

SURVEY RESEARCH ANALYSIS

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From: Kellyanne Conway, President and CEO
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Date: March 31, 2007

Re: *Analysis of Findings: Post-Test Surveys in Camden and Bergen County, New Jersey*

Introduction & Methodology

the polling company™, inc./WomanTrend is pleased to present the **Center for Education Reform (CER)** with this analysis of findings from two recent telephone surveys of registered voters in Bergen County, New Jersey and the City of Camden, NJ.

The methodology for each of the surveys follows:

Bergen County, NJ

- Interviews: 300 registered voters with an additional oversample of 50 registered voters residing in Teaneck, NJ
- Field Dates: March 21-24, 2007
- Survey contained 8 questions: 2 substantive and 6 demographic inquiries

City of Camden, NJ

- Interviews: 300 registered voters
- Voters were offered the option to take survey in English or Spanish
- Field Dates: March 23-25, 2007
- Survey contained 11 questions: 5 substantive (including 2 open-ended) and 6 demographic inquiries

Both surveys were fielded at a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) facility using live callers. Respondents were randomly selected from lists of registered voters residing in the respective localities. 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.

This research was conducted as a "post-test" to measure change from the baseline knowledge and opinions of charter schools established by surveys fielded in the two localities in March 2006. In Camden, CER conducted a multi-media ad campaign including bilingual billboards and advertisements on public buses (which ran mid-April through mid-July 2006) as well as flyers, some of which were placed in newspapers, that invited parents to attend information sessions in June, July, August, and October 2006. The billboards, bus ads, and flyers all heralded charter schools as "*new public schools.*" No specific advertising or outreach campaign was waged in Bergen County.

The margins of error for the main samples are calculated at $\pm 5.6\%$ at the 95% confidence level, meaning that the results obtained would differ by no more than 5.6 percentage points in either direction if the entire voter populations in either Camden or Bergen County were to be surveyed. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

City of Camden, NJ

Moderate Buzz Surrounding Charter Schools in Camden.

Voters were split fairly evenly on the question of specific recollection of the charter school campaign. Forty-seven percent of registered voters in Camden asserted they had "seen, read, or heard" something about charter schools in the past year, compared to 50% who had not. These recall numbers are especially positive given the considerable time that has elapsed since CER's major advertising push; the billboard and public transit advertisements ran from April through July 2006, while the flyers announced informational sessions held in June, July, August, and October 2006.

An examination of the crosstabs revealed a few groups more likely than others to remember hearing something about charter schools:

- Voters aged 35 to 54 were more likely than their older and younger counterparts to recall information on charters.
- **African-Americans stood out as more apt than Whites or Hispanics to have seen or heard about charters in the past year.**
- Camden residents earning greater than \$50,000 per year were more likely than those making less to acknowledge awareness of some sort of news or outreach on the topic.

Camden voters who recalled seeing or hearing about charter schools were then asked an open-ended follow-up inquiry which probed them to reveal, in their own words, exactly what they remembered. Nearly half (46%) of these voters offered a generic positive comment, including that charters were "good schools" (26%) or offered "better quality education" (10%). By comparison, just 4% were left with a negative impression of charter schools from what they saw or heard. This amounted to a 12-1 positive-to-negative ratio in general recall.

Another 23% claimed more specific information, citing some detail about charters, such as the fact that new charters were opening in the area (8%) or

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Post-Test Analysis: Bergen County and Camden, NJ
March 2007

And what specifically did you see, read, or hear about charter schools? What was the message? (PROBED: Do you remember reading, seeing, or hearing anything else about charter schools? Anything else?)

SELECT VERBATIM RESPONSES

"I heard how [charters] would help the students because of having such smaller classes. They seem to be really interested in improving students' education."

"I heard that the scores were higher than public schools, the classes were smaller, not as many children in the classroom."

"They're popping up over the city, and that they're better schools."

"My nephew goes to one. The class size is smaller and the teacher gives more time to the students."

"[Charter schools are] an alternative to regularly funded schools. Private people fund them."

"I don't like charter schools they drain resources from public schools and they don't do a better job."

something about their funding (4%). Twelve percent volunteered the source of their information, while a full one-third (34%) either could not or would not elaborate on what they had seen, read, or heard about charter schools. Camden voters were also asked to share the source of their charter school information. Newspapers were the clear winner with 38%. While some of CER's flyers were distributed in local papers, the strength of this source is likely also due to the fact that people often turn to newspapers and local television stations (volunteered by 20%) for information on local issues, such as schools.

