

Charter Schools and the Shifting Educational Landscape

CAIS Trustee/School Head Conference
January 23, 2010

Presented by



*Ron Reynolds, Executive Director
California Association of Private School Organizations*

and



*Jim McManus, Executive Director
California Association of Independent Schools*



What Is a Charter School?

5 key markers

- a public school
- anywhere on the K-12 spectrum
- typically created by group of parents, teachers, or community leaders, and/or local community-based organization
- established through petition to local School Board, County Board of Education, or state, which issues contract known as a “charter”



State's Goals in Establishing Charters

- improve student learning
- increase learning opportunities, especially for low-achievers
- promote innovative teaching methods
- expand school choices in public system
- hold schools accountable for meeting measurable student outcomes—shift from “rule-based” to “performance-based” system



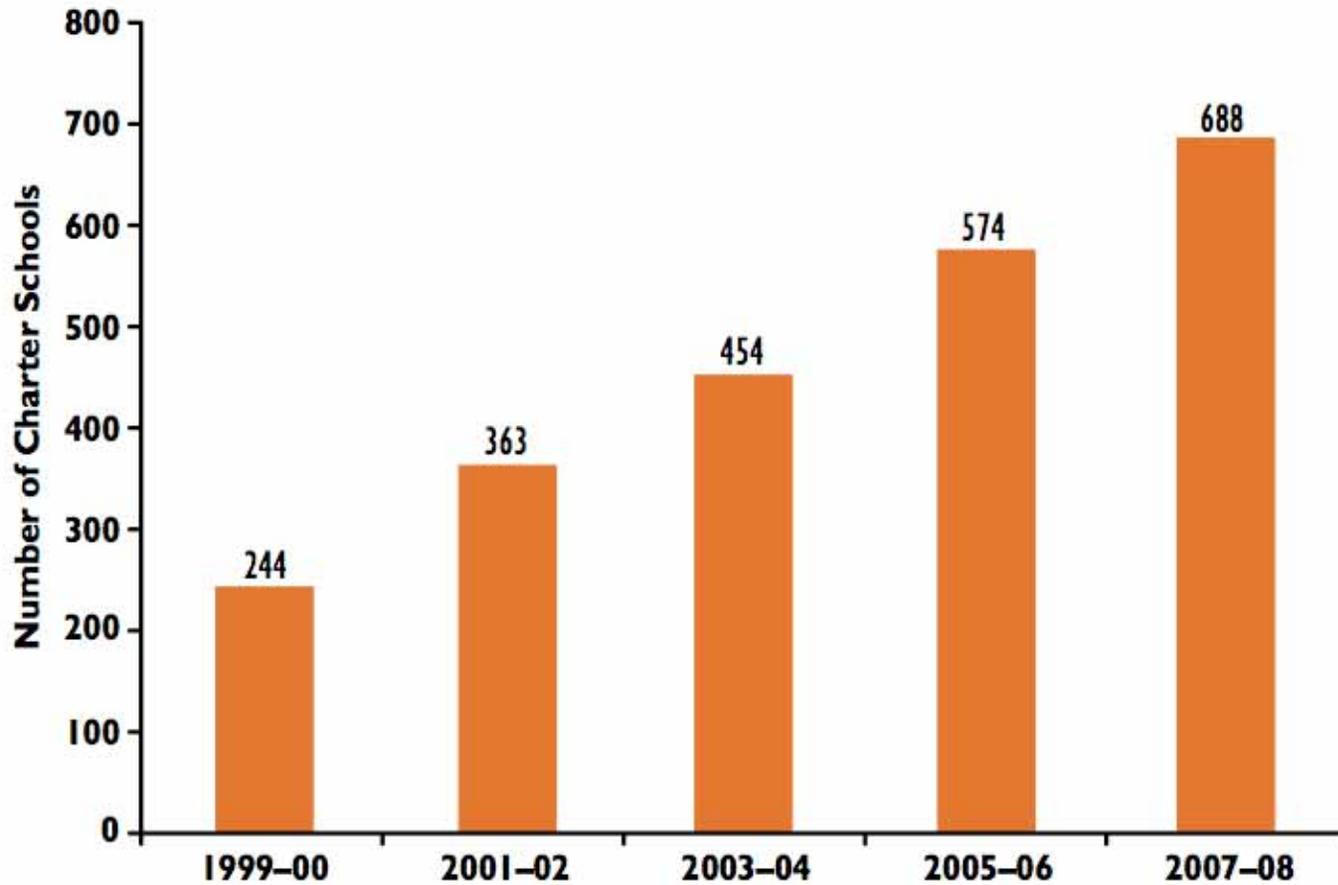
Charter Schools Are Serving a Growing Share of the “Market”

