

## **Enroll Boston: a Dangerous Plan for Boston's Students and Schools**

**By QUEST (Quality Education for Every Student), 9/18/17**

In this paper, the grassroots Boston parent group QUEST looks at the new enrollment plan recommended by the Boston Compact and the Mayor's office and asks if this proposal, known as "unified enrollment," "common enrollment," or "Enroll Boston," is the best way forward for our students, our families and our schools. We offer background on the national and local push to include charter schools in district assignment systems as part of market-based education reform, share what we know about how the plan would operate, and explain our major concerns. Appendices and Additional Resources provide further information and evidence. In the end, QUEST shares its conclusions that adding charter schools to the Boston Public Schools assignment system would not improve equitable access to quality schools. Our research leads us to believe Enroll Boston would harm BPS schools and the vast majority of students in the city. The plan, QUEST believes, would contribute to greater segregation, be less transparent, and provide fewer, less equitable options for Boston's most vulnerable children and families.

### **Background on Enroll Boston**

In September 2015, Mayor Martin J. Walsh announced a proposal to include Commonwealth charter schools in the Boston Public School assignment system. This proposal, called Enroll Boston, was developed by the thirteen member Boston Compact Steering Committee (a group of charter, parochial and BPS administrators plus one representative from City Hall). Enroll Boston is not a homegrown plan: similar enrollment systems have been pursued nationally as part of "portfolio strategies" to incorporate privately controlled charter schools into public district assignment systems. It fits with an emphasis on charters, private and religious schools, and "school choice," as promoted by Donald Trump and his Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Developed and championed by the Seattle-based and Gates-funded Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), such plans have been approved in urban districts such as Denver, New Orleans, Camden and Newark. Other cities, including Indianapolis and Oakland, California are in the early stages, or are considering it.

In contrast to efforts for community engagement made during the 2012-13 review of Boston's assignment system, the push for Enroll Boston has lacked transparency, genuine community engagement or data review. In fact, the process has followed the path recommended by CRPE and its suggestions regarding avoiding public and governmental interference in the process, and controversy along the way (see Appendix [A](#) and [B](#)). Little data on the effects of common/unified enrollment systems has been presented, and studies cited are neither peer-reviewed nor unbiased. Rather they have been conducted by groups with a demonstrable investment in corporate, free-market approaches to public education, such as the Manhattan Institute or A+ Denver. Enroll Boston has largely been developed and led by the Boston Compact, and supported by Gates Foundation grants in 2012, totaling \$3.5 million.

The Boston Compact did hold a short series of public meetings in the fall and winter of 2015 to introduce the Enroll Boston proposal. These meetings brought out scores of parents who sought information and expressed concerns about the proposal and the agenda behind it. Details of the proposal's implementation were minimal however; what information was provided changed from meeting to meeting, and it seemed to many parents that the goal was to promote the plan rather than to elicit genuine feedback. Even now, two years after the launch of the plan, details of how it would work, who would sign on, or what the potential benefits and costs would be, remain vague.

QUEST and others asked the Compact to make their efforts more public, but the organization asserted its private status in order to avoid public meeting laws and records requests, and has claimed that it did not take minutes (see [Appendix C](#)). Since then, the Compact has released a limited selection of Steering Committee meeting minutes, but even those are incomplete, such as a July, 2016 set referencing an "ad hoc Unified Enrollment Subcommittee" without identifying members or providing minutes for this committee's work.

In the rollout of the proposal, the Boston Compact and the Mayor's office suggested Enroll Boston would lead to greater equity, and more accountability for charter schools. There is little evidence that this is the case, however, particularly regarding questions about discipline and enrollment of higher need student populations. Commonwealth charters are their own districts, and can set their own rules, putting them outside the purview of public districts and subject only to the oversight of a distant and already overburdened K-12 State Board of Education.

### **How would Enroll Boston work?**

Boston's current Home-Based Assignment Plan, adopted in 2013, has as its stated goal to provide families "quality schools, closer to home." Elementary school families are given a list of all schools in a one-mile radius of their home, with other schools possibly added in to provide "quality" or "capacity" options. Students entering middle school have feeder school choices, while students with special needs or English language learners have separate assignment options, and all high schools are citywide.

