Charter Schools in Paterson

Christine Rampolla, MLER
What are charter schools?

• All charter schools are
  – Publicly funded and regulated
  – Privately managed
What are charter schools?

• All other aspects of charter schools are different in each state
  – How new charter schools are approved
  – How charter schools are governed
  – How charter schools are funded
  – Whether charter schools may be run for profit
  – Whether charter school teachers may be unionized
All Publicly-Funded Schools in New Jersey

• Must give standardized tests mandated by the State

• May not teach religion

• May not discriminate based on a child’s special needs status, income, race or ethnicity, religion
How do charter schools differ from most New Jersey public schools?
Who Governs

**Most Public Schools**
- Governed by local Board of Education (BOE) whose members are elected by local residents or appointed by local elected officials
- Board members must live in the community
- BOE hires a Superintendent, who runs the school district

**Charter Schools**
- Governed by private Board of Trustees, initially chosen by the founders of the charter school, then elected by charter parents or appointed by charter management
- Board members do not have to live in the community the charter school serves or to have children at the charter school
- Board hires a Head of School, who runs the school
Opening and Closing Schools

Most Public Schools
• New schools are opened or closed by the locally elected or appointed Board of Education

Charter Schools
• New schools are opened or closed by the State Commissioner of Education
• Local community has no ability to decide if a new charter school opens or closes in the community
Teachers

Most Public Schools
• Teachers are unionized
• Teachers’ pay, benefits and all other conditions are determined by a contract negotiated between the local Board of Education and the local teachers union
• Tenure is governed by state laws

Charter Schools
• Teachers may be unionized
  – About 15% of New Jersey charter schools are unionized
• Non-unionized teachers must negotiate their job conditions individually with charter school management
• Tenure is governed by different state laws than for traditional public schools
What is Taught

Most Public Schools
• Must meet State and Federal standards
• Specific methods of teaching and text books are determined by Superintendent and local Board of Education

Charter Schools
• Must meet State and Federal standards
• Specific methods of teaching and text books are determined by Head of School and Board of Trustees
  – Must meet the intent of the school’s charter
Who Pays for Education

Most Public Schools

• Funding is provided by local taxpayers and State and Federal Governments

• Additional local funding must be approved by the Board of Education
  – If exceeds +2% a year, must be approved by local taxpayers

Charter Schools

• Receives funding from each child’s sending school district, based on a formula of 90% of average per pupil spending
Who Pays for Transportation

Most Public Schools
• Provided by local school district

Charter Schools
• Charter school does not pay
• Provided by each child’s sending school district
Who Attends

Most Public Schools
• Children who live in the surrounding community
• If not enough space for all children, community must approve additional tax funding to build new schools or expand existing schools

Charter Schools
• Children who live in the “district or region of residence”, and students from non-resident districts
• If more children want to attend than spots available, the charter school selects children through a lottery run by the charter school
• Siblings of existing students may be given preference
How Children Leave the School

Traditional Public Schools
• May suspend or expel children based on State criteria

Charter Schools
• May suspend or expel children based on State criteria
• May ask child to leave school based on criteria outlined in the school’s charter
What Needs to be Reformed?

• Communities have no control as to whether a charter school opens or closes in their midst
  – State control
    • Is Undemocratic
    • Corrupts
      – Encourages patronage & rewards “connections”
    • Divides communities
    • Has a disparate Impact on children of color
      – Charter schools being approved primarily in black and brown communities.
      – Majority white communities able to block new charter schools that residents do not support
Policy Recommendations

• Allow district voters to decide if a new charter school may open in the district or an existing charter school in the district must close
  – NJ DOE screens applications and makes recommendations
  – Local communities make final decision
What Needs to be Reformed?

• Charter schools educate different population of students than most public schools
  – Fewer low-income
  – Fewer special needs
    • Very few or none with severe needs
  – Fewer with limited knowledge of English
Poverty

• Free and Reduced Lunch
  – Paterson District Average 89%
  – Charter School for Science & Technology 77%
  – Community Charter School of Paterson 68%

Source: NJ Department of Education 2010-11
Special Needs

• Paterson District Average  14%
• Charter School for Science & Technology  7%
• Community Charter School of Paterson  9%

Source: NJ Department of Education 2010-11
Limited English Proficiency

- Paterson District Average 18%
- Charter School for Science & Technology 3%
- Community Charter School of Paterson 0%

Source: NJ Department of Education 2010-11
Two Separate & Unequal School Systems

– More challenging students concentrated in traditional public schools
– Traditional public schools left with fewer resources to provide for their education
Policy Recommendations

• Weighted lottery system
  – If district 20% special needs and charter applicant pool only 10% special needs, those children’s names are entered into the lottery twice

• Lottery conducted by host districts
  – Eliminate potential for charters “screening” candidates

• Charter schools compensated for percentage of overall demographic that reflects the district
  – If charter is 10% free lunch and district is 20% free lunch, charter is only compensated for 10%.
Standardized Test Results
2010-11 Academic Year*

Data from New Jersey Department of Education
Source: http://www.edlawcenter.org/research/charter-school-data.html
4th Grade NJ ASK Math

State Average

District Average

General Education

Special Education

Limited English Pr.
4th Grade NJ ASK Science

General Education

State Average

District Average

Special E.

Limited English
Save Our Schools NJ

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