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**From:** Kellyanne Conway, President and CEO  
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the polling company™, inc./WomanTrend

**Date:** September 1, 2005

**Re:** Data Analysis: Statewide Survey of Adults in New York

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## Introduction and Methodology

the polling company™, inc. is pleased to present to the **Center for Education Reform (CER)** these data and analysis from a recent statewide survey of 500 adults (18+) in New York.

The sample was drawn utilizing a Random Digit Dialing (RDD) method where phone numbers were generated by a computer to ensure that every household in the state had an equal chance to be surveyed. A total of 93 interviews were terminated because the individual who answered the phone was Spanish-speaking.

The survey contained 11 questions, including seven demographic inquiries. The four substantive questions were identical to questions included in a lengthier nationwide survey of 800 adults conducted on behalf of CER in January 2005. Sampling controls were used to ensure that a proportional and representative number of people were interviewed from such demographic groups as age, gender, race and ethnicity, and geographic region.

The margin of error for the statewide survey is calculated at  $\pm 4.38\%$  at the 95% confidence level, meaning that the results obtained would differ by no more than 4.38 percentage points in either direction even if the entire adult population nationwide were to be surveyed. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

The survey was fielded August 23-25, 2005 at a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) phone facility using live callers. The final questionnaire was approved by authorized representatives of CER prior to fielding.