Many details remain unclear about how the Boston Compact's enrollment system would work. For example, it's unclear how many and which Commonwealth charter schools would elect to be part of the plan. Also unclear is whether charters would continue being citywide, or be limited to students within a certain geographic area. (Not incidentally, setting geographic limits to charter enrollment would require a change in current state law that requires charter schools to be citywide.) We also don't know how Enroll Boston would affect the Home-Based Plan's promise of a certain number of level 1 and 2 "quality" schools on a family's choice list. Would families be guaranteed options for both high-performing district and charter schools? Plans presented by the Compact at public meetings suggest that some district schools would be eliminated from a family's

home-based list and replaced by charters (see [Appendix D](#)). Finally, how would English language learners and students with disabilities be assigned to schools?

Regardless of how these uncertainties are resolved, inequity would be reinforced by a two-tiered charter and district enrollment system. For example, Boston Compact leaders have suggested that district schools would continue to serve the highest need ELLs and SWDs, as has been true in other unified enrollment cities. This would put district schools at a disadvantage in current metrics used to evaluate schools. In addition, charters do not follow the same discipline code as BPS schools. Will discipline policies be aligned and will parents have access to suspension and attrition rates? Another enrollment difference between these two systems is that charters neither take students throughout the year nor at any grade, while almost all district schools do. That also has serious implications for measuring school quality and equitable access for families who enroll after deadlines have passed, and for students seeking transfers or seats mid-year.

In addition to these unresolved issues impacting families, what are the larger consequences of common enrollment on the district? Who would oversee the new combined lottery and who would pay for operating the new system? Charters don't report to the school committee, so decision making is outside the public realm and the control of the city. What potential problems would result from a district system endorsing, via a common lottery, a set of schools that do not fall under its purview either in policy or practice? How will Boston avoid the inequities that have dogged common enrollment systems elsewhere, such as access and treatment of students with disabilities that led to a lawsuit in New Orleans initiated by the Southern Poverty Law Center? What safeguards will be in place to prevent further segregation of students based on race and socioeconomic status, as has been documented in Newark? (See [Appendix E](#).) How will it impact decisions regarding school facilities and BuildBPS planning? These and many other questions remain unanswered two

years after the concept of Enroll Boston was first unveiled. Along with these many unanswered questions are more specific concerns, outlined below.

### **Eight Major Concerns**

**1) Enroll Boston would change BPS student assignment without an analysis of how the current plan is operating, particularly regarding equity.** When it approved the current Home-Based Assignment Plan in March 2013, the Boston School Committee asked for a yearly racial and socio-economic impact analysis, but this has not yet been done.

**2) There is little evidence to show that Enroll Boston will ensure equity or have positive impact for families.** Mayor Ras Baraka has called One Newark, that city's version of Enroll Boston, part of "experimental rather than proven, common-sense improvement strategies."<sup>[1]</sup> One analysis found One Newark had "segregative effects," and warned that it "would be irresponsible to continue the program, or implement it in other cities, without further study."<sup>[2]</sup> Newark parent and community groups have called the unified enrollment plan "disastrous," and last year Newark's elected school board voted 7-2 to dismantle it. Even the Gates-funded Center on Reinventing Public Education, the biggest backer of common enrollment systems, finds "little consistent evidence" to link unified enrollment to "positive outcomes."<sup>[3]</sup>

**3) A common enrollment system won't solve issues that make enrollment most challenging for families.** The plan takes no measures to make it any easier for families to apply to a district school, or to guarantee that families get their preferred school. Nor does it help improve the quality of district schools, or address inequities in the number of seats available in a family's home-based schools. Instead, Enroll Boston would only make it easier to apply to a Commonwealth charter school, an effect diminished since the Boston Charter Alliance recently launched a single online application system for most Boston charter schools.

**4) Enroll Boston would make it harder for families to meaningfully compare and select schools.** Adopting one enrollment system for both district and charter schools masks the very real differences between these two systems. These differences include approaches to discipline, teacher certification, and budget transparency. Denver's unified enrollment plan no longer clearly identifies whether schools are district or charter. A negative consequence of such a system is that families must investigate and rank all their district and charter schools on one list--a bigger list, with less accessible information.

**5) The proposal limits the schools families can access.** Families can currently apply to as many charter schools as they like via one application, and can be accepted to both one district school and multiple charters. Under the Enroll Boston proposal, however, most charters will lose citywide status, becoming neighborhood schools. For neighborhoods with few charters,

this will mean a dramatic reduction in charter options. Neighborhoods with a high number of charters but a shrinking number of district schools, like Hyde Park, may end up with choice lists that have very few district schools. This problem will likely disproportionately impact communities of color.