- didn't exist until 1992 legislation authorizing them
- have grown rapidly since then
- have many supporters (especially governor appointees) on State Board of Education
- enrolled 4% of California's K-12 students by 2007-08—and included 7% of state's schools
- 83% of charters were start-ups; 17% were conversions
- high schools make up disproportionate share of California's charters
- less known fact: many charters close each year (49 in 2006-07 = 8% of state's charters)



Growth of California's Charter Schools

Number of charter schools over time





School Districts with 10 or More Charters in 2007-08

District	Number of Charters
Fresno Unified	10
Sacramento City Unified	12
Oakland Unified	32
San Diego Unified	35
Los Angeles Unified	125



Rise of CMOs — Charter Management Organizations

- recent, but growing, phenomenon
- difficult to precisely define, can operate as for-profit or not-for-profit organizations
- operate (or plan to operate) more than one school
- provide significant ongoing administrative support, instructional coherence, and leadership for their schools
- facilitate information-sharing and understanding of best practices in their own network
- streamline administrative costs
- include such programs as:
 - Aspire (16 schools)
 - Green Dot (10 schools)
 - large networks like KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) with 66 schools in 19 states and DC



Challenges in Running Charters

- charters enjoy more freedom and flexibility than their regular public school counterparts . . .
- . . . but charters don't have district offices to lean on for central services and expertise
- “somewhat or very serious” problems cited by charter leaders in recent survey:
 - acquiring or managing facilities (49%)
 - raising funds or managing finances (37%)
 - attracting qualified teachers (36%)
- charter leaders reportedly work 60 hours/week, but spend little time on planning
- if charters continue to expand, U.S. will need between 6,000 and 21,500 new leaders/principals for charters in next 10 years (must be operational managers and instructional leaders, with accent on effectiveness and innovation)



Federal Incentivization

American Recovery & Reinvestment Act

- AKA “The Stimulus Package”
- Roughly \$100 billion allocated for K-12 education
- Of this amount...
 - \$4.35 billion earmarked for the “Race to the Top Fund”
 - RTTF is the largest pool of discretionary education funds to which states have ever had access.



American Recovery & Reinvestment Act

Among the initial RTTF eligibility requirements:

- States must have charter school laws on the books.
- Charter caps must be removed.

“States need to have a plan to turn around their lowest-performing schools. I’m an advocate of using whatever model works for children and I want charter schools to join that work. But they won’t be able to get into the turnaround business in states that restrict the growth of charters. States that slow innovation are limiting opportunities for students and placing themselves at a competitive disadvantage for \$4 billion in Race to the Top Fund grants.”

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, June 25, 2009



California's Charter Cap

- California charter cap in effect since 1998
- Gov. Schwarzenegger calls Legislature into special session in October, 2009.
- Legislation is introduced in late August, 2009, to remove the cap on charter schools, even though the cap is set at 1,113 schools and only 809 currently exist.
- California's "Race to the Top" application has now been submitted.





Charter Schools: Recent Research

Charter schools: Two studies, two conclusions

By [Nick Anderson](#)

Washington Post Staff Writer

Monday, November 30, 2009



- As President Obama pushes for more charter schools, the education world craves a report card on an experiment nearly two decades old. How are these independent public schools doing? The safest and perhaps most accurate reply -- it depends -- leaves many unsatisfied.
- This year, two major studies offer contradictory conclusions on a movement that now counts [more than 5,000 charter schools](#) nationwide...



Charter Schools: Recent Research

June, 2009

The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) reports the results of a study conducted in 15 states and the District of Columbia.

Key Finding: In 80 percent of the schools charter students performed no better, and sometimes worse, than local public schools.





Charter Schools: Recent Research

September, 2009

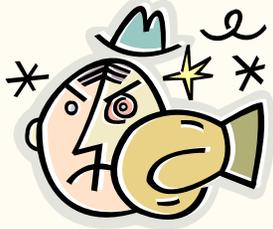
Caroline Hoxby, a Stanford University economist reports the results of a study conducted in New York City.

Key Finding: Attending a charter school from kindergarten to 8th grade can close the achievement gap with a similar student in the affluent suburb of Scarsdale, N.Y., by 86 percent in mathematics and 66 percent in reading.





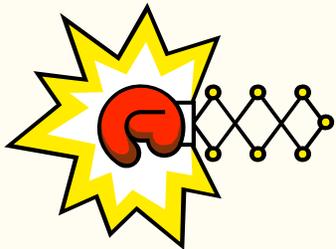
Charter Schools: Recent Research



Hoxby claims the CREDO findings were attributable to a “serious mathematical mistake.”



