TO: Mary Ann Blankenship, Mary Ruble

FR: Chelsea Fannin

RE: Charter Schools

DA: August 10, 2012

**WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS:**

* Students:
	+ Demographics:
		- Boston Charter Study-- compared with Traditional Public Schools (Kathleen J. Skinner)
			* Overserving African Americans
				+ (C- 60%, TPSs-39%)
			* Underserving Hispanics and other minorities
				+ (C-24%, TPSs- 38%)
			* Serving higher percentage of students ineligible for free/reduced lunch (richest)
				+ (C- 30%, TPSs-26%)
			* Serving higher percentage of students eligible for reduced lunch (poor)
				+ (C- 18%, TPSs- 9%)
			* Serving much lower percentage of students on free lunch (poorest)
				+ (C-52%, TPSs-65%)
			* Underserving special education students: those they are serving have mild disabilities and can function in a classroom with regular education students
			* Virtually no English Language Learners (ELL)
		- Government Accountability Office (Stephanie Banchero)
			* Charters not enrolling as high a portion of special education students as TPSs despite law to take almost all disabled students wishing to enroll
				+ (C- 8.2%, TPSs-11.2%)
	+ Barriers:
		- Students *selected* through a lottery system, but students *accepted* based on parent/student visits, interviews, parental behavior contracts, acceptance of rigid discipline codes, etc. (Kathleen J. Skinner)
			* Parent Commitment Contract:
				+ Provide my child with several hours of homework time, check that homework is completed, and limit TV and other distractions
				+ Ensure my child arrives on time and in uniform every day child is healthy
				+ Make arrangements so my child can remain at school for an extra hour on weeknights and on Saturday mornings if necessary
				+ Monitor child’s progress and return weekly progress reports
				+ Interact professionally with staff by responding promptly to any questions and concerns
				+ Provide instructional materials for my child
				+ Support school by making arrangements if my child receives out-of-school suspension
				+ Agree to volunteer at least once a year
		- Applications: (School District of Philadelphia)
			* Extremely long
			* Online only
			* Only available 1 day
			* Not in all languages
			* Requiring very sensitive information (test scores, U.S. citizenship status, discipline records, household income, sexual orientation, etc.)
			* Requiring numerous references
				+ EX: 3 references with one religious or community member
	+ Achievement:
		- Massachusetts: (Kathleen J. Skinner)
			* ELL: no benefit
			* Special Education: significant loss in math, no improvement in reading
			* Poverty: significant gains in math, but no improvement in reading
		- Stanford University Charter Study: (Kathleen J. Skinner)
			* **17** percent of Charters outperform TPSs
			* **37** percent of Charter students have significantly poorer achievement
			* **45** percent of Charter students are performing equal to or lower than TPSs
		- Overall: (Strengthening Charter School Policies)
			* Underperforming Charter Schools outnumber excelling Charter Schools **2:1**
	+ Attrition: (Kathleen J. Skinner)
		- Push Factors: practices used by schools to push students toward the door; school policies, climate or structure that alienates and/or frustrates students so they end up leaving before graduation
			* *Attendance policy*: *if student absent (excused or unexcused) more than 6.5% of year, which is approximately 12 days, then student must repeat grade*
		- Drop Out Factories: schools in which **60 percent or fewer** freshman graduate in four years
		- For every **five** freshman there are only **two** remaining by the time enter senior year, compared with **5-4 in TPSs**
		- Over time the majority of students who won lottery of admission leave and are not being replaced by students on the waiting list
