnover and quality; and the role of community colleges in higher education.

**BETHENY GROSS** is a Research Analyst at the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education. Her current work examines teacher recruitment, hiring, and mobility in both traditional public school districts and charter schools. Dr. Gross is Co-Director of the National Charter Schools Research Project's *Inside Charter Schools* project.

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**ROBIN J. LAKE** is Associate Director of the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education and Director of the National Charter School Research Project. Along with other charter school research, she is co-author of *Charter Schools and Accountability in Public Education* (Brookings Institution Press, 2002).

**ANDREW J. ROTHERHAM** is Co-founder and Co-director of Education Sector, a national education policy think tank. He also writes the blog Eduwonk.com and serves on the Virginia Board of Education. Previously, he served at the White House as special

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## APPENDIX B

# Ten Notable Charter School Studies Published in 2007

These new charter school studies addressed important policy questions and employed particularly balanced and rigorous analysis. For more information about these and other recent charter school studies, including summaries of findings and links to the reports, please visit the National Charter School Research Project website ([www.ncsrp.org](http://www.ncsrp.org)) under “Resources and Tools.”

**A SUM GREATER THAN THE PARTS: WHAT STATES CAN TEACH EACH OTHER ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLING.** Andrew Rotherham and Sara Mead. Washington, DC: Education Sector (2007).

**ACHIEVEMENT AND BEHAVIOR IN CHARTER SCHOOLS: DRAWING A MORE COMPLETE PICTURE.** Scott Imberman. New York, NY: National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education (2007).

**BUILDING A TYPOLOGY OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN TEXAS.** Jody Ernst and Virginia Blankenship. Austin, Texas: Charter School Policy Institute (2007).

**CHARTER SCHOOLS AS A VEHICLE FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM: IMPLEMENTATION AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES AT THREE INNER-CITY SITES.** Steven M. Ross, Linda Bol, and Brenda McSparrin-Gallagher. Paper presented at the annual American Educational Research Association conference, Chicago, IL, April 2007.

**CHARTER SCHOOLS: HOPE OR HYPE?** Jack Buckley and Mark Schneider. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (2007).

**CHARTER SCHOOLS INDICATORS.** Priscilla Wohlstetter. Los Angeles, CA: Center on Educational Governance, University of Southern California (2007).

**GETTING INSIDE THE BLACK BOX: EXAMINING HOW THE OPERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOLS AFFECTS PERFORMANCE.** Ron Zimmer and Richard Buddin. *Peabody Journal of Education*, Vol. 82, No. 2-3 (2007): 231-373.

**NEW YORK CITY'S CHARTER SCHOOLS OVERALL REPORT.** Caroline Hoxby and Sonali Murarka. Cambridge, MA: New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Project (2007).

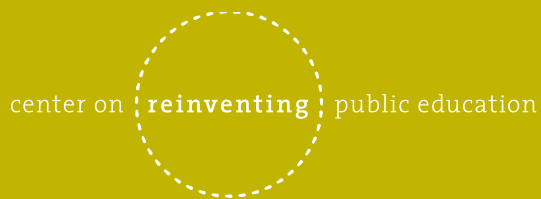
**SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO? COMPARING TEACHER MOBILITY IN FLORIDA'S CHARTER AND TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS.** Debbi C. Harris. *Peabody Journal of Education*, Vol. 82, No. 2-3 (2007): 274-310.

**WHAT AMERICANS THINK ABOUT THEIR SCHOOLS: THE 2007 EDUCATION NEXT—PEPG SURVEY.** William G. Howell, Martin R. West, and Paul E. Peterson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University (2007).

#### AND FROM THE NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL RESEARCH PROJECT IN 2007

- **QUANTITY COUNTS: THE GROWTH OF CHARTER SCHOOL MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS**
- **BEYOND THE BATTLE LINES: LESSONS FROM NEW YORK'S CHARTER CAPS FIGHT,**  
by Lisa Stulberg
- **IDENTIFYING AND REPLICATING THE "DNA" OF SUCCESSFUL CHARTER SCHOOLS: LESSONS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR,** by Robin Lake
- **MAKING SENSE OF CHARTER SCHOOL STUDIES: A REPORTER'S GUIDE,** by Lydia Rainey
- **SCHOOL SAFETY IN URBAN CHARTER AND TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS,**  
by Jon Christensen

To obtain copies of prior *Hopes, Fears, & Reality* reports or to see other work from the National Charter School Research Project, please visit us at [www.ncsrp.org](http://www.ncsrp.org)



The Center on Reinventing Public Education at the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington engages in research and analysis aimed at developing focused, effective, and accountable schools and the systems that support them. The Center, established in 1993, seeks to inform community leaders, policymakers, school and school system leaders, and the research community.

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