



Union Study is Latest Attack in Long-Time Battle Against Charter Schools

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Charter school leaders across the country are dismissing a report to be released this week by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) regarding charter school achievement. Powerful union leaders who have long been opposed to charter schools both fund EPI and serve as members of the group's board of directors. "This report tells us nothing about how charter schools are serving our kids," said Kevin Chavous, distinguished fellow at The Center for Education Reform (CER). "It is a PR stunt by a group of avid charter school opponents who will do anything to maintain the status quo. Given the state of public education today, we should be focused on expanding options for parents, not limiting them." CER sets the record straight:

• **(1) Economic Policy Institute is a biased source and does not provide an accurate assessment of charter school performance.**

- The EPI is funded largely by labor unions – long-time opponents of charter schools.
- Members of the group's board of directors include some of the nation's most powerful union leaders, from organizations such as the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), AFL-CIO, International United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers of America.

(2) Across the country, charter schools help students in urban and low-income areas succeed at faster rates than their counterparts in conventional public schools.

- In Michigan, charter high school students are achieving faster gains in math, reading, science, and social studies. More than 58 percent of Michigan charter school students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, versus the state average of 33 percent.
- In California, Oakland's 19 public charter schools – that serve predominantly low-income students – achieved gains five times greater than Oakland's conventional public schools.
- In Louisiana, Children's Charter School showed the most growth of all the public schools in East Baton Rouge Parish, despite an at-risk percentage of over 94 percent. The state labeled the school as demonstrating "Exemplary Academic Growth."
- In Massachusetts, 60 percent of urban charter schools outperformed their conventional school counterparts on the 2003 school year MCAS exams.
- In New York, the State Education Department reveals that every charter school in New York City showed a faster rate of improvement than its respective public school district.

(3) National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) data is a credible source, but it does not accurately gauge some student demographics.

- NAEP only classifies students as "low income" if they participate in free and reduced lunch programs. A recent CER survey revealed that more than one third of charter schools choose not to participate in these programs due to burdensome paperwork.
- NAGB is currently revamping the free/reduced lunch portion of its survey that accompanies the NAEP. This decision is based on findings that the current survey does not accurately gauge some student demographics.
- Officials at the non-partisan education statistics office at the U.S. Department of Education acknowledged in December of 2004 that free and reduced lunch statistics alone are not always the best indicator of poverty.

(4) Charter schools bring competition to the public education market and drive conventional public schools to do better.

- "Whether it is individual attention, changing the culture of a school or finding an inspirational leader to hold the reins, Oakland's traditional public schools are ready to adopt some of the charters' tricks," said Chip Johnson, columnist at *The San Francisco Chronicle*.
- Last year Multi-cultural Academy Charter School in north Philadelphia received a \$50,000 grant from the state to share its best practices with other charters and conventional public schools.
- The Los Angeles, California Unified School District partnered with the CHIME charter school to replicate CHIME's model of teaching children with learning disabilities.
- The Monroe County School District in Georgia realized the benefits of charter schools and opened four of its own. The District Superintendent said, "we're able to try new things."



Link here for more [Important Evidence about Charter School Achievement](#), CER Research Fact Sheet, April 2005.
Link here to EPI's report [The Charter School Dust-Up: Examining the Evidence on Enrollment and Achievement](#).

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