		- Studies indicate that behavioral and academic disengagement are the leading causes *within the control of the school* that lead to students leaving
* Teachers: (Gary Miron)
	+ Qualifications:
		- No requirement that Charter School teachers be certified
		- Generally Charter School teachers have fewer years experience
		- Very different hiring practices
	+ Retention: Not a lot of research in this area--
		- Charters and private schools lose teachers at higher rate
			* (C- 25%; TPSs-14%)
			* Teachers more likely to teach for a few years and leave profession
			* Charters more common in urban areas, which tend to have less qualified teachers and less desirable teaching conditions, leading to higher turnover
	+ Working Conditions:
		- Class size similar to TPSs
		- Stronger sense of community
		- More autonomy
		- Less influence in school governance
		- Less satisfied with physical facilities
		- Critical of instructional planning time
		- Longer hours and longer year
		- Less protection
		- Salary:
			* Varies
			* Generally less since not required to follow the minimum salary schedule
			* More flexibility with pay
* Schools & Communities: (Gary Miron, unless noted otherwise)
	+ Presumptions: though little evidence to support--
		- Students will shift from lower to higher productivity schools raising the entire education systems efficiency
		- Re-sorting of students will generate peer effects on student achievement
		- TPSs will respond in particular ways
	+ Charter Schools are dividing communities
		- Attracting motivated students, funding and effective teachers
			* Diverting public funds away from TPSs
			* Costing more in taxes
	+ Education Management Organizations (EMOs) & Charter Management Organizations (CMOs):
		- EMOs: for profit entities
		- CMOs: nonprofit entities
			* KIPP, Achievement First, Uncommon Schools, etc.
		- Neither have local ties to community
		- Local contexts not taken into account
	+ Parents choose schools for a variety of reasons even though they do not always have correct/complete information
		- Location
		- Extra Curricular Activities
		- Disciplinary Policies
		- Test Scores
	+ Charter School Marketing Strategies (Julie F. Mead)
		- Charters advising parents that school is “not a good fit” for their special education or ELL student, “counseling out” disabled students
		- Marketing only to a specific segment of population, discouraging/scaring off other segments
* Goals: (Gary Miron)
	+ “Innovation:”
		- In the beginning--
			* Move away from a “one size fits all” public education model by...
			* Introducing healthy competition, which would...
			* Lead to forced “innovation” across the board thereby...
			* Providing an alternative to families who could not afford private school and that would...
			* Result in higher achievement for all students
		- In practice--
			* Innovative employment practices, marketing strategies, and application procedures
				+ Cyber Schools: innovative delivery mechanism, though not necessarily innovative content
			* Not innovative in teaching methods or classroom practices
			* Pressure to conform and “teach the test”
		- Innovations need to be replicable with some mechanism to facilitate the spread of the practice
			* Policy borrowing an issue (have to look at local contexts, etc.)
		- Other Innovations-- “choice” is an important concept for parents, still need alternatives
			* Magnet Programs
			* Intra/Inter District choice plans
* Funding: (Bruce D. Baker et al.)
	+ Great Lakes Study:
		- Compares the spending of Charter Schools with the TPSs the children would have attended in New York, Ohio and Texas
		- Accounts for differences in grade levels, and total enrollment
		- Acknowledges that TPSs and Charters do not operate the same way, and cannot be adequately compared
		- Also acknowledges discrepancy in data (inflated statistics, etc.)
			* Funding Mechanisms:
				+ Public Subsidies--

