

FACT SHEET ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

Terminology

charter schools - public schools under private management which do not have to follow many of the regulations required for the regular public schools but which cannot have a religious affiliation, charge tuition, or go against civil rights regulations

- community-led charter schools - charter schools, including those first envisioned by the American Federation of Teachers, which have community members on their boards, serve students needing special programs, allow teachers to experiment pedagogically, and intend to help the other public schools improve
 - corporate-led charter schools - charter schools whose boards include business leaders who believe that what works in business will work just as well in schools and who are strongly opposed to teachers' unions
 - independent charter schools - charter schools created by petitions from local groups, by the Georgia State Charter Schools Commission, or by the state after a local board has refused to allow a particular school
 - dependent charter schools - traditional public schools or school systems that choose to become charters or start-up schools created by the petition of a Local Education Agency
- privately managed schools - public schools operated by outside entities, either non-profit organizations or for-profit businesses, under contract with a school district
- voucher schools - state-authorized private schools receiving public funds distributed as public vouchers given to individuals who may give them to any authorized school they choose

American Charter Schools in General

- There are approximately 5000 charter schools in the United States, enrolling 3-4% (depending on the study) of all public school students.
- Thanks to additional financial resources from corporate sponsors (in New York City, especially hedge fund leaders), the most celebrated charter schools can afford to offer smaller classes, longer school-days and school-years, after-school and other enrichment activities, and laptop computers for every student.
- Many charter schools enforce discipline codes that would likely be challenged if they were established and enforced in regular public schools.
- Charter schools are often (but not always) more racially segregated than neighboring schools, under-enroll English language learners and special education students, and have high attrition rates of students.
- Overall, charters spend less on teacher salaries and instruction than traditional public schools and more on management and administration.
- Most American charter school boards and administrators oppose teachers' unions.
- A 2009 study found a turnover rate of 25% among charter school teachers and 14% among public school teachers.
- According to a national study by The Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University, 17% of charter schools performed better (on standardized tests) than public schools; 46% performed the same; and 37% performed significantly worse.
- In some states, school districts must provide sites to charter schools, even if it means taking space away from regular public schools.

Georgia's Charter Schools

- According to the Georgia Department of Education, there are 113 operational charter schools in Georgia, including charter system schools.
- The Georgia Charter School Commission assists people wishing to open or already running charter schools and lobbies for legislation supporting charter schools.
- Seven school systems in Georgia lost a suit against the Georgia Charter School Commission when it approved charter schools local school boards had rejected. The Georgia Schools Superintendent Association and the Georgia School Boards Association are supporting the school systems' appeal of the case.

Harlem Children's Zone

- The Harlem Children's Zone Project operates in ninety-seven blocks in Harlem, with in-school, after-school, social-service, health, and community-building programs serving children and their families from birth into college.
- In 2008, their net assets were \$194 million, almost \$15 million of which was in savings and temporary investments. Another \$128 million was invested in a hedge fund.
- Two-thirds of their funding comes from private sources, over \$50 million in 2009.
- Their budget for fiscal year 2010 was over \$48 million.
- They spend \$16,000 per child in the classroom annually and thousands more for social services, including health and dental care.
- The salary of their head, Geoffrey Canada, is at least \$400,000, more than the salary of New York City Schools' Chancellor.
- In Promise Academy I, the average class size is under fifteen, and there are generally two teachers per class, three student advocates to provide guidance and advice, a social worker, a guidance counselor, a college counselor, and one-on-one after-school tutoring.
- Canada kicked out his entire first class of middle school students when they did not score well enough on tests to satisfy the board of trustees.

Finland's Successful Schools

- Over 90 % of Finland's teachers belong to a union.
- The salaries of Finland's teachers are equivalent to those of many American business leaders.
- 15% of the college graduates in Finland become school teachers.
- Students in Finland take few, if any standardized tests.
- In Finland most classes have fourteen students and two teachers.
- New teachers in Finland receive several years of extra training, involving decreasing amount of supervision and increasing levels of individual responsibility.
- Finland has a much lower poverty rate than that of the United States.