CREDO responds with an 11-page paper titled, “Fact vs. Fiction: An Analysis of Dr. Hoxby’s Misrepresentation of CREDO’s Research”



Sean F. Reardon, a Stanford professor, claims that Hoxby’s report relies on an inappropriate set of statistical models to analyze the data, and the results likely overstate the cumulative effect of attending a charter school.



Charter Schools: Recent Research

January, 2010

A new study was released that looked at six years of data on New York City children in grades 3-8.

Key Finding: Students, by and large, make bigger learning gains in charter schools than they otherwise would in their regular, neighborhood public schools.

Guess who conducted the study???

C R E D O





Are New York City's Charter Schools Different?

Do they...

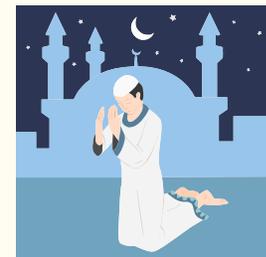
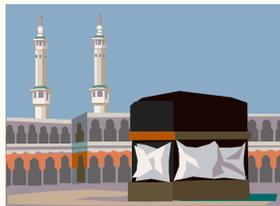
- Receive stronger assistance from support groups?
- Operate in a friendlier political climate?
- Benefit from a more rigorous authorization process?
- Enjoy advantages attributable to being in existence longer?
- Serve a less disadvantaged population of students?





“Religious” Charter Schools

- Is the notion of a “Religious Charter School” a contradiction?
- If charter schools are public schools, how can a charter school be “religious?”





“Religious” Charter Schools

“Religious” charter school can denote...

- A charter school operated by a faith-based entity.
- A charter school that attempts to accommodate its students' and parents' religious beliefs, without engaging in activities that endorse such beliefs.
- A charter school that endeavors to teach about a religion

Wall of separation →

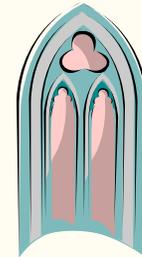




"Religious" Charter Schools

Can a private religious school close its doors in June and open as a charter school in September?

No.



- ✓ Laws prohibit private school conversion to charters.
- ✓ Charter schools cannot employ religious criteria for staffing.
- ✓ Some states require all charter school teachers to be certificated.



“Religious” Charter Schools

Some Existing & Proposed “Religious” Charter Schools

- Iftin Charter School – San Diego, CA
- Ben Gamla Charter School - Hollywood, FL
- Tariq ibn Ziyad Academy – Inver Grove Heights, MN
- Hebrew Language Academy – Brooklyn, NY
- 7 former Catholic schools in Washington, DC
- 4 proposed Catholic schools in Brooklyn & Queens, NY
- Albert Einstein Academy for Letters, Arts & Sciences, Santa Clarita, CA



“Religious” Charter Schools

Is prayer permitted in a “religious” charter school?

- A charter school may provide students with a room to pray in before or after school.
- Prayer must wholly voluntary and student-initiated.
- The decision to participate must be the student’s.
- Teachers and administrators cannot participate.



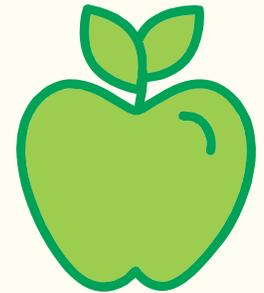


"Religious" Charter Schools

Can a "religious" charter school accommodate faith-based dietary restrictions?

Yes.

Charter schools may provide kosher, halal, or other religiously required food to their students.



Can a "religious" charter school close for religious holidays?

Yes.

Charter schools may close for religious holidays as an accommodation to their students.



"Religious" Charter Schools

Can "religious" charter schools teach religion?

- Charter schools can teach morality.
- Charter schools can teach about religion.
- Charter schools can teach about culture.
- Charter schools cannot endorse a religion.
- A charter school can rent space to a different entity that operates a religion course after regular school hours.



"Religious" Charter Schools

Can a "religious" charter school identify a particular faith in its name?

No.

Can clergy sit on boards of charter schools?

Yes.





Potential Strategic Advantages for Independent Schools Compared with Charters

- **faculty/administration** with greater long-term experience developing coherent program, policies
- more in-depth administrative **expertise in finance, fund-raising, and facilities management**
- more “practice” and greater effectiveness in realm of **independent (non-district) governance**
- increased certainty regarding permanence of **facilities**--and knowledge in managing them
- more **institutional agility**, less entanglement with governmental agencies