
The Charter Difference: A Comparison of Chicago Charter and Neighborhood High Schools

A Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education Report

University of Illinois-Chicago

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Executive Summary

MAJOR FINDINGS

Student Enrollments

- Charter high schools enroll 6% to 7% fewer low-income students than neighborhood high schools.
- Neighborhood high schools limited-English-proficient student enrollments more than double those of charter high schools.
- Charter high schools enroll statistically significantly fewer students with special needs than neighborhood schools.

ACT Composite Scores

- An examination of 2006-2008 ACT composite scores finds no statistical significant difference between charter and neighborhood high schools.

School Environment

- Charter and CPS high schools' average class sizes and pupil-to-teacher ratios are comparable.

Teacher Characteristics

- Fully 55% of CPS teachers hold Master's degrees compared to 43% of charter teachers.
- CPS teachers have, on average, 7.2 years more teaching experience than charter school teachers.
- Charter school teachers earn, on average, 15% less than CPS teachers while working a longer year (+9 days) and day (+40 minutes).

CONCLUSIONS

- Charter schools have not improved the overall quality of, or equal access to, education for *all* Chicago high school students.
- Charter high schools' significant under-enrollment of special needs students may be discriminatory and warrants further investigation.

"The Charter Difference: A Comparison of Chicago Charter and Neighborhood High Schools" is available at <http://www.uic.edu/educ/ceje>, Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education, University of Illinois-Chicago, College of Education.

- The Chicago charter school system is not sustainable largely because of its current student enrollment and teacher employment practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A moratorium on new charter campuses and school closings/phase-outs/turnarounds/consolidations until an independent agency conducts a thorough study of charter school performance and management practices and makes its findings public.
- CPS's current over-reliance on standardized test scores to justify changing the existence or governance of schools should be curtailed as these tests are designed so that half of the scores fall below the mean.
- We urge collaboration between state and local legislative bodies, CPS and the Chicago Teachers Union to ensure fair wage and labor practice protections for all teachers and staff and providing equal access to all public schools for all students .

About the Authors

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ABSTRACT

Between 1997 and 2008, 30 charter school operators opened 67 campuses in Chicago. Since 2004, under the Renaissance 2010 plan led by Chicago Public Schools Chief Executive Officer Arne Duncan, 46 of those charter campuses opened, with seven new campuses scheduled to open in 2009 and 2010. At the same time, 61 Chicago public schools were closed, phased-out, consolidated, or “turned around” -- where all faculty and staff are dismissed, and future hiring and management decisions are outsourced to private concerns. To date, no charter performance study has been conducted by an independent agency.

In this present multi-year (2006-2008) study, charter high schools are found to enroll fewer low-income and limited-English-proficient students, and significantly fewer special needs students than CPS neighborhood high schools. Moreover, Chicago charter high schools’ ACT composite scores are not significantly higher than CPS neighborhood schools’ scores. Finally, in comparison to CPS teachers, charter school faculties are less educated, less experienced, less likely to hold teaching certificates, and receive significantly lower salaries while working longer days and years.

INTRODUCTION

Study Purpose

Between 1997 and 2008, 30 charter school operators opened 67 campuses in Chicago. Since 2004, under the Renaissance 2010 plan led by Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Chief Executive Officer Arne Duncan, 46 of those charter campuses opened, with seven new campuses scheduled to open in 2009 and 2010. During the same time, 61 Chicago public schools were closed, phased-out, consolidated or “turned around” (the latter term describes school reconstitution when all faculty and staff are dismissed and future hiring and management decisions are outsourced to private concerns) (Lutton, 2009). With the proliferation of charter schools in Chicago, an independent study of charters’ performance and management practices is long overdue. (The 2008 Chicago charter school study conducted by the RAND Corporation (Booker, Gill, Zimmer, & Sass, 2008) cannot be considered independent, as that study received support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which has contributed over \$2 million to the Renaissance Schools Fund, a major source of funding for Chicago charter schools.) Questions exist about Chicago charter schools. For instance, how do charter schools differ from CPS schools? Do they “perform” better? The scope of this present study, “The Charter Difference: A Comparison of Chicago Charter and Neighborhood High Schools,” is restricted to Chicago high schools, but takes the first step toward such an independent study.