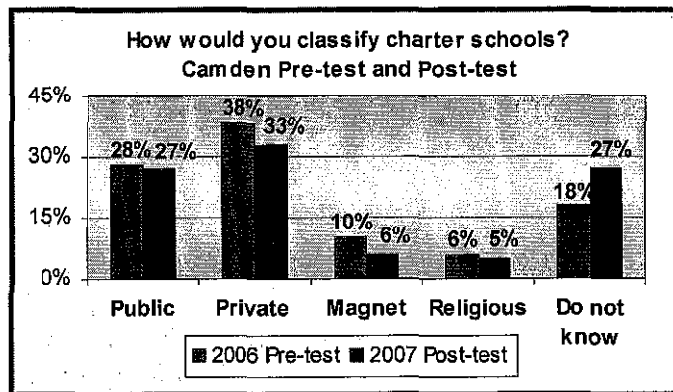
Combined, the primary media sources employed by CER, namely billboards, bus ads, and flyers, netted a combined 7% in specific source recall. However, some of the word-of-mouth attention (15%) could have been borne from the group's display efforts and educational sessions.

Where do you remember seeing, reading or hearing something charter schools recently?

38%	NEWSPAPER
20%	TELEVISION
15%	WORD OF MOUTH
8%	FRIENDS/RELATIVES/CHILDREN ATTEND CHARTERS
5%	BILLBOARD OR OUTSIDE AD
4%	PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
3%	RADIO
2%	LOCAL SCHOOL
2%	MAIL
1%	FLYER
1%	INTERNET
1%	PUBLIC TRANSIT/ BUS/TRAIN
11%	DON'T KNOW/ DON'T RECALL

No Gain in Identification of Charter Schools as "Public."

One of the primary messages of CER's media campaign in Camden was that charter schools are *public* institutions, a fact that is little known among people in other states, earlier surveys showed. These data suggest that voters in Camden were no more likely to know that charters now than they were one year ago. As the nearby graph illustrates, 28% correctly classified the schools as public in the post-test survey compared to a near-identical 27% in the pre-test. The number of voters incorrectly identifying charters as "private" or "magnet" did decrease a bit over the year (from 38% to 33% and from 10% to 6%)., Confusion about the proper category for charters increased by 50% over the same time period, as the 18% who admitted being in the dark about charters in the pre-test mushroomed to 27% of voters in the post-test.



- Knowledge is power.** Voters who recalled seeing or hearing something about charter schools in the past year were more than twice as likely as those who did not to accurately identify charters as public schools (37%-15%). However, they were also more inclined that those who were out-of-the-loop to think the schools were private (39%-26%). The biggest gap was in the number of "I don't knows" offered by respondents – just 11% of those who remembered

receiving some information claimed ignorance about the character of charters, compared to four times that – 44% – of those who did not.

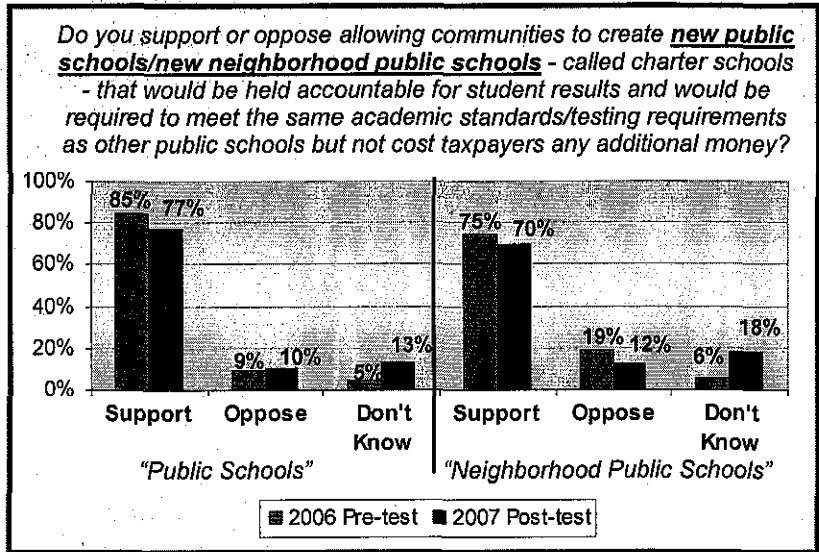
- Women were more likely than men to know charter schools were public (31%-22%). Additionally, parents were more likely than non-parents to accurately identify the schools (31%-24%).
- Other groups that stood out as more knowledgeable about charter schools included 35-44 year olds, Hispanics, those earning more than \$50,000 per year, and Ward 4 voters. By comparison, in the pre-test, Hispanics, Ward 1 voters, and low-income voters (<\$30K) were more likely than most to classify the schools correctly.

