Are Florida Charter Schools Serving All Kids?

A Short History and A Few Questions

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Florida Department of Education
Center for Research on Education Outcomes, Stanford
Spencer Foundation
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
Overview

1. What are charter schools?

2. Where did charter schools come from?
   - Intellectual and professional roots, policy history
   - Charter schools and other choice programs

4. Charter schools in Florida

5. How effective are charter schools?

6. Challenges
What problem was charter school policy designed to address?

Generally, the traditional public school system was thought to be:

- Overly bureaucratic
- Lacking in incentives to improve
- Stuck in one ‘model’; not open to experimentation

In addition, particularly in large, urban areas, the traditional system was thought to be highly dysfunctional (often after decades of court- and state- mandated integration, school finance equalization and reform efforts)
New Vocabulary

- Traditional Public Schools (TPS)
- Sponsors/Authorizers
- EMOs, CMOs, Hybrids
- Conversions/Replication/Cyber
 Charter schools are public schools

- Publicly funded
- Publicly governed
- Accountable to public officials

 Charter schools are independently operated

- Operate under a charter extended by a public entity (usually school district)
- Subject to fewer governmental rules and regulations as traditional schools (though required to comply with many health and safety rules)
- Employees are not necessarily employees of school district
What are charter schools (con’t)?

- As public schools:
  - They can not charge tuition
  - They can not have a religious affiliation
  - They have to accept all students (lottery may be used if over subscribed)
  - They are constrained by their charter which is time-limited, usually 3-5 years; after charter expires, they must re-apply.
  - Students take the same standardized tests and schools are assigned school grades (same as traditional schools)
Where did charter schools come from?
Intellectual/professional/political roots

- Intellectual: smaller government, privatization of services traditionally provided by public sector (Milton Friedman, Nobel Prize-winning economist, argued for school vouchers, 1955)

- Professionalism - Al Shanker, President, Am Fed. of Teachers
  Supported the idea of teams of teachers starting their own schools and implementing their own pedagogy free of district regulations, 1988

- Political Actors: Democratic Policy Council (late 80s)
  Democratic leadership, particularly southern governors (e.g., Clinton, Graham) focused on making public services more efficient and responsive
  Vice-President Gore ‘Reinventing Government’ (Gov’t should steer, not row)
Policy history

- First charter school – 1992 Milwaukee

- Law establishing charter schools in Florida – 1996

- Rapid growth and rapid acceptance as a public alternative to traditional public schools

  - Currently, the charter school students account for 5% of all students nationally; 9% in Florida
Districts with the highest percentage of students attending charter schools, 2013-14

- Detroit 55%
- Flint 44%
- Cleveland 39%
- Philadelphia 30%
- Camden 27%
- District of Columbia 44%
- New Orleans 91%
- Hall County 32%
- Dayton 29%
- Toledo 29%
- Indianapolis 30%
- Kansas City 37%
- Grand Rapids 30%
- Gary 37%
- Roosevelt S.D. (Phoenix) 29%
- Victor Valley S.D. (Victorville) 32%
- Natomas S.D. (Sacramento) 28%
Differences in state charter laws; Devil in the details

Tremendous variation by state

Examples of how state charter school policy varies:

- Number of schools; local or statewide caps (Florida has no caps)
- Types – conversions from TPS, replications, special purpose, cyber
- Urban settings - a number of states only allow in urban areas
- Funds – vary by how distributed and whether equal to TPS
- Authorizers - school districts, universities, cities, non-profits, others
- Length of charter; criteria for revocation of charter; appeal process
- Student testing; school rankings
Charter schools in Florida

- How do they work?
- How many? Where?
- Who do they serve?:
  - Minority kids
  - Poverty status
  - Special education students
  - ELL
Grown quickly in U.S. by % of total schools and by management type
Charters are one of many choice programs in Florida

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC</th>
<th>PUBLIC</th>
<th>PRIVATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRADITIONAL (DISTRICT)</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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</table>
How do charter schools in Florida work?