The CPS office charged with charter oversight is the Office of New Schools (ONS). In January 2009, ONS published its *2006-2007 Charter Schools Performance Report* (“ONS 2006-2007 Report”) that presents information intended to evaluate charter school “The Charter Difference: A Comparison of Chicago Charter and Neighborhood High Schools” is available at <http://www.uic.edu/educ/ceje>, Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education, University of Illinois-Chicago, College of Education.

performance. That report follows the same general design as the four previous years' reports (CPS ONS, 2009).

In our estimation, none of the ONS charter reports fully illuminates Chicago charter school performance.

Charter school operators are measured against individual accountability plans which "share the following common metrics: test scores – composite and gains; attendance; and graduation rates" (CPS ONS, n.d.). We do not agree with ONS' emphasis on these narrow performance criteria. Nonetheless, this study's intent is to compare charter and neighborhood schools using ONS's data and paradigm. Therefore, a closer inspection of how ONS measures these criteria is warranted.

Attendance Rates: Data used by ONS to determine charter high schools' attendance rates that also have middle school grades is problematic.

The comparison school average for schools with a middle school component (Academy of Communications and Technology, Chicago Mathematics and Science Academy, ASPIRA Haugan Campus, Barbara A. Sizemore Academy of Betty Shabazz, Perspectives Charter School – South Loop and Calumet campuses, University of Chicago – Woodlawn campus, and Young Women's Leadership) *only includes the attendance for students in grades 6-8.* (emphasis added) (CPS ONS, 2009, p. 17).

Due to the discrepancies in ONS' charter high school attendance data, the present study does not include this factor in its analysis.

Graduation Rates: ONS calculates charter graduation rates as follows: "The number of 2006-2007 high school graduates divided by the quantity of first time ninth grade 2002 fall enrollment minus student [sic] transferred out plus students transferred in

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multiplied by 100.” (CPS ONS, 2009, p. 17). ONS reports include each charter high school’s average transfer-out rate, but CPS does not, making comparisons unreliable. The CPS Office of Research, Evaluation, and Accountability’s (REA) five-year cohort dropout and graduation data appear more precise; however only aggregated data by charter operators (not individual campuses) is available. Therefore, lacking specific and comparable data, we do not analyze graduation rates in this report.

Test Scores: We do not use Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) scores to avoid assessments that are state-made, state-scored, and subject to change. On October 22, 2008, the Chicago Board of Education (CBOE) adopted a resolution to exclude PSAE scores from its high school accountability ratings. According to that resolution, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) implemented a “revised method for computing [PSAE] scores” and thus “2008 PSAE scores are no longer suitable to compare against prior years’ scores to measure a school’s improvement trend” (CBOE, 2008). Due to the PSAE’s lack of reliability, we do not use PSAE results in our analysis. The ACT, however, is a reliable, national, norm-referenced test; therefore, we analyze ACT results in this study.

ONS also uses “relative student performance” measures upon which to assess charter school performance that rely upon a “comparison schools” measure developed by REA.

An explanation of REA’s “comparison schools” measure follows:

The Department of Research, Evaluation and Accountability develops a comprehensive list of the neighborhood schools that the charter school students would most likely have attended if the charter did not exist. These are identified using student addresses. For each performance indicator, the data from the neighborhood schools is aggregated to develop a weighted average that represents the comparison school’s performance. The proportion of students in the charter school that would have attended each of the

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relevant neighborhood schools is used as the weight in this calculation. (CPS ONS, 2009, p. 15)

As any Chicago high school student may petition to attend any Chicago high school, and many do, it is not clear why REA developed, and ONS uses, this “comparison schools” approach. CPS officials currently and publicly judge the performance of neighborhood high schools vis-à-vis CPS district-wide averages on a range of measures (test scores, attendance and graduation rates, etc.), but, overall, do not compare charter high schools to district averages. Furthermore, 50% of Chicago public school students do not attend their neighborhood high school (Myers, 2008). Although a district-wide comparison is faulty (discussed later in this study), in our estimation, REA’s comparison schools approach is not an improvement. Moreover, the comparison schools approach is statistically problematic. Data compiled from the ONS 2006-2007 report show that, on average, only 23% of the present study’s charter high school students reside in their charter school’s geographic neighborhood (CPS ONS, 2009). Therefore, the comparison schools measure is based on an unspecified number of schools “...that the charter school students would most likely have attended if the charter did not exist” for 77% of this study’s charter high school student population (CPS ONS, 2009, p. 15). The undisclosed number and identity of comparison schools, and the fact that half of CPS students attend non-neighborhood high schools, calls into question the validity of ONS’ comparison schools measures. .