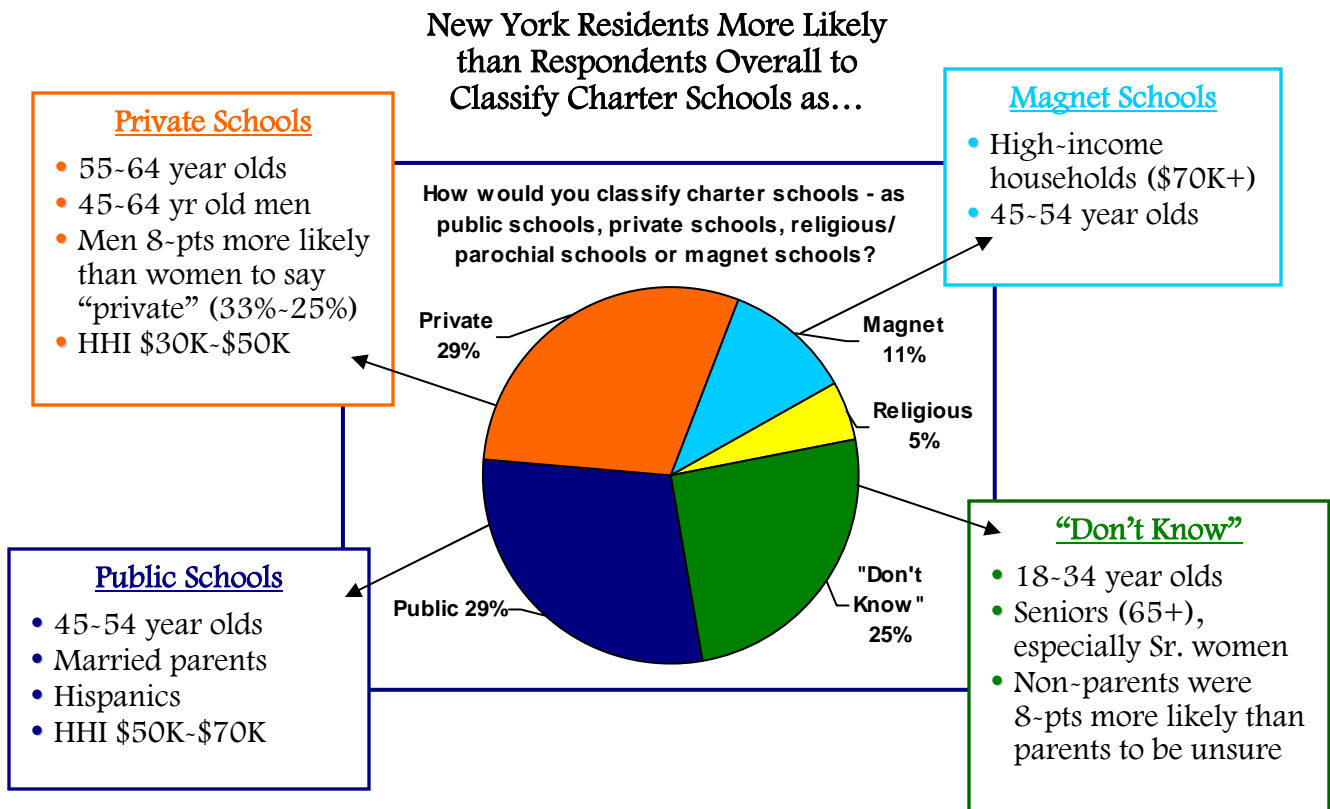
## Analysis of Findings

### *New Yorkers Divided on Proper Classification of Charter Schools.*

**Only 29% of New York residents surveyed knew that charter schools are public schools.** When considering the enormity of the public education system in New York—4,300 public schools educating nearly 3 million students, as compared to 63 charter schools teaching approximately 13,000 students—this level of awareness may be more impressive than it appears at first glance. It certainly suggests that basic information about charters is reaching a certain segment of the population.

An equal 29% surmised that charters are “private” institutions, a figure nearly double those who said charters are either “magnet” (11%) or “religious” schools (5%). A full 25% declined to respond, admittedly unaware of the correct classification of charters.

Though better informed than Americans nationwide—20% of whom in an earlier survey<sup>1</sup> had identified charters as public schools, 38% as “private,” 16% as “magnet,” and 5% as “religious”—the majority of New Yorkers would benefit from an education on charter schools.



<sup>1</sup> All comparisons to national figures from January 2005 survey of 800 adults nationwide conducted by **tpc** for **CER**. MoE +/- 3.5%.

***Support for Charters Overwhelms Opposition by More than a 4-to-1 Margin.***

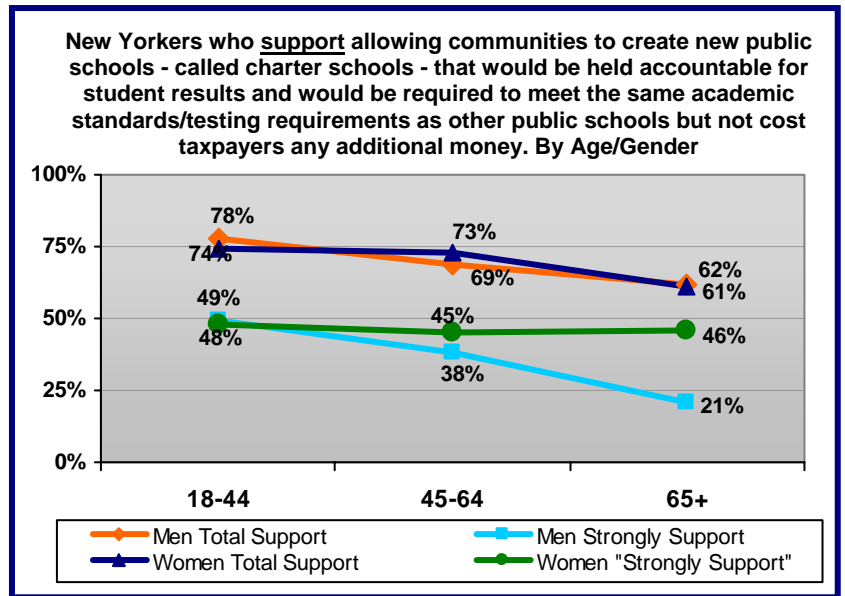
A lack of initial knowledge about the character of charter schools notwithstanding, **a robust 71% of survey respondents professed their support after hearing a fairly brief and objective definition of these innovative educational institutions.** In fact, learning that charters were a new type of *public* school that would be *answerable* for *student results* and required to meet the same *academic standards* as other public schools (all at *no extra cost* to taxpayers), led 44% of New Yorkers to voice “strong” backing of charters.