- A group of individuals come up with a plan.
- They submit the plan via a state application form to their local school district (or other sponsor). The school board votes to charter (or not) for a specific period of time (3 years); longer times for charters with successful track record.
- The application process covers information on the education plan including curriculum, personnel qualifications, financial plans, evidence of fiscal responsibility, many other components.
Number of Charter Schools

This map provides information on the number of charter schools in each Florida school district during the 2015-16 school year.

Overall, there were 652 charter schools in the state of Florida.
This map provides information on the number of students enrolled in charter schools in each Florida school district during the 2014 – 15 school year.

Overall, there were 251,225 charter school students in the state of Florida.
This map provides information on the percentage of all public school students enrolled in charter schools in each Florida school district during the 2014 – 15 school year.

Approximately 9% of public school students were enrolled in a charter school.
Table 2: Enrollment Trends in Florida Charter Schools

|            | School Count | Total Enrollment | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian | Al | Mixed |
|------------|--------------|------------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|    |       |
| 2004-2005 | 317          | 82,998           | 46.5  | 25.2  | 26.5     | 1.5   | 0.3|       |
| 2014-2015 | 562          | 231,467          | 35.1  | 19.4  | 39.7     | 2.6   | 0.4| 2.8   |

Source: NCES CCD Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data
Student Diversity

PERCENT OF STUDENTS WHO ARE CLASSIFIED AS MINORITY

- 0% of students
- 1 – 20% of students
- 21 – 40% of students
- 41 – 60% of students
- 61 – 80% of students
- 81 – 100% of students
- No charter schools
- Charter lab school
Free or Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility

TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS

PERCENT OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FRPL

- 0% of students
- 1 – 20% of students
- 21 – 40% of students
- 41 – 60% of students
- 61 – 80% of students
- 81 – 100% of students
- No charter schools
- Charter lab school
English Language Learners

PERCENT OF STUDENTS CLASSIFIED AS ELL
- Data not available
- 0% of students
- 1 – 5% of students
- 6 – 10% of students
- 11 – 15% of students
- 16 – 20% of students
- 21 – 25% of students
- No charter schools
- Charter lab school

TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS
Students With Disabilities

PERCENT OF STUDENTS CLASSIFIED AS SWD
- 0% of students
- 1 – 5% of students
- 6 – 10% of students
- 11 – 15% of students
- 16 – 20% of students
- 21 – 35% of students
- No charter schools
- Charter lab school

TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS
Closures and charter school model

New form of accountability?
Are higher levels of closure good or bad?
How does one measure the cost of the disruption?
Charter schools closed between 2013 and 2016 by county

- Bay 2
- Broward 14
- Dade 5
- Duval 4
- Hillsborough 12
- Lee 3
- Leon 2
- Osceola 2
- Palm Beach 5
- Pasco 2
- Alachua, Columbia, Lake 1
- Monroe, Pinellas, Sarasota 1
- St. Johns, St. Lucie 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of Years under study</th>
<th>Number of Charter Closures</th>
<th>Rate of Charter Closures</th>
<th>Number of TPS Closures</th>
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<td>11.4%</td>
<td>43</td>
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Note: For Missouri, only Kansas City and St. Louis were studied.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do charter school students perform compared to TPS students?

- What evidence is there that traditional public schools benefit from innovations tried in the charter sector?
Limitations of research to date

- Tremendous amount of research though research has not kept up with pace of growth and diversity of type
- State regulations and district policies differ significantly across states limiting generalizability of research across districts and states
- Student achievement data mostly drawn from only math and English, other measures lacking such as social sciences, humanities, citizenship
- Tough finding evaluation metric
- Tough finding comparison groups
  - (Lottery studies has allowed for some comparative measures)
A few questions and challenges

- Are all students being well served?
  - Increased segregation?
  - Are ELL kids and special ed kids well served?
  - Creaming?
  - Chum?

- Role of the state vs. district
  - Policy
  - Oversight
  - Transparency
A few questions and challenges (con’t)

- How is overall system affected? improved?
  - Spillover Effects
  - Innovation
  - Best practices
THANK YOU to

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