The comparison schools measure is suspect for another reason. Students who attend school outside of their attendance areas have (or their families have) taken the initiative to find, investigate, assess, and decide to go to these schools, at a cost of, at least, time

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and distance. This speaks to particular motivation that suggests the possibility of a greater commitment to education, since the students are willing to travel out of their neighborhood, and, therefore, these students might have higher academic achievement in any event. Thus, comparing them with students who do not take this opportunity and remain at the neighborhood school is suspect. The RAND Corporation lends credence to this suspicion in its recent charter school study: “Black and Hispanic students who move to charter schools tend to be slightly higher achieving than their peers within the same racial and ethnic group in the TPSs [traditional public schools] from which they came; the differences achieved statistical significance in reading but not math” (Booker et al., 2008).

For the above reasons, we were compelled to create our own database. The “neighborhood” and “charter” percentages shown in this report’s tables are the means of each high school’s individual data. We compiled data from the following primary sources: ONS 2005-06 and 2006-07 charter school performance reports, REA, ISBE report cards, and ISBE annual charter reports. All available data from all schools in the study population is included; therefore, no sampling error exists in this study.

Study Population

Comparing individual high schools’ ACT composite scores to district-wide averages that include selective enrollment schools is faulty because these latter schools admit students based, in part, on academic achievement. As Table A show, non-military selective enrollment schools’ ACT scores, in particular, likely have an inflationary effect on district-wide averages.

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Table A.	ACT Average Composite Scores		
Population	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
CPS district-wide	17.4 ^a	17.5 ^b	17.6 ^c
Non-military selective enrollment ^d (n)	22.5 (8)	23.1 (8)	23.4 (9)*

Sources:^aVaughn, M. (2006, August 16).

^bGrossman, K.N. (2007, August 18).

^cVaughn, M. (2008, September 10).

^dCPS Office of Research, Evaluation and Accountability (n.d.).

*NOTE: Study number increases because Lindblom Math & Science's first junior class was included.

Our methodology is to compare non-selective enrollment Chicago public high schools to charter high schools based, in part, on ACT results. Of the 108 Chicago high schools reporting ACT results in 2008 (CPS REA, n.d.), 20 are *excluded* from the present study population, most (13) because of their use of selective enrollment screening practices, as detailed below.

- nine selective enrollment and four military high schools (both base student admission, in part, on academic performance): Brooks College Preparatory Academy, DeVry University Advantage Academy, Jones College Preparatory High School, King College Preparatory High School, Lane Tech College Preparatory High School, Lindblom Math and Science Academy, Northside College Preparatory High School, Payton College Preparatory High School, Young Magnet High School, Carver Military Academy High School, Chicago Military Academy, Phoenix Military Academy High School, and Rickover Naval Academy High School
- one special needs only high school: Las Casas Occupational; and
- five high schools (designated as CPS Areas 51 and 53) due to the absence of ISBE report card data: Alternative Learning Community High School, Idoc-Healy South High School, Linc Alternative High School, Peace & Education High School, and Prologue Early College High School.
- One school, Aspira Early College (AEC) High School, reports 10 ACT scores in 2007-2008, however AEC had no junior class that year and thus is excluded.

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To summarize:

$$\begin{array}{r} 108 \quad \text{Chicago total high schools reported 2007-2008 ACT scores} \\ - 20 \quad \text{schools excluded as detailed above (selective-enrollment predominantly)} \\ = 88 \quad \text{total high school study population} \end{array}$$

For study purposes, we refer to non-charter and non-selective high schools as “neighborhood” schools. Therefore, the study population is comprised of *Chicago neighborhood and charter high schools with junior classes reporting 2007-2008 ACT scores* as shown below:

- 76 neighborhood high schools; and
- 12 charter high schools.