**6) Enroll Boston would likely result in the expansion of charter seats, and the closure of district schools.** Evidence from other cities with similar enrollment systems shows that charters tend to expand and district schools tend to be closed. In Denver, for example, the number of charter schools has doubled (33 new charters) since the adoption of a common enrollment plan ([Appendix F](#)). Under One Newark, 13 district schools closed, prompting a civil rights suit alleging the plan harmed minority students ([Appendix G](#)). Already in Boston, a public records request has shown that the Boston Compact intends to lease BPS buildings to charters and co-locate charters in district schools.

**7) Enroll Boston would advantage charter schools when it comes to measuring school quality and assigning students.** A positive feature of Boston's Home-Based Assignment Plan is that it mandates a new quality metric that incorporates non-test-based measures. Until this is put in place, however, the metric remains based on standardized test scores, which determine the school quality "tiers." If charter schools were similarly tiered based on test scores, they would be advantaged by their relatively low numbers of students with high needs and the fact that they do not have to accept students mid year, nor fill slots that have been vacated at the end of certain grades. The Compact has also indicated that students with special needs would be steered to appropriate district schools, further impacting test score disparities between charters and district schools.

**(8) Enroll Boston is part of a national push for school choice and market oriented school reforms, not a way to "make things easier for parents."** Inserting charter schools, and potentially parochial and private schools, into district enrollment systems would not simply affect where children attend school. It would endorse a system of schools over which the district has no jurisdiction, either in policy or practice, and would cement a system of schools that are not accountable to the local community. Enroll Boston must be seen in the context of this national movement that favors choice over equity and charter expansion over improvements to schools that serve the vast majority of students.

<sup>[1]</sup> <http://patch.com/new-jersey/newarknj/opinion-one-newark-plan-bad-for-city-schools>

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://njedpolicy.wordpress.com/2015/04/24/one-newark-choosing-great-schools-or-merely-segregated-ones>

<sup>[3]</sup> <http://www.crpe.org/publications/how-parents-experience-public-school-choice>

## Conclusion

Student assignment is a complicated issue with many challenges for families and for a city trying to provide equitable access to quality education for all students. Enroll Boston would do little to address the most difficult aspects of the enrollment process and in fact may intensify these complex issues. It could have a negative impact on district school budgets, result in school closures, heighten problems with discipline and ELL/Special Education practices, and increase inequity and segregation due to a two-tiered education system.

QUEST calls on the Mayor, Boston School Committee, and other government officials to reject Enroll Boston and focus instead on strengthening BPS schools. Parents want an assignment system that provides equitable access to quality schools that serve their children, no matter their needs. They want high quality ELL and SPED options. They want schools that are funded adequately and have nurses, librarians, guidance counselors, art, and physical education. They want their children to be in safe, clean school buildings staffed by qualified and culturally competent teachers. They want their voices to be heard, and policies and decisions to be made in transparent ways. Enroll Boston does not further these goals; it makes them harder to achieve.

*Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST) is a volunteer grassroots organization of parents with children in Boston Public Schools. Founded in 2012, the group initially came together over concerns about the inequities of proposed changes to the BPS assignment system. We continue to ask how education policies and practices can help to dismantle past oppression, increase opportunity, and provide greater access to quality education for all. Contact QUEST at [qualityforeverystudent@gmail.com](mailto:qualityforeverystudent@gmail.com) or follow us on facebook at [questbps](https://www.facebook.com/questbps) or twitter [@Quality1st4BPS](https://twitter.com/Quality1st4BPS).*

## Appendices Table of Contents (see below for documents)

### Appendix A

[“Stakeholder Engagement for Common Enrollment Systems,”](#) Center on Reinventing Public Education, March 2014, p.2.

### Appendix B

[“18 month Portfolio Implementation Plan,”](#) Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2015.

### Appendix C

[“Attorney General Rules That Charter-District Group is Not Subject to State Open Meeting Laws,”](#) QUEST, July 12, 2016.

### Appendix D

[“Sample List of Schools for K2 Student,”](#) from Boston Compact community meeting at the Kroc Center, Dorchester MA, October 8, 2015. Note that Haynes EEC and King School have been removed from choice list.

### Appendix E

[“One Newark: ‘Choosing’ Segregated Schools,”](#) by Jerzy Jazzman, National Education Policy Center, May 4, 2015.

### Appendix F

[“Mixed Academic Performance in Denver’s Charters Schools: Flawed DPS Authorization Process Leaves Many Underperforming Charters in Need of Support,”](#) The Center for Popular Democracy.