A post-test conducted closer to the time of the campaign may have netted more affirmative results. With the extreme media saturation of today's world – one market research firm estimates that residents of urban areas are exposed to up to 5,000 advertisements each day – six to eight months is a long time for people to retain information gleaned from a billboard, bus placard, or flyer. This is especially true when they are not personally engaged through the advertisement to do much more than pay attention to it.

Support for Charter Schools Falls Slightly from March 2006.

Strong majorities of voters in the city of Camden endorsed the idea of allowing communities to form charter schools, which were described as public schools “that would be held accountable for student results and would be required to meet the same academic standards/ testing requirements as other public schools but not cost taxpayers and additional money.” When charters were described simply as “new public schools,” 77% of voters supported them, compared to 70% who embraced “new neighborhood public schools.”¹ Each measure of approval bore intensity, as a majority “strongly” backed the schools in each case.

However, as the nearby graph demonstrates, Camden voters were not quite as amenable to charter schools in this March 2007 post-test as they were one year ago. Furthermore, the level of uncertainty about the schools more than doubled.



¹ Question was asked in split-sample fashion in which half of respondents were asked about charters as “new public schools” and the other half heard charters described as “new neighborhood public schools.”

Camden Voters More Likely than Most to Support/Oppose Charters as...	
“Public Schools”	“Neighborhood Public Schools”
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SUPPORT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 45-64 year olds ▪ Low-income households (\$30K) ▪ Blacks and Hispanics more than Whites ▪ While men and women were equally likely to support charters overall, women displayed markedly greater intensity 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SUPPORT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 18-44 year olds ▪ Wards 3 and 4 ▪ Self-ID Republicans ▪ Parents more than non-parents ▪ Whites and Hispanics more than Blacks
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>OPPOSE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Household income \$50K+ 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>OPPOSE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blacks more than Whites or Hispanics

These numbers belie a lack of engagement in charter schools on the part of Camden voters. While they are willing, for the most part, to give the thumbs up to what sounds like a promising proposal, they aren't yet personally invested in – or know enough about – the issue to have moved from interest to action.

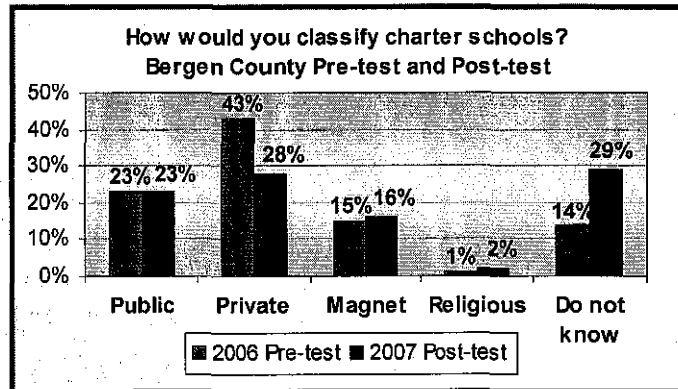
An examination of the crosstabs revealed noteworthy differences in support for and opposition to charter schools among Camden voters:

While charter schools specifically may not have been in the news much in Camden of late, another education story has dominated the headlines there. In February of 2006, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* broke news that school officials connected with the Dr. Charles E. Brimm Medical Arts High, a magnet school in the city, had been accused of rigging standardized testing scores to make it appear students were performing better than they actually were. Details of the brewing scandal – which has prompted a criminal investigation and the resignation of Camden's superintendent – have been in the news ever since. Though this story has nothing to do with charter schools, some of the “bad blood” it generated may have carried over and impacted Camden voters' views of their school system generally.

Bergen County, NJ

Growing Uncertainty: Fewer Think Charters are Private Schools Compared to One Year Ago; “Don’t Knows” Double Over Same Time Period.

CER did not wage a specific campaign in Bergen County to inform voters that charter schools were, in fact, part of the public school system and, as such, it is not surprising that there was no noticeable change in the number of Bergen respondents able to correctly classify them as such. While voters were significantly less likely to misidentify the schools as “private,” as the nearby chart indicates, **the big takeaway is that the number of Bergen County voters who are unsure about the classification of charter schools has doubled since last year.**



In this situation, it seems that a lack of activity in the form of outreach and communications was fatal to the desire to move the needle forward on charters. The absence of authoritative information on the alternative schools passively helped to increase the ambivalence, confusion and perhaps the opposition to charters among voters.