Our intent here is to provide a clear comparison of Chicago neighborhood and charter high schools only. Due to its study population design, this study also offers more exact and comparable system-wide measures.

We only include charter high schools with 2007-2008 juniors who were likely enrolled and instructed for three years at their respective charter high schools. These schools have been in operation, on average, for 7.9 years (CPS ONS, 2009 January).

The only public sources of data, of which we are aware, reported by individual high school campuses within multi-campus charters are ONS charter reports and ACT test results. We compiled student demographic and test score data from these two sources, and use them for the first section of this study – student populations and performance. In the second section, school environment and teacher characteristics, we use CPS district-wide and aggregated, multiple-campus charter operator data, as we note in the body of the report.

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FINDINGS

Section I. Student Populations and Performance

In 2006-2007, 85% of all Chicago public school students were members of low-income families (ISBE, n.d.). As Table 1 shows, in terms of family income, neighborhood and charter high schools' student populations are similar, although charter high schools enroll between 6% and 7% fewer low-income students. In 2006-2007, Youth Connection (91%) and North Lawndale (90%) report enrollments with the highest percentage of low-income students while Chicago International-Northtown reports the lowest -- 51%.

Table 1. High School Type	Percentage of Low-income Students	
	2005-2006	2006-2007
Neighborhood ^a (n)	89% (76)	88% (76)
Charter (n)	82% ^b (12)	82% ^c (12)
The Charter Difference	-7%	-6%

Source: ^aChicago Public Schools, Office of Research, Evaluation and Accountability (2008).

^bChicago Public Schools, Office of New Schools, *2005-2006 Charter Schools Performance Report*.

^cChicago Public Schools, Office of New Schools, *2006-2007 Charter Schools Performance Report*.

NOTE: ONS does not include Youth Connection Charter School (YCCS) within its reports. All YCCS data were compiled from the same sources as neighborhood schools throughout this study.

Over the two years shown in Table 2, neighborhood high schools' limited English proficient (LEP) enrollments more than double those of charter high schools. In 2006-2007, Aspira Ramirez and Chicago Math & Science charters report the highest LEP enrollments (8% each), while six charter high schools report LEP enrollments under one percent.

Table 2.	Percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students	
High School Type	2005-2006	2006-2007
Neighborhood ^a (n)	5.5% (76)	5.6% (76)
Charter (n)	2.5% ^b (12)	2.4% ^c (12)
The Charter Difference	-3.0%	-3.2%

Source: ^aChicago Public Schools, Office of Research, Evaluation and Accountability (2008).

^bChicago Public Schools, Office of New Schools, *2005-2006 Charter Schools Performance Report*.

^cChicago Public Schools, Office of New Schools, *2006-2007 Charter Schools Performance Report*.

Charter high schools enroll statistically significantly fewer students with special needs than neighborhood schools (see Table 3). Charter high schools with the highest 2006-2007 special needs enrollments -- Chicago International-Northtown, 17.7%, and ACE Technical, 15% -- fall below the CPS neighborhood high school average of 17.8%. In 2006-2007, Chicago International-Longwood and North Lawndale report the lowest percentage of students with IEPs, 5.6% and 8.1%, respectively. According to t-test results, the difference between charter and neighborhood schools' IEP enrollments is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Table 3.	Percentage of Students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs)	
	2005-2006	2006-2007
High School Type		
Neighborhood ^a (n)	18.6% (76)	17.8% (76)
Charter (n)	13.0% ^{b*} (12)	12.5% ^{c*} (12)
The Charter Difference	-5.6%	-5.3%

Source: ^aChicago Public Schools, Office of Research, Evaluation and Accountability (2008).

^bChicago Public Schools, Office of New Schools, *2005-2006 Charter Schools Performance Report*.

^cChicago Public Schools, Office of New Schools, *2006-2007 Charter Schools Performance Report*.