Direct: state provides funding for independent charters

Indirect: state money goes to host district, which is then passed on to the charters

* + - * + Private Contributions--

Varies widely

Directly to charters

Local school districts also receive private contributions, although on a much smaller scale

* + - * Findings:
				+ New York:

Outspend similar district schools per pupil by 5-30%

Per pupil spending differences in Middle Schools associated with differences in special education population

* + - * + Ohio:

Spends 10-30% less per pupil than similar district schools

Charters serve relatively more economically disadvantaged students, but concentrated in poorer urban areas of state

Appears that Charters receive fewer private contributions

* + - * + Texas:

Outspend similar district schools per pupil by

 5-30%

* Also serve relatively more economically disadvantaged students, and located in poorer urban areas of state
* Variation in funding formulas, recently changed
* Elementary charters tend to spend less
* Overall:
* Charters enroll fewer students than TPSs
* Smaller schools tend to spend more per pupil
* Higher poverty schools are spending on average only slightly more than those with lower poverty
* Schools with higher number of children with disabilities are spending more per pupil
* Per pupil spending is inequitable and unpredictable

**WHAT OTHER STATES ARE DOING:**

* Alabama:
	+ One of the most vocal states opposed to charter schools
	+ Many legislators from both parties have expressed doubt after learning more about charter schools
	+ Many school districts in Alabama have passed resolutions declaring opposition to charter schools
	+ AEA emphasizing the negative impact charter schools would have on the large rural population
	+ Survey: conducted by AEA of 574 likely voters--
		- First questions based on voters knowledge at the time:
			* **49%** believed they did not know enough about charter schools to vote
			* **35 %** supported charter schools
			* **16%** opposed
		- Second set of questions based on voters knowledge after reading impartial information on charter schools:
			* **12%** still believed they did not know enough to make an informed decision
			* **39%** supported
			* **49%** of voters opposed charter schools
		- Questions asked:
			* Lack of certification requirements
			* Diverting public school funds
			* Admission policies
			* Lack of accountability
			* Less responsive to the community
			* Anyone can apply to make charter school
			* Not required to pay minimum salary schedule
			* Potential for legal problems
			* More autonomy
* Montana:
	+ Vocal opposition from education unions
* Nebraska:
	+ Chair of Education Committee opposes
	+ “Focus Schools” (state supported magnet schools instead of charters)
* North Dakota:
	+ Vocal opposition from education unions
	+ President’s message in publication, etc.
* South Dakota:
	+ Demand for Charters lower than in other states as the TPSs perform well
	+ The only push for Charters is coming from Native American population since tend to struggle in TPSs
* West Virginia:
	+ “Teacher led innovation zones”
* Washington:
	+ Repealed charter school legislation 5 years ago, but new legislation proposed regularly
	+ Voters have rejected charter schools numerous times (referendums)
	+ Research in Washington indicates that charter school and public school failures are largely explained by non-school factors (family income)
	+ Testimony from former charter school teachers
	+ Informing the public through radio and television advertisements in various languages
	+ Other “school choice” options such as an extended day model in certain districts
* Vermont:
	+ No information, but does not seem to be a real concern yet

**WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS:**

* Educating the Public: (Gary Miron, unless noted otherwise)
	+ Negative Research:
		- Indicating that Charters perform similarly or worse than TPSs
			* EX: states with permissive laws and lots of charters are less likely to see positive results (OH, MI, AZ, TX) (Charter Schools Proceed Deliberately)
	+ Mixed Research:
		- Either large gains/losses in some charter schools are offset by losses/gains in other charter schools yielding mixed achievement impact OR...
		- Achievement impact is consistent across charters, but a very small impact
	+ No research:
		- Suburban areas
		- Rural areas
	+ Weak research:
		- Public debate has focused on invalidated research
			* EX: number of students that have dropped out are not included in graduation rates/college acceptance rates in Boston
	+ Scandals: (Strengthening Charter School Policies)
		- Especially with cyber schools
		- Inflated Statistics
			* EX: TX misreported Charter information and cost public $9 million in tax dollars
	+ Competition:
		- Education is not comparable to the market
		- TPSs are not improving
	+ Other:
		- “Charter Schools are experiments, parents are taking a risk”
		- Education historians caution that “classroom practice”-technical core of the educational enterprise- is the area most resistant to change
		- Lax oversight (Charter Schools Proceed Deliberately)
* Other Options:
	+ Legal Ramifications: (Gary Miron, unless noted otherwise)
		- Religion Clause
			* Separation of church & state issues (private school conversions)
		- Discrimination & Due Process
		- Education Clause
			* Generally unsuccessful with Charters, but successful with voucher programs
		- Special Education
			* Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
		- Statutory Construction

