

Charter School Information to Consider

- Charter schools may claim to accept all students, but many expel students at an alarming rate. Many also tell parents of special needs students that the charter will accept special needs students but require parents to sign a waiver indicating that the parents understand no special education services will be provided to their children, causing these parents to choose not to enroll their special needs children.
- With this ability to both continuously filter and remove unsuccessful students, one would expect charter schools to outperform regular public schools; however, Stanford University has found that 83% of charter schools do worse or no better than regular public schools.
- In states that allow charter schools, the more charters the state has, the worse they do. The states that granted the largest number of charters in their first 10 years are Arizona (which opened 407 schools in 10 years), Florida (326 schools), Ohio (326 schools), California (308), and Texas (259 schools). Stanford's data show that four of these five states posted negative student-achievement results compared to regular public schools, while the fifth, California, showed no significant difference in student performance between charter and traditional public schools.

Consider these points made by noted educational writer Diane Ravitch...

* The [ICEF](#) charter chain in California, teetering on the verge of bankruptcy, was [just bailed out](#) by the Broad Foundation and former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan. The founder of the chain, which enrolls 4,500 students, has resigned. No wonder there is more pressure by foundations and wealthy philanthropists to get more government funding for charters. Many charters and charter chains are not financially sustainable; they have discovered no secrets about economizing and their financial backers can't always be there to save them.

* The principal of a charter school in Los Angeles was accused of [embezzling](#) more than \$1 million of school funds; auditors said more than \$2 million was missing and that some of it spent for vendors with fraudulent addresses.

* In New York state, the state charter association sued to block any public audits, saying that their charter freed them from such intrusive public oversight. The steady accumulation of financial scandals in these deregulated schools is proof that, where public funds go, public audits must follow, as night follows day.

* Inquiring minds should visit "[charterschoolscandals](#)," a site maintained by Sharon R. Higgins, a diligent, energetic public school parent in Oakland, Calif.

* Newsweek ran [a story about the maltreatment of students](#) with special needs in the New Orleans school districts. Astonishing numbers of children with disabilities are being mistreated, suspended, and failing to make progress in numbers far different

from what happens to similar students in comparable districts. Charter schools are taking less than their fair share of students with disabilities. The article asks pointedly: *"...does the much-touted academic progress of New Orleans's post-Katrina charters come in part because special-needs students are being weeded out?"*

* One of New York City's most-publicized charter schools, the Ross Global Academy, is in a heap of trouble. Founded by Courtney Sale Ross, the fabulously wealthy widow of media mogul Steve Ross, the school was a favorite of the New York City Department of Education. Chancellor Joel Klein tried to give it space in the building of a very successful school for gifted children (NEST+M), but the parents fiercely battled against the "co-location" in their building, so Klein opened Ross in the palatial ground floor of the DOE's Tweed headquarters. As it grew, it moved to a larger space, but its problems grew, too. Despite favorable publicity, the school has gone through six principals in five years, has high teacher turnover, high student attrition rates, and poor test scores. The New York Daily News says it is now the lowest-rated elementary or middle school in the city. See [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

* I received an email from Dr. DeWayne Davis, the principal of Audubon Middle School in Los Angeles, which was sent to several public officials. Dr. Davis said that local charter schools were sending their low-performing students to his school in the middle of the year. He wrote:

"Since school began, we enrolled 159 new students (grades 7 and 8). Of the 159 new students, 147 of them are far below basic (FBB)!!! Of the 147 students who are FBB, 142 are from charter schools. It is ridiculous that they can pick and choose kids and pretend that they are raising scores when, in fact, they are purging nonperforming students at an alarming rate—that is how they are raising their scores, not by improving the performance of students. Such a large number of FBB students will handicap the growth that the Audubon staff initiated this year, and further, will negatively impact the school's overall scores as we continue to receive a recurring tide of low-performing students."