PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS
HOW THEY WORK, WHY IT MATTERS, AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP
We’re failing our kids, and it’s affecting their future.

America is falling behind, and it’s hurting our economy.

Public charter schools do better, with less money and smaller buildings – particularly for poor and minority students.

Public charters work because teachers and principals have more control; schools can specialize and stay open longer; good schools grow, and bad schools get replaced.

Public charters deserve equal per-student funding and access to empty or underused district school buildings. But serious oversight and accountability is also critical.
THE ISSUES
EXPLAINED
WE ARE FAILING OUR KIDS

LACKING THE BASICS

Only one in three 8th graders is proficient or above in math, science, or reading.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF 8TH GRADE STUDENTS, BY NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP) READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL (2019)*

AN INCOMPLETE EDUCATION

Only one in four high school seniors is “college ready” in math, science, English, and reading.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ACHIEVING BENCHMARK SCORE ON ACT (2019)*

THE COST OF REMEDIAL EDUCATION

More than four in 10 first-year college students require remedial education. These additional classes cost students $1 billion/year. They also make it harder for students to graduate on time.³

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS REQUIRING REMEDIAL COURSES*

OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO GO ON TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OF UNDERGRADUATES IN 4-YEAR COLLEGES
**IT’S HURTING THEIR FUTURES**

**THE ODDS ARE AGAINST THEM**

Students with only a high school degree are twice as likely to be unemployed as college graduates.

**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR WORKERS AGES 25-34, BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (2017)**

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<th>HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES</th>
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**A LACK OF UPWARD MOBILITY**

Four-year college graduates earn 62% more per year than high school graduates, on average.

A college degree is worth about $2.8 million in lifetime income.

**MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS OF FULL-TIME, YEAR-ROUND WORKERS AGES 25-34, BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (2017)**

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<th>HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA</th>
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**CHANGING JOB REQUIREMENTS**

67% of all jobs in the economy require post-secondary education and training beyond high school.

**POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

- Less Than HS
- HS Diploma
- Some College or Associate’s Degree
- Bachelor’s Degree or Better

- 1992: 50%, 30%, 20%, 0%
- 2000: 50%, 30%, 20%, 0%
- 2010: 60%, 20%, 20%, 0%
- 2019: 60%, 20%, 20%, 0%
AN UNNECESSARY DIFFERENCE

African-American 8th grade students are three times less likely to be proficient in reading or math as white students.

DROPPING OUT

Students of color are twice as likely to drop out of high school than white students.

THE GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

Students from affluent families are four times more likely to earn a 4-year degree than students from poor families.

REMEDIAL EDUCATION

Black students are 21% more likely to require remedial education than their white peers.

IT’S WORSE FOR POOR AND MINORITY STUDENTS
WE NEED TO SPEND SMARTER

Despite ranking 2nd in per pupil spending for K-12, the U.S. ranks 13th in reading, 37th in math, and 18th in science.\(^{13}\)

The U.S.'s per pupil spending on K-12 is 35% higher than the average for OECD countries.\(^{14}\)
VACANT POSITIONS

STEM jobs are growing six times faster than non-STEM jobs. Today, employers have 3 million STEM jobs they cannot fill.¹⁰

PERCENT JOB GROWTH, 2007 TO 2017¹⁶

LACK OF AGILITY

In fast-growing economies, local schools cannot keep up with skilled-job growth.

IMPORTING TALENT

As a result, employers in high-growth markets import workers from other states, leaving low-skilled workers underemployed.

Meanwhile, their universities import talent to fill STEM classrooms.

IT’S HURTING OUR ECONOMY
At each step, students fall out of the pipeline. The payoff for plugging the holes in this pipeline are enormous.

### CASE STUDY: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN COLORADO

Projected educational attainment of each 12th-grade class in Colorado

- **START HS**: 60,000
- **GRADUATE HS OR OBTAIN GED**: 50,000
- **ATTEND COLLEGE**: 40,000
- **OBTAIN A CERTIFICATE OR BETTER**: 30,000
- **OBTAIN A 2-YEAR DEGREE OR BETTER**: 20,000
- **OBTAIN A 4-YEAR DEGREE OR BETTER**: 10,000
- **OBTAIN A MASTERS OR BETTER**: 0

### THE PAYOFF

Colorado business leaders’ effort to increase high school graduation rates for poor students from 75 to 93 percent could help those students earn

- **$5 BILLION** more over ten years - and increase Colorado’s 10-year GDP by

- **$7 BILLION**.
In a traditional school, the principal controls less than 1% of her budget. She and her teachers have little control over the curriculum or the length of the school day and year. A father can’t move his daughter to a different school that matches her background, interests, or learning style.