*p <.05

With the above student population differences, one might expect charters' ACT composite scores to be significantly higher than neighborhood schools due to the unfortunate correlation of more low-income, LEP, and special needs students and lower

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standardized test scores. But charters' ACT composites are less than 1 point (+0.89) higher than neighborhood schools, which, according to t-test results, is not statistically significant (see Table 4). For each of the three years shown, no significant difference is found between neighborhood and charter high schools' ACT composite scores.

Table 4.	ACT Composite Scores^a*			Point Gain
High School Type	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008**	2006-2008
Neighborhood (n)	15.49 (66)	15.69 (70)	15.82 (76)	+0.33
Charter (n)	16.62 (9)	16.73 (10)	16.71 (12)	+0.09
The Charter Difference	+1.13	+1.04	+0.89	-0.24

Source: ^aChicago Public Schools, Office of Research, Evaluation and Accountability (n.d.).

NOTE: *The total number of study schools increases each year because newer schools did not yet have a junior class. Thus, 66 neighborhood and 9 charter high schools had junior classes in 2005-2006 which increased to 76 and 12, respectively.

**2007-2008 ACT scores for *all* schools do not include LEP students' scores as they do in years prior.

In addition, charters post a near-flat three-year point gain (+0.09) while neighborhood schools gain 0.33 points in the same period, a slight improvement.

To summarize, *compared to neighborhood high schools*, charter high schools:

- enroll fewer low-income students;
- enroll fewer LEP students;
- enroll significantly fewer special needs students with IEPs; and
- do not realize significantly higher ACT composite scores or gains.

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Section 2. School Systems Compared

Student population enrollments and standardized test scores tell only a part of the story of Chicago's neighborhood and charter high schools. Schools are not just educational buildings; they are a vital part of the community fabric. How charter operators manage and staff their schools lend insight into their role as publicly funded, and ostensibly long-lasting, community partners. To analyze system-wide differences between charter and neighborhood schools, in this section we retrieved data from ISBE's CPS district-wide annual report cards and we compiled data from ISBE's annual charter reports.

Data is not available for individual CPS neighborhood high schools on the following school environment and teacher characteristic measures. Therefore, we use district-wide averages retrieved from ISBE's 2006-2008 CPS district report cards (unless otherwise noted). ISBE district report card averages include data from *all* CPS schools, including selective-enrollment high schools excluded in Part I of this study, as well as elementary and middle schools.

Data in ISBE charter school reports, however, is not charter-wide, but rather each charter operator reports aggregated data for all its campuses. For instance, Chicago International's single 2007-2008 ISBE report includes data for all 12 of its campuses and combines data on all CICS grades served -- PK through 12. Thus, ISBE charter data is aggregated by charter operator and does not distinguish between campuses or along traditional elementary, middle school or high school lines. For study consistency and fairness, however, we compiled and use only ISBE charter data on the same charter operators studied in the first portion of this report. Recall that in the Section 1

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the number of charter high schools studied is 12. In Section 2 the number is 11. In Section 1, REA's data file reports individual data for Chicago International's two high school campuses – Northtown and Longwood. In Section 2, ISBE data aggregates all of Chicago International campuses. Like CPS district-wide data, the charter operator data we use here represents a mix of elementary, middle and high schools, as detailed below.

- Seven of 11 charter operators report aggregated elementary, middle and high school data across multiple campuses unless otherwise noted: ACT (grades 7-12 – single campus), Aspira (grades 6-12), Chicago International (PK-12), Chicago Math & Science (grades 6-11 – single campus), Perspectives (grades 6-12), Shabazz (grades K-11), and Young Women's Leadership (grades 7-12 – single campus).
- Three high school-only charter operators (Noble Street, North Lawndale and Youth Connections, all 9-12) report aggregated data for multiple campuses.
- One charter operator, ACE Technical, has a single 9-12 campus (ISBE, 2009, January).

We believe this Chicago public and charter school comparison is valid when viewed from a system-wide perspective.

School Environment

ISBE reports only one charter operator's average high school class size for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, therefore the prior two years' data are shown in Table 5. In both 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, charter and CPS high schools' average class sizes are comparable. In 2005-2006, individual charter operators' high school class sizes range from a low of 11 to a high of 29.

