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Michigan Charter Schools Perform Low at High Cost, Newspaper Investigation Finds

By Arianna Prothero on June 23, 2014 12:13 PM | [No comments](#)

Michigan's charter schools are not held accountable for wasteful spending, nepotism, and poor academic performance despite costing taxpayers around \$1 billion annually, a year-long [investigation by the Detroit Free Press](#) has discovered. The paper reviewed two decades' worth of charter school records and is rolling out its findings in an investigative series over the course of this week.

Among the special report's major findings are:

- The state often fails to shut down poorly performing schools;
- Students in poverty often don't perform any better in charters than traditional schools;
- Michigan has by far the most charter schools run by for-profits in the country;
- State law doesn't prohibit insider dealing such as board members awarding contracts to friends and relatives of school officials.

The report points out that even though there are innovative, high-performing charters, lax oversight is breeding significant abuses within the sector. For example: There are no state guidelines for shutting down charter schools or screening applicants for new ones, and because many schools are run by private companies, there is little transparency into how taxpayer money is spent.

In Detroit, a [majority of students attend charter schools](#), according to a Dec. 2013 study by the Washington-based National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

The *Detroit Free Press*' series runs through Sunday, June 29.

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