### Appendix G

[“Newark Schools, Feds Strike Deal to Halt Probe Into Civil Rights Complaints,”](#) by Dan Ivers, NJ.com, December 16, 2015.

## Additional Resources

### General:

[“Common Enrollment, Common Core, Charters, Privatization and Racism,”](#) video of a panel with Oakland School Board member and three professors of education, *You Tube*, May 31, 2016. Panelists discuss the connection between common enrollment, school choice, and racism. They ask who controls and benefits from common enrollment systems. “School choice, on average, does not produce the equity and social justice that proponents spin,” says Professor Julian Vasquez Heilig.

[“What I Learned from Questioning Common Enrollment in Oakland Schools,”](#) by Shanthi Gonzales, Oakland School Board member, June 1, 2016.

In a summary of the the May 2016 event above, Oakland School Board member Shanthi Gonzales says, “Equity is not only about the rights of individual parents to have more choices in a 'market' of schools; it is about what our community demands for all Oakland students, not just some students.”

[“Common Enrollment”-- the Newest Page in School Privatizers’ Playbook.](#) *NEA Today*,

October 31, 2016.

Focuses on parent and community resistance to school privatization and common enrollment in Oakland. Describes the “cycle of school closures and disruptions” that have occurred in cities such as Camden, New Jersey.

## **Boston**

[“Unified School Lottery Raises Fear Among Students.”](#) by Jeremy C. Fox, *Boston Globe*, October 8, 2015.

Parents and community members cite fears about Enroll Boston regarding access to schools; discipline strategies and suspension rates at charter schools; and charters poor performance serving English Language Learners and Students with Special Needs.

[“What Could Be Wrong With Unified School Enrollment.”](#) by the Parent Imperfect, October 26, 2015.

The author, a Boston Public School parent, raises red flags about Enroll Boston including the ability of charter schools to opt out of the plan; lack of good information for parents regarding school choices; and the role of the private Boston Compact.

## **Oakland**

[“Community Objects to Privately Funded OUSD Enrollment Reform.”](#) *Oakland Post*, Dec. 2015.

This article in the *Oakland Post* (the largest African-American community newspaper in northern California) analyzes pro-charter funding for Oakland’s common enrollment proposal and its implications. The former Oakland schools general counsel says, “It’s one thing for the school district not to interfere with the development of charter schools. It’s another thing altogether when you have the administrators of the public school system supporting the destruction of that very system.”

[“Equity and Common Enrollment.”](#) Shanthi Gonzales, May 4, 2016.

Oakland’s Superintendent cites equity as a driver of common enrollment, but the author point out the ways that equity is not served. Special attention is paid to metrics for measuring school quality, school closures as a result of unified enrollment, and the exclusion of parents and educators from the planning process. “We should make improvements to our enrollment system; I am in favor of that, but if we care about the health of the system that serves all students, then I believe common enrollment is too risky an idea.”

## **Denver**

**[“The New Education Reform Lie: Why Denver is a Warning Sign, not a Model, for Urban School Districts.”](#)** by Jeff Bryant, *Alternet*, June 15, 2016.

Looks at Denver as a “warning sign” for problems with education reform and common enrollment. Documents closure of district schools and replacement with charters “well known for enforcing the harshest forms of school discipline disproportionately on students of color. “ Interviews parents, whose “stories reveal disturbing truths about Denver’s version of modern urban school reform – how policy direction is often controlled by big money and insiders, why glowing promises of “improvement” should be regarded with skepticism, and what the movement’s real impacts are, especially in communities dominated by poor families of color.”

**[“Denver Public Schools again fails to comply with federal mandate for English language learners.”](#)** by Chris Halsne and Chris Koeberi, *KDVR.com*, Oct. 5, 2016.

Points to major problems regarding ELL students with Denver’s equivalent of Enroll Boston. Most significantly, April 2016 reports “show dozens of charter schools failing miserably. The tracking system shows only five of the 110 KIPP Montbello Middle School students who needed English Language Development classes were enrolled last year. Traditional DPS struggle too, but educate far higher numbers of ELLS (nearly 37%).” In addition, even though all Denver charters are in-district, the charters don’t have to track ELL data in the same way as DPS does, so “we can’t report their scheduling data accurately or comprehensively.”

**New Orleans**

**[“Southern Poverty Law Center Fact Sheet: Educational Access for New Orleans Public School Students with Disabilities.”](#)** *Southern Law Poverty Center*.