In fact, just 16% of respondents were against the formation of charter schools—11% of them with intensity. Another 10% remained undecided.

- New Yorkers viewed charters somewhat less positively than those surveyed across the nation, 78% of whom endorsed the idea. That said, statewide opposition across New York to charter schools matched the national level (16%-15%). Accordingly, **the relatively lower level of support was due to a higher proportion of Empire State residents who noted they “did not know” or declined to reveal what they thought of charters (13% vs. 6% of all Americans).** Those fence-sitters are movable with sharp and targeted communication about charters.
- Blacks were the racial group most likely to favor charter schools (75% compared to 72% of Whites and 68% of Hispanics). And while they were just 4-points more likely than most to embrace the idea generally, Blacks were 8-points more apt to do so with intensity (52% said “strongly support” vs. 44% of all respondents).
- Young adults (aged 18-34), many of whom were students in the New York public school system not long ago, also supported charters with greater intensity than most (52% vs. 44% overall).

Age and gender both proved key influencers with respect to New Yorkers’ views on charter schools. As the nearby chart indicates, overall support for charters among men and women decreased as respondents aged.

- At the same time, while the percentage of women who “strongly” backed this new brand of public schools remained constant as they grew older, the intensity of men’s enthusiasm lessened dramatically.



## Specialized subgroups of New York Residents More Likely than New York Respondents Overall to...

### Support charter schools:

- ✧ 35-44 year olds
- ✧ 18-34 year old men
- ✧ Unmarried respondents
- ✧ Households earning \$30K-\$49K or \$50K-\$69K per year
- ✧ Respondents who believed charters were public institutions *and* those who pronounced them magnet schools

### Oppose charter schools:

- ✧ Adults aged 55 years or older
- ✧ 45-64 year old men
- ✧ Women aged 65+
- ✧ Long Island dwellers
- ✧ Respondents who admitted they did not know how to classify charters

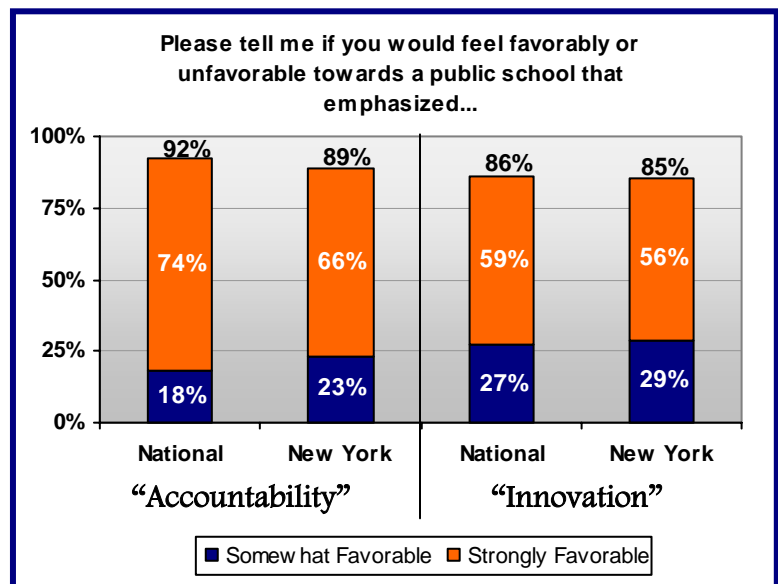
### Remain unsure about charter schools:

- ✧ Hispanics
- ✧ Respondents who could not or would not hazard a guess as to the proper school type in which charters belonged

### *New York Finds the Twin Pillars of Charter Schools Very Appealing.*

Residents across the Empire State roundly embraced two of the leading attributes that define the concept of public schools emphasizing two concepts central to the charter school philosophy by eye-popping margins. “*Accountability*” in public schools was viewed favorably by 89% of respondents, while just 3% rejected it and 7% were unsure. Likewise, folks who found “*innovation*” attractive in the context of public education outnumbered detractors 85% to 4% (9% were undecided).

