

Progressive framework for strong public charter schools

Trump and DeVos' plan for private school vouchers

Bottom line: Looking out for kids

Excellent public school options for students

- Students enroll in their local public school, a magnet school, a public charter school, or another high-quality public school in their district or a nearby community.¹

High bar for opening a charter school

- Approval from a district or independent authorizer that engages in responsible oversight by maintaining high standards for schools, upholding school autonomy, and protecting student and public interests.³
- Experienced leadership with a strong educational plan.⁴
- Fully developed facilities and finance plan.⁵

Open and nondiscriminatory student enrollment

- Districts serve all students regardless of socioeconomic status, race, native language, religion, or ability.⁸
- Charters open to all students and use a lottery to select students if oversubscribed.⁹
- Public schools are free for all families.¹⁰
- Ideally, districts have a unified information and enrollment system so that all families can easily access comparable school information and have a fair shot at their preferred public schools.¹¹

Transparency

- All public school students take the same statewide tests to measure their performance and progress against state standards. These standards are aligned with readiness for college and careers.¹⁶
- Reporting of student performance by schools that is disaggregated to understand potential gaps among race, socioeconomic status, disability status, and English language proficiency.¹⁷
- All public schools are part of the state's accountability system.¹⁸
- All students with disabilities, except the most severely disabled, are held to the same academic standards.¹⁹
- Charter schools are accountable to their authorizers for student learning in exchange for freedom from many policies and regulations.²⁰

Strong oversight for charters

- Limited number of charter authorizing entities in each community.
- High bar for charter renewal, dependent on comprehensive reviews of academic, financial, and other evidence, as well as of compliance with applicable laws.²⁴
- Strong accountability for charter authorizers, including annual reporting on performance and regular state review and evaluation.²⁵
- Uniform standards for sanctioning or shutting down underperforming authorizers.²⁶

Looking out for the bottom line

Funding for students to attend private schools

- Students receive funding in the form of vouchers, tax credit scholarships, education savings accounts, or individual tax credits to attend private, often religious schools.²

Low bar for private schools to receive voucher funds

- Agreement to undergo a financial audit.⁶
- Compliance with health and safety laws and a valid occupancy permit, if required by the city.⁷

Potentially discriminatory student enrollment

- Private schools may have selective admissions requirements, allowing schools to push out low-income students; students of color; English language learners; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBT, students; students who practice faiths other than that of the school; and students with disabilities.¹²
- May not be affordable if tuition for school exceeds funding amount.¹³
- Many voucher programs require students with disabilities to sign away rights to protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.¹⁴
- State provides no central information and enrollment resource for parents, making it more difficult for those without time, connections, or know-how to make informed choices between public and private schools.¹⁵

Less transparency

- Students attending private schools with vouchers are not required to take the same statewide tests to measure their performance and progress against state standards.²¹
- Public reporting of student information by the state, or an organization chosen by the state, that is not disaggregated.²²
- Schools are not held accountable based on state standards that are aligned with readiness for college and careers.²³
- Expectations may be lowered for subgroups of students based on English language needs, race, or disability, with no academic standards required in private schools.

Weak oversight for charters and private schools

- Large number of charter authorizing entities and potential for "authorizer shopping."²⁷
- No meaningful accountability for private schools that receive public funds.
- Low bar for charter approval and authorization renewal.²⁸
- Little to no accountability for charter authorizers, including minimal reporting on performance of authorized schools and weak mechanisms to terminate underperforming authorizers.²⁹
- Inadequate prohibitions around board independence, nepotism, and conflicts of interest for charter schools.³⁰

Endnotes

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- 19 Ibid.
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