With public charter schools, families decide what’s best for their kids. Teachers have more control over their lessons. Principals have more control over their budgets. Schools can specialize (and stay open longer). High-performing charter schools grow; and underperforming schools are replaced.

More than 7,000 charter schools serve 3.2 million students across 43 states. They represent seven percent of schools nationwide and educate six percent of all public school students.20

Charters receive 73 cents on the dollar compared with traditional public schools. That’s a $5,828 difference, per student.21 Yet on average, charters are:

- 40% more cost-effective
- 53% larger return on investment

when compared to traditional public schools.22

Black and Hispanic charter school students are twice as likely to be proficient in math than their district school counterparts, and 50% more likely to be proficient in English.

Additional days of learning of urban charter school students, compared to urban district students, by subgroup and subject23

Data from 2013; recent studies consistently support the significant positive relationship between charters and closing the achievement gap.24
Half of charters specialize by teaching model, subject matter, or student population – providing options for families who can't afford private schools.25

**SAMPLE OF SPECIALIZED SCHOOL OFFERINGS**

- **NO EXCUSES**: Strict discipline policies and high expectations of students.
- **PROGRESSIVE**: Teaching designed to build determination, "grit," and work ethic. Child and learner-centered.
- **CREDIT RECOVERY**: Specialize in helping dropouts graduate.
- **HYBRID**: Divided between human educators and computers.
- **STEM**: Specialize in math and sciences.
- **INTERNATIONAL/BILINGUAL**: Students learn foreign language and global cultural practices.
- **ARTS**: Focus on fine or performing arts, use arts immersion education model.
- **SINGLE SEX**: Entirely single sex or single sex by grade level.
- **PUBLIC POLICY**: Focus on civic engagement, political knowledge and participation and development of public policy knowledge.
- **CLASSICAL**: Use the Socratic method or emphasize the three-fold way.
- **VOCATIONAL**: Job skills and hands on training.
- **PURPOSEFULLY DIVERSE**: Purposefully trying to create racially and socioeconomically diverse student bodies.
- **MILITARY**:
In the last 15 years, enrollment in charter schools has more than tripled (to 3.2 million). 7,038 charter schools cover 43 states (+ D.C.).

From 1999 to 2015, charters grew to serve half as many students as private schools.

Parents representing 8.25 million students prefer charters, but today’s charters can only serve 3.2 million.
Public charters should receive the same funding per student as traditional public schools (TPS). A 2018 study of 14 regions found that, on average, public charter schools receive $5,828 less per student than TPS - that’s a 27 percent difference.

Public charters should qualify for equal state and local building funds, so they can provide libraries, labs, and gyms, like TPS.

Public charters should qualify for equal transportation support (like school buses) and teacher support (pensions).

To help the millions of children waiting for a place in a public charter school, charters require:

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**EQUAL SPENDING**

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**ACCESS TO BUILDINGS**

We can meet today’s rising demand for public charters and help more children succeed by requiring school districts to transfer school buildings to proven charters.

No child is helped by an empty school.
BECAUSE RESULTS VARY, STRONG OVERSIGHT IS ESSENTIAL - AND ONLINE CHARTERS MUST IMPROVE

STRONG OVERSIGHT

Each year, administrators close hundreds of public charter schools. That's a good thing, because it helps children find the right school and creates room for successful schools to grow.

Accountability and a results-oriented approach are key to the success that thousands of public charter schools have shown.

Public charters realize their potential when charter boards conduct annual audits and hold teachers and principals accountable for student results.

CASE STUDY: ONLINE CHARTERS

A small fraction of charter schools teach full-time students exclusively online. Some of these charters are high performing, but the sector's overall results are weak.

Although these virtual schools educate just six percent of charter students, they cannot continue to operate if students aren't benefitting.

Online schools must be restructured

Despite difficulties in assessing student outcomes, experts in the field generally recognize online charters have failed to replicate the success of traditional charters.

A piece by charter advocates Marc Sternberg and Marc Holley of the Walton Family Foundation captures the current perspective on virtual charters:

“Our first priority is always making sure that students are served well... Online education must be reimagined. Ignoring the problem – or worse, replicating failures – serves nobody.”

![Pie chart showing traditional charter students vs. online charter students]
1. We organize conference calls, webinars, and local briefings for business leaders on school reform options and their impact.

2. We train business leaders how to work with local media, publish an op-ed, testify at government hearings, and speak out on social media.

3. We introduce educators and school administrators to business leaders in their communities (and in other communities looking to improve their schools).

4. We promote best practices and business leader recommendations across our network and through earned and social media.
REFERENCES


11. Ibid.


17. Ibid.


19. Ibid.


21. Ibid.

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36. Ibid.