The small four-point difference between attitudes toward “*accountability*” and “*innovation*” mushroomed to 10 points when considering the intensity levels of those feelings. There, accountability scored that much higher.



**Specialized subgroups of New York Residents More Likely than New York Respondents Overall to Favor...**

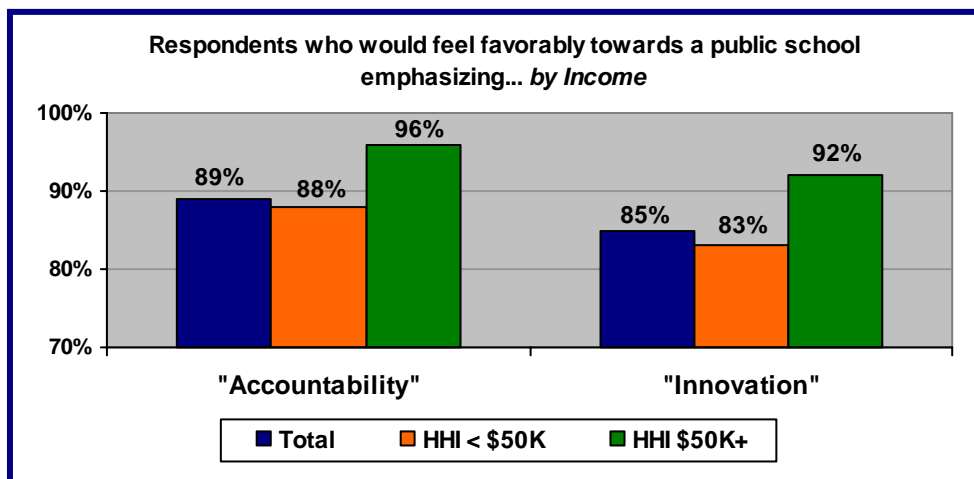
**“Accountability”: 89% overall**

- ✧ 35-44 year olds
- ✧ 18-64 year old men
- ✧ Blacks
- ✧ HHI \$50K+ (including 100% of those earning \$50K-\$70K per year!)
- ✧ Adults who supported charter schools
- ✧ While married parents were just 2-points more likely than respondents overall to support accountability in public schools generally, they were 8-points more likely to do so “strongly”

**“Innovation”: 85% overall**

- ✧ 35-54 year olds
- ✧ 18-64 year old men
- ✧ Married parents
- ✧ HHI \$50K+
- ✧ Adults who supported charter schools

Annual household income played an important role in New Yorkers’ attitudes towards the acceptability of public schools emphasizing accountability and innovation. *(see chart below)*



## In Conclusion...

*Charter schools remain largely unknown (or misunderstood) among New York residents.* Only 29% know that they are public in nature, leaving 7-in-10 in need of a basic tutorial about what charters are – and what they are not.

*It appears that to know Charters is to like Charters, as New Yorkers were undeniably supportive of communities forming the “new public schools,”* after learning that they emphasized accountability and pursued high academic standards without imposing an additional burden on tax payers.

*Black respondents, middle- and high-income households, and 35-44 year olds (the age when many have school aged children at home) were consistently supportive of charter schools and their objectives.* Hispanics were among the most likely to answer “I don’t know” when asked for an opinion on charter schools—indicating that an outreach effort aimed specifically at that growing population may convert them into staunch backers as well.

While the past few years have seen an improvement in students’ scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), New York’s public schools are increasingly crowded and in a state of poor repair. In fact, elementary and high school class sizes are among the country’s largest<sup>2</sup>. *The need for personalized attention and a setting more conducive to both learning and teaching grows more critical with each passing school year. These data suggest that with proper messaging and targeted delivery, an unignorable number of New Yorkers would be favorable to the charter and the character of charter schools.*

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<sup>2</sup> Educational State Rankings, September 2004