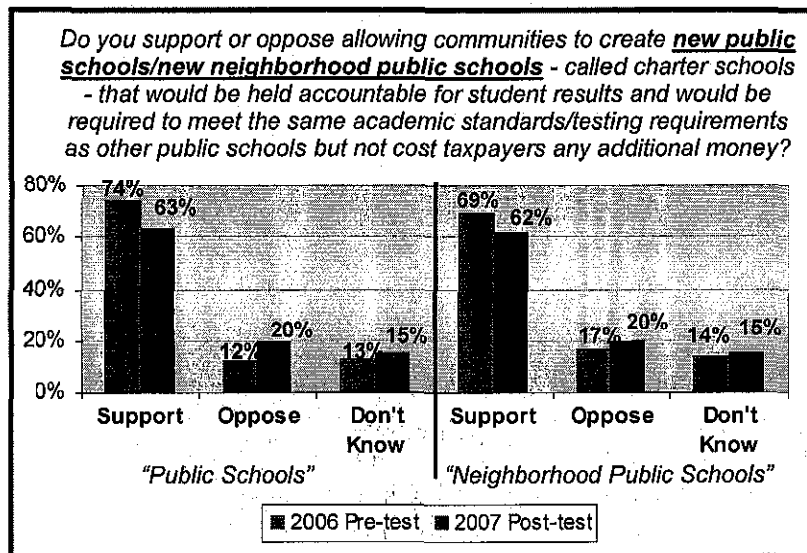
- Voters in Teaneck stood out from their peers living in the rest of the county as more likely to accurately describe charter schools as public institutions (35%-23%). This also marked a 9-point gain over the Teaneck numbers collected in 2006².
- *Gender Gap*: Men were more likely than women to classify charters as public or private schools, while women were more apt than men to say they simply did not know.
- There was little significant difference between parents and non-parents with respect to their ability to correctly identify charter schools as public. However, those with kids at home were notably more likely than those without to believe charters were magnet schools, while non-parents were more apt than parents to admit that they were unsure.

² The sample sizes of Teaneck voters are very small (2007 N=71; 2006 N=64) and as such the statistical significance of these differences is difficult to determine.

Support for Charter Schools Dips Slightly in Bergen County.

After being read the description of charter schools, six-in-ten Bergen voters backed allowing communities to create the new schools. Support for charters was roughly the same whether they were termed “new public schools” (63%) or “new neighborhood public schools” (62%). Intensity was restrained, with just 26% of Bergen County voters “strongly” favoring “public schools,” while 34% showed the same intensity for “neighborhood public schools.”

As seen in the nearby chart, **there was an overall drop in support for charters over the past year**: approximately seven-in-ten favored them in the March 2006 pre-test.



One would not expect support for charters to have *increased* given that no major outreach and communications effort, including one by CER, was in play in Bergen County over the past year. That said, the *decrease* is somewhat puzzling. While a search of local newspapers revealed no recent or sustained anti-charter headlines, it is possible that groups critical of charters or other educational alternatives have been making noise.

It bears noting that the education system generally has taken a few hits recently in the news. Along with the test-score rigging scandal that plagued Camden (which was first published by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*), other public schools, including some in the North Bergen school district, have been investigated for irregularities in student test scores. **These Garden State voters might understandably be a bit fatigued by and skeptical of anything related to standardized testing, a specific component included in the survey's description of charter schools.**

The crosstabs showed some important distinctions in support for and opposition to charter schools among Bergen County voters:

Bergen County Voters More Likely than Most to Support/Oppose Charters as...	
"Public Schools"	"Neighborhood Public Schools"
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SUPPORT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low-income households (<\$30K) ▪ <u>At least 62% backing of all three political parties</u> ▪ East and South Bergen voters more than North Bergen residents ▪ 18-34 year olds and those 55+ more than voters aged 35-54 ▪ Men more than women 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SUPPORT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaneck voters ▪ Residents of North Bergen County ▪ <u>At least 55% support of all three political parties</u> (with Independents most enthusiastic at 66%) ▪ Women more than men
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>OPPOSE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High-income households (\$70K+) 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>OPPOSE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 35-54 year olds ▪ <i>Parents</i> ▪ High-income households (\$70K+) ▪ Men more than women

In Conclusion...

Overall, voters in both Bergen County and Camden, New Jersey are still very much in need of an education on charter schools. The fact that charters are public schools, let alone "new" ones that are created by communities and held accountable through standards, has not yet reached a majority of voters in either area.

Additionally, the natural skepticism many in the state seem to feel towards the school system due to recent events and subsequent media coverage seems to have eroded some support for the concept of charter schools. While charters did not create the mess, they could benefit by cleaning it up and establishing themselves as an alternative to the bureaucracy, ineffectiveness and in some instances, corruption of traditional public schools.