Table 5.	Average High School Class Size ^a	
	2004-2005	2005-2006
High School Type		
CPS district-wide	19.7	22.4
Charter*	19.9	21.7
(n)	(7)**	(10)**
The Charter Difference	+0.2	-0.7

Source: ^aIllinois State Board of Education. *eReport Card*.

*Multi-campus charter high school operators' data are aggregated. Only charter operators included in the first section of this report are included in this second section.

**Ns below 11 reflect missing/non-reported data on eReport Card).

Another way to view school environment is the number of pupils in relation to the number of teachers at CPS and charter schools. Three years ago, charter teachers

enjoyed a smaller pupil-to-teacher ratio (17.6); however, by 2007-2008 it appears that charters have lost that advantage (see Table 6).

Table 6.	Average High School Pupil to Teacher Ratio^a		
H.S. Type	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
CPS district-wide	19.3	19.6	16.3
Charter (n)	17.6 (8)*	19.7 (8)*	18.3 (11)
The Charter Difference	-1.7	+0.1	+2.0

Source: ^aIllinois State Board of Education. *eReport Card*.

*Ns below 11 reflect missing/non-reported data on eReport Card.

Data in Tables 5 and 6 (average class sizes and pupil-to-teacher ratios) are problematic. Charters and CPS schools may use different data collection methodologies. For instance, are class sizes calculated on core subjects only, or do they include physical education, music and art classes that typically are larger and may not be offered as widely at charter schools? Are pupil-to-teacher ratios affected by CPS's higher special-needs and LEP student enrollments? From the available data, we cannot answer these questions. Nonetheless, based on these data, the difference between these two systems' school environments on both points is not significant.

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Teacher Characteristics

The definition of teacher quality is widely debated and is not within the scope of our study. Based on available data, we attempt to examine some differences that may exist between CPS and charter teachers.

CPS teachers are more highly educated, on average, than charter teachers (see Table 7). In 2007-2008, 55% of CPS teachers hold Master's degrees while only 43% of charter teachers hold the same degree. In 2007-2008, individual charter operators' teaching staffs vary widely on this factor – from a low of 12% to a high of 74%.

Table 7.	Average Percent of Teachers with Master's Degrees ^a		
	School Type	2005-2006	2006-2007
CPS district-wide	51.4%	54.8%	55.2%
Charter (n)	40.8% (11)	47.3% (8)*	43.4% (11)
The Charter Difference	-10.6%	-7.5%	-11.8%

Source: ^aIllinois State Board of Education. *eReport Card*.

*Ns below 11 reflect missing/non-reported data on eReport Card.

Turning to teacher certification, the Illinois School Code as amended by Illinois Public Act 93-0003, effective April 16, 2003, defines the required minimum percentages of certified instructional employees of charter schools. Known as the “Chicago Education Reform Act of 2003,” it states:

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Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, *at least 50%* of the individuals employed in instructional positions by a charter school that is operating in a city having a population exceeding 500,000 and that is *established on or after the effective date* of this amendatory Act of the 93rd General Assembly shall hold teaching certificates issued under Article 21 of this Code.

Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, *at least 75%* of the individuals employed in instructional positions by a charter school that is operating in a city having a population exceeding 500,000 and that is *established before the effective date* of this amendatory Act of the 93rd General Assembly shall hold teaching certificates issued under Article 21 of this Code. (emphasis added) (IL Public Act 93-0003 (2003), Sec. 27A-10(c))

Unlike charters, all traditional public school teachers require certification; however supporting CPS district-wide data is not available. According to ISBE's charter school report (ISBE, 2009), on average, 76% of the instructional staff employed by this study's charter operators were certified in 2007-2008 (see Table 8). It appears that four charter school operators may be out of compliance on this matter.

Table 8.	Average Percent of Certified Teachers Employed	
	2006-2007 ^a	2007-2008 ^b
School Type		
Charter (n)	78% (11)	76% (11)

Source: ^aISBE (2008). *Illinois Charter School Annual Report*.

^bISBE (2009). *Illinois Charter School Annual Report*.