Provides facts related to the treatment and educational access for students with disabilities that prompted the SPLC’s lawsuit. This includes that “Children with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in many New Orleans charter schools - averaging 7.8 percent of total enrollment,” and that “Some charter school suspended children with disabilities at rates that are 100 percent higher than the state average.”

**Newark**

**[“One Newark: Choosing ‘Great’ Schools or Merely Segregated Ones?”](#)** by Mark Weber, New Jersey Education Policy Forum, April 2015.

Analyzes the 2014 “One Newark” common enrollment plan, and finds “segregative effects.” Also describes problems with information given to families, such as not providing student discipline data, or data about teacher certification. The report finds “notable differences between popular district and popular charter schools: the popular charters have higher suspension rates and more inexperienced teachers than the popular district schools. Whether families are aware of these discrepancies is unknown.”

# Appendix A

- From the very beginning, leaders used formal and informal means to strategically and continually engage a wide range of stakeholders to build inter-organizational trust and mollify resistance to the reform.

Of course, leaders elsewhere who are interested in moving toward a common enrollment system need to consider the stakeholders and unique political dynamics in their own context; the particular groups, interests, and resources that will shape the prospects of common enrollment will undoubtedly vary in different cities. And yet, the experiences in Denver and New Orleans show that leaders who are serious about the politics of common enrollment cannot ignore the importance of problem framing and engagement, two tasks that are just as crucial to success as getting the technical details and mechanics of these systems to function properly.

## TASK #1: FRAMING THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

From early in their reform efforts, leaders in Denver and New Orleans addressed stakeholder concerns and the potential for conflict by intentionally defining the problems and solutions in ways that resonated with stakeholders while keeping some of the most controversial enrollment issues off the agenda during early implementation of the reform.

### Framing the Problem

Although some families and schools had advantages under the status quo enrollment systems in both cities, district and some charter school leaders in Denver and New Orleans also had abundant anecdotal evidence that it created lots of problems. Leaders in both cities understood, for example, that the status quo system was difficult for all but the most savvy families to navigate. As a district administrator in New Orleans said,

“Some parents would walk away from a lottery process with four offers, some with ten, some with zero. If you had zero... there was no one to go to, to then say, ‘Well, what do I do now?’”

School leaders also understood from their experiences that multiple school-level lotteries and waitlists created uncertainty for schools at the beginning of the school year, making it difficult to plan and budget for the coming school year. As a charter leader in Denver said, under the status quo enrollment system,

“Schools thought that they were going to open with 100 kids, and on day one, 60 would show up because 40 of those kids were enrolled in two schools, and they ended up going to a different school.

Early on, a coalition of education and community leaders in both cities took these anecdotal accounts about the dysfunctions of the status quo, bolstered them with

more systematic assessments of what was not working, and painted a compelling picture of why the system needed to change. In Denver, for example, community advocates of common enrollment commissioned a study that systematically documented the shortcomings of the status quo, especially its lack of transparency. In New Orleans, leaders within the RSD conducted a series of community meetings where parents voiced their concerns about the existing enrollment system.

In the end, these and other preliminary efforts to document and characterize the shortcomings of the status quo resulted in a clear message in both cities that the current system was needlessly complex for parents and created far too much uncertainty for schools. According to participants in both cities, framing the problem in this way resonated across stakeholder groups and was rarely disputed.

### Framing the Solution

Once leaders developed a consensus definition of the problem, they steered the framing of the solution in ways that strategically kept the most controversial enrollment issues off the agenda.

For example, leaders in Denver framed common enrollment as a change in process, not policy. Especially when explaining common enrollment to school leaders, advocates in Denver framed the reform essentially as a cleanup effort that would rationalize the hodge-podge approaches to enrollment that operated across the city.

However, these advocates also assured everyone that common enrollment would not affect school-level enrollment preferences and criteria in both the charter sector and in some special admission district schools. A school of the fine arts, for example, could still have a policy that required prospective students to audition as part of its enrollment process, even as the city moved toward common enrollment.

This process-not-policy framing was especially important for Denver because its common enrollment system was an opt-in reform. One charter leader said,

“I don’t remember there being anyone who was strongly advocating that schools be pushed to change their priorities. I don’t think anyone thought that was doable... the only reason... [common enrollment]... happens is because they took a pass on the policy questions...”