* + - Adopt set of rebuttable legal presumptions that trigger greater scrutiny and accountability (Julie F. Mead)
	+ Legislative Changes: (Strengthening Charter School Policies & Charter Schools Proceed Deliberately, unless noted otherwise)
		- Caps
		- Limited duration
			* 5 years
		- Clear renewal and revocation procedures (Julie F. Mead)
			* Renewals denied where attrition rate matches or exceeds TPS (Kathleen J. Skinner)
			* Procedures should reflect commitment to equal opportunity education
		- Oversight by educational organizations
		- State audits
		- Subject to greater scrutiny and accountability:
			* Health/safety
			* Public records/open meetings
			* Licensure/certification
			* Financing
			* Labor relations
			* Civil Rights
			* Student Assessment
* Application process: (Strengthening Charter School Policies & Charter Schools Proceed Deliberately, unless noted otherwise)
* Initially: require potential charters to-- (Julie F. Mead)
* Provide detailed recruitment plans targeting diverse student applicant pool
* Address local contextual factors
* Develop disciplinary codes with a focus on positive interventions and support (prevent push out strategies)
* Transparency:
* Public hearings before charter granted
* Publish student attrition rates by demographics
* Charters not granted:
* Private for profit entities
* Home schools
* Cyber schools
* Private school conversions
* Charters only granted if proposal offers an educational experience that is qualitatively different from what is already offered
* No diversion of resources:
* School board has option of denying application that could financially harm the school district
* Districts not required to provide extra funding for start up charter
* Access:
* Must provide access to all students
* Students should not be involuntarily assigned
* Employment must be voluntary
* Require that Charters fill vacancies with those on waiting list
	+ Cooperation: (Strengthening Charter School Policies)
		- * Charters, TPSs and private schools working together
			* Hostile political climate does not foster trust
			* Start with teachers
	+ Decentralization and deregulatory reforms in TPSs (Strengthening Charter School Policies)

**CITATIONS**

Alabama Education Association, *Charter Schools in Alabama Facts & Myths of the Charter Movement & What it Means to our State,* Alabama School Journal, (Feb. 6, 2012), <http://www.myaea.org/PDFfile/ASJ/CharterSchoolTab.pdf>

Alison Consoletti, *Charter School Laws Across the States, Rankings and Scorecard 13th Edition,* Center for Education Reform, (Apr. 2012), <http://www.edreform.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/CER_2012_Charter_Laws.pdf>

Bruce D. Baker et al., *Spending by the Major Charter Management Organizations, Comparing Charter School and Local Public District Financial Resources in New York, Ohio and Texas,* National Education Policy Center, (May 5, 2012), <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/spending-major-charter>

Gary Miron et al., *School Choice: Evidence and Recommendations,* Great Lakes Center, (Mar. 2008), <http://greatlakescenter.org/docs/Research/2008charter/policy_briefs/all.pdf>

Julie F. Mead & Preston C. Green III, *Chartering Equity, Using Charter School Legislation and Policy to Advance Equal Educational Opportunity,* National Education Policy Center, (Feb. 21, 2012), <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/chartering-equity>

Kathleen J. Skinner, *Charter School Success or Selective Out-Migration of Low-Achievers? Effects of Enrollment Management on Student Achievement,* Massachusetts Teachers Association Center for Education Policy and Practice, (Sept. 17, 2009), <http://www.btu.org/sites/default/files/MTA_Charter_School_Report_%209_09.pdf>

NEA Education Policy and Practice Department, *Charter Schools Proceed Deliberately, Monitor, Diligently, and Learn What Can be Scaled Up,* Center for Great Public Schools, (2008), <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_PB17_CharterSchools.pdf>

NEA Education Policy and Practice Department, *Strengthening Charter School Policies,* Center for Great Public Schools, (2011), <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB33charterschoolpolicies2011.pdf>

NEA, *NEA Resolution A-1,* NEA Representative Assembly, (2001),

<http://www.nea.org/home/18132.htm>

School District of Philadelphia, *Universal Enrollment: Charter School Applications,* Office of Charter Schools, (July 31, 2012), <http://thenotebook.org/sites/default/files/CharterSchoolOfficeSlideshow.pdf>

Stephanie Banchero & Caroline Porter, *Charter Schools Fall Short on Disabled,* Wall St. J., (June 19, 2012), <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303379204577477003893836734.html>