CPS employs far more experienced teachers than charter schools (see Table 9). In 2007-2008, this "experience gap" stood at 7.2 fewer years experience for charter

teachers. Both CPS and charter schools employed less-experienced teachers in 2007-2008 than they did in 2005-2006. Charter operators are similar here, ranging from a low of four to a high of eight years experience. For both school systems, the data suggest a trend of employing fewer experienced teachers.

Table 9.	Average Years of Teaching Experience^a		
School Type	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
CPS district-wide	13.0	13.2	12.3
Charter (n)	5.7 (11)	5.6 (8)*	5.1 (11)
The Charter Difference	-7.3	-7.6	-7.2

Source: ^aIllinois State Board of Education. *eReport Card*.

*Ns below 11 reflect missing/non-reported data on eReport Card.

To summarize, in comparison to CPS schools, charter operators have:

- comparable class sizes and pupil-to-teacher ratios;
- fewer certified teachers; and
- less-educated and less-experienced faculties.

In light of the above, a comparison of teachers' salaries is warranted, however, teachers' years of experience must be considered. Available ISBE charter teacher salary data is not broken down by education level, but CPS data is. Moreover, 2007-08 charter teachers, on average, have only 5.1 years' experience in comparison to 12.3 years for CPS teachers. To control for these differences, we used a weighted average of CPS teacher salaries. According to the 2007-08 full-time CPS teacher salary schedule, 38.6 week positions, 6.25 hour day, the annual total compensation for CPS teachers with a Bachelor's degree/five years experience was \$54,499 and for those with "The Charter Difference: A Comparison of Chicago Charter and Neighborhood High Schools" is available at <http://www.uic.edu/educ/ceje>, Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education, University of Illinois-Chicago, College of Education.

Master's degrees/five years experience, \$57,614 (CPS Human Resources, n.d.).

Recalling that 55% of 2007-08 CPS teachers held Master's degrees and 45% held Bachelor's degrees, the weighted 2007-08 CPS average salary for CPS teachers with five years experience is \$56,213. This formula is applied across the three years shown in Table 10. Charter school teachers earn, on average, 15% less than CPS teachers. In 2007-2008, individual charter operators' average teacher salaries range from a low of \$40,945 to a high of \$58,069.

Table 10.	Annual Average Teacher Salary (Total Compensation) with 5 Years Experience*		
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
CPS district-wide ^a	\$51,856	\$54,050	\$56,213
Charter ^b (n)	\$55,623 (11)	\$47,690 (8)**	\$48,860 (11)
The Charter Difference	-\$7,233	-\$6,360	-\$7,353

Source: ^aChicago Public Schools. *Full-time Teacher Salary Schedule -38.6 Week Positions - 6.25 Hour Day (weighted average)*.

^bIllinois State Board of Education, *Report Card*.

*Total compensation, including pension pick-up ("creditable earnings")

**Ns below 11 reflect missing/non-reported data on eReport Card.

Not only do charter teachers receive substantially lower pay than CPS teachers, they work longer years and days as well. According to ISBE's 2009 Charter Report, in 2007-2008 the average charter teacher worked nine more instructional days and had a 40-

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minute longer work day (see Table 11). In 2007-2008, one charter operator reduced its teachers' daily minutes to 465, down from 515 minutes in 2006-2007, putting it more on par with other charter operators.

Table 11. School Type	Average Annual Number of Instructional Days		Average Length of Teacher Workday (in minutes)	
	2006-2007	2007-2008	2006-2007	2007-2008
CPS district-wide	NA	170 ^a	421 ^b	421 ^b
Charter (n)	180 ^c (11)	179 ^d (11)	444 ^{c*} (11)	461 ^{d*} (11)
The Charter Difference	--	+9	+23	+40

Source: ^aChicago Public Schools (2007), *CEO Action 07-0523-ED19*.

^bChicago Teachers Union Contract (2007), *Chicago/CTU Contract*.

^cISBE (2008). *Illinois Charter School Annual Report*.

^dISBE (2009). *Illinois Charter School Annual Report*.

*Based on school hours.

CONCLUSIONS

The speed at which CPS schools are closed, phased-out, “turned around,” and consolidated, combined with charter proliferation, does not allow for reasonable reflection upon, and evaluation of, the effectiveness of these actions. Based on our preliminary analysis of available data, charter schools have not improved the overall quality of, or equal access to, education for *all* Chicago high school students.

