

# The Many Problems with Charter Schools

## Key Points

- **There are much better ways than charter schools to promote innovation.** JCPS is at the center of creativity and bold initiative, launching high-quality programs for students, such as many successful new magnet schools, and most recently, three new Schools of Innovation. The new Schools of Innovation will operate under waivers from state laws and regulations, in order to implement their innovative strategies, and no charter law was needed to do this. This level of innovation has only been possible because our community has come together to support JCPS. The fragmentation and disruption which would be created by charter schools would only undermine the community's efforts to create powerful programs in an equitable way.
- **Charters would divert critical funding from our public schools.** At a time when the state repeatedly fails to fund textbooks for children, it would be terribly damaging to redirect crucial funding and resources away from our public schools to charter schools.
- **We don't need charters.** Advocates claim charters cut through red tape and empower school buildings, but in Kentucky, SBDM already cuts through red tape and empowers schools locally. Since the passage of KERA, Kentucky's ranking in the highly-respected "Quality Counts" report by Education Week has gone from near the very bottom to 10th in the nation, passing most states with charter schools in the process. (1, 2, 29)
- **Our public schools are making greater progress statewide than neighboring states with charters.** In fact, Stanford University found that the more charters there are in a state, the more likely the state is to be going down in state-by-state comparisons. (3)
- **In spite of better funding, charters are most likely to do no better or worse than the regular public schools they replace,** according to Stanford University. (4, 5, 6, 7)
- **Charter schools typically have significantly lower teacher standards.** Past bills proposed for Kentucky would allow charter schools to hire unlicensed teachers. Many charter school teachers would not even qualify to be substitute teachers in regular public schools.
- **Charters lack oversight.** Often, the only thing public about charter schools is their funding. They are frequently not subject to open records laws, open meetings laws, or other safeguards. This lack of oversight has led to countless charter school scandals. (8, 9, 10, 11, 28)
- **Charter schools kick out kids who don't perform well,** and yet they still perform no better than regular public schools who accept the students being exited from these charter schools. (8, 12, 13)
- **Charters claim to accept all students, but they intentionally screen out special needs students.** By requiring parents of special needs students to sign waivers saying they understand that the charter school will not provide special education services for their child, charter schools effectively screen these students on the front end, yet they still do worse than regular public schools. (14, 15, 16, 17)
- **Wall Street financiers and land developers are making windfall profits off charter schools.** This explains how charter advocates have funding for expensive TV ads and glossy pamphlets. It should be no surprise that two out of the three board members of KARE (Kentuckians Advocating for Reform in Education), including the head of the Kentucky Charter Schools

Association, have either direct or indirect ties to real estate and land development interests. (18, 19, 27, 28)

- **The turnover rate for teachers in charters is very high.** In Los Angeles charter schools, teacher turnover was found to be 3 times higher than regular public schools. (20, 21)
- **The turnover rate for administrators in charters is very high.** A recent study by the University of Washington verified this and pointed out that, in general, charters have no plan for addressing this problem. (22, 23)
- **Charters do not promote stable learning experiences for children.** Charter proponents boast that ineffective charters will be shut down. However, most parents do not want their child to have to go to two or three elementary schools because one after another is being shut down. Surveys show parents would much rather help their child's school improve, rather than shut it down.
- **Charter advocacy organizations are funded by foundations** that oppose essentially every program and service designed to support poor and minority children, but we are asked to somehow believe that on the one issue of charter schools they truly care about these children. (16, 24)
- **Charters are often more expensive to operate.** For example, the state of New Mexico found they cost 26% more per student. The additional cost for charters is often made up by private donations from organizations traditionally opposed to free public schools, like the Walton Family Foundation. A Western Michigan University study found the per pupil funding in KIPP charter schools to be about \$6,500 more per student, with most of this funding coming from the private sector. (12, 25)
- **Charter schools are segregating our schools and undermining democracy.** Public education has been a pillar of our democracy, allowing students to understand the diversity they will experience as adults. Learners interact with others of different races, religions, beliefs, and income levels. However, studies have found that charters are segregating our public schools. Many serve only black, or only Muslim, or only Asian, or only affluent children. This should concern anyone who cares about the ability of the members of our diverse society to be able to get along well with one another and value the rich diversity found in our democracy. (26)