By under-enrolling low-income, limited-English-proficient, and special-needs students, Chicago charter high schools are not providing equal access to education for all students. Charter high schools’ significant under-enrollment of special needs students may be discriminatory and warrants further investigation. Lack of access to publicly funded schools threatens further segregation of our schools. If this continues unabated, neighborhood schools may become the primary provider of education to our students who are in greatest need, and the most costly to educate.

For the past three years, Chicago charter high schools have not significantly improved student achievement as narrowly defined by ACT results. Neighborhood high schools realized slight, yet greater, three-year ACT gains than did charter high schools.

Charter operators’ employment practices do not appear to be building a solid foundation upon which schools can become durable institutions with deep roots in the local community. National traditional public teacher attrition rates range from 11-14% (Ingersoll, as cited in Miron & Applegate, 2007). In contrast, charter teacher attrition rates stand at 31%, and those most likely to leave their charter schools include less-experienced teachers (5.7 average years), those holding only Bachelor’s degrees, and non-certified teachers (Miron & Applegate, 2007). This nation-wide study’s findings, which included Illinois in its study, mirror the profile of charter teachers in our Chicago-specific study. Couple that with Chicago charter teachers’ lower salaries, and longer workdays and years, charters have the markings of an unstable system.

For all of the above reasons, the study authors conclude that the present Chicago charter high school system may not be sustainable.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Charter schools often take the place of once-existing CPS neighborhood schools. Therefore, we strongly recommend an immediate moratorium on all new charter campus openings and school closings, phase-outs, turnarounds, and consolidations until an independent commission conducts a thorough evaluation of Chicago charter school performance and management practices and makes its findings public. Specifically, an investigation of charter operators' adherence to Illinois School Code 105 ILCS 5, Section 27A-4(a) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability or need for special education services, and Section 27A-4(d) which specifies charters' open enrollment requirements is strongly recommended (Illinois General Assembly, n.d.). This audit should include all Chicago schools currently under experimental forms of governance.
- An independent commission should assess the advisability of past and planned CPS actions, such as school closings and consolidations, that risk increasing student mobility in light of current research which details "...the long-term effects of student mobility [which] include lower achievement levels, a slower academic pace, and ultimately, the reduced likelihood of high school completion" (Lipman, 2007).
- At minimum, we recommend replication of this study by an independent commission in future years that includes Chicago elementary schools.
- An independent agency should conduct and prepare future charter school reports. That agency should discontinue the use of the comparison schools measure, and use only high school attendance records to calculate high school attendance rates. REA's five-year cohort dropout and graduation data appear more precise; however only disaggregated data for individual charter campuses should be used. In addition, we recommend the publication of more timely charter school reports. As of February 2009, ONS has not published a report for the 2007-2008 academic year which ended over seven months ago. ONS

published its 2006-2007 charter report in January 2009, 18 months after the end of that academic year.

- Charter school records should, at minimum, replicate and easily interface with CPS data.
- We recommend that CPS develop more commonsense and sensitive school quality criteria, including qualitative assessments that use school site visits by independent evaluators and multiple and authentic assessments of student work such as portfolios, open-ended writing samples, and non-routine mathematics problems (Newmann, Secada, & Wehlage, 1995). CPS' current over-reliance on standardized test scores to label schools as "low performing," and thereby justify changing the existence or governance of schools, should be curtailed. Standardized tests are designed so that half of the test takers score below the mean. They have also been shown repeatedly to disfavor students of color, low-income students, and females (Fair Test, 2007). CPS' current practice of comparing neighborhood schools to inflated district-wide averages that include the scores of selective-enrollment schools only compounds the problem and should cease immediately.
- Each Chicago school should strive for balanced staffing -- a mix of experienced and more novice teachers. Finally, we strongly recommend that CPS and the Chicago Teachers Union collaborate to ensure that all Chicago teachers are protected by fair wage and labor practices, as well as evaluate and, if necessary, upgrade workplace conditions, to ensure that all students receive a stable and high-quality education.

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