Similarly, advocates said that the common enrollment solution would not change geographic preferences that guaranteed some families (primarily in advantaged areas of the city) a spot in their neighborhood school.<sup>2</sup> As one community leader said,

“We didn’t change any preferences from what they currently were, so if you had a boundary, you kept the boundary. You didn’t want to take too many issues on to try to get the system right at the get-go.

18-MONTH PORTFOLIO IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

MONTH 1 GOALS		MONTH 2 GOALS	MONTH 3 GOALS	MONTH 4 GOALS		MONTH 5 GOALS	MONTH 6 GOALS
<div>SCHOOL AUTONOMY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Select individuals for school autonomy task force to identify additional autonomies for schools using CRPE autonomy paper as a starting point</li></ul></div> <div>PUPIL-BASED FUNDING FOR ALL SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make the current flow of funds to schools into a real dollar flow and focus on increasing portion of district funds that schools receive</li><li>Create a district-principals task force to define how schools can make purchases with the funds they control with no delays or advanced reviews by the central office</li></ul></div> <div>EXTENSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Publicly commit to the portfolio strategy, make a commitment to milestones that the district will report out on</li></ul></div>	<div>GOOD OPTIONS &amp; CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Announce that district will replace 5 district-run schools with charter schools in the Year 2 school year, with selection criteria of low student growth, low teacher attendance, loss of students during the prior year, and negative labor management relations</li></ul></div> <div>TALENT-SEEKING STRATEGY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Unveil new teacher assessment and support system that will go into effect in the fall</li><li>Work with unions to identify new career pathways for teachers</li></ul></div> <div>PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish a school rating scheme</li><li>Set up task force on creating a portfolio management office that will report out by end of this period about how to set up the office, who should head it up, and where it will fit in the CO structure</li></ul></div>	<div>PUPIL-BASED FUNDING FOR ALL SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Announce principal training on controlling your own budget</li></ul></div> <div>SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Inventory local colleges, experts, and private firms to see where support for schools may come from</li></ul></div> <div>EXTENSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Engage editorial boards and other key local media about the strategy, what key actions will occur, and how the media should evaluate progress</li></ul></div>	<div>GOOD OPTIONS AND CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Begin recruiting/ incubating charter providers</li></ul></div> <div>PUPIL-BASED FUNDING FOR ALL SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Plan to continue offering budget trainings frequently through the coming years until all schools are autonomous</li></ul></div> <div>TALENT-SEEKING STRATEGY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assign a Talent Director to assess possible sources of high-quality principals and develop a recruitment strategy</li></ul></div> <div>SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CTO and CAO begin identifying CO units that can be turned into independent nonprofits</li></ul></div> <div>PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Design a school report card that will reflect growth, climate, long-term student outcomes, etc. and be accessible to the community</li></ul></div>	<div>OVERALL STRATEGY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Formulate request for amendments to state laws and waivers/removals of state regulations</li></ul></div> <div>GOOD OPTIONS &amp; CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify district run-schools that are being considered for chartering</li></ul></div> <div>SCHOOL AUTONOMY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CEO selects which autonomy recommendations to accept</li><li>Put autonomous schools under portfolio management office</li></ul></div> <div>TALENT-SEEKING STRATEGY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Implement new teacher assessment system</li><li>First round of principal evaluations that include ability to use autonomies and unite staff around a defined improvement strategy</li></ul></div> <div>SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CTO and CAO begin working with selected units to prep them for becoming independent in a year</li></ul></div>	<div>PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Test scores released</li><li>Begin data collection that will be needed for new school report cards</li></ul></div> <div>EXTENSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Publish autonomy paper laying out the autonomies that will be given to principals</li></ul></div>	<div>GOOD OPTIONS AND CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Contract out for development of a unified enrollment system for all schools, including cooperating charters</li></ul></div> <div>SCHOOL AUTONOMY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CEO issues a white paper on school autonomy which includes a 5-year plan to move all district schools to autonomy</li></ul></div> <div>SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Announce budget autonomy that principals will have and identification of supports that external providers could provide</li></ul></div> <div>PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Publish an inventory of all schools, identifying those that will be considered for repalcement, closure, or aggressive transformation</li></ul></div>	<div>SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Create a transition plan for supporting schools that are not in the autonomy pilot as they transition to autonomy over the next 5 years</li></ul></div> <div>PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trim closure and replacement lists by identifying schools likely to benefit from assistance</li><li>Announce schools that may be closed or replaced</li></ul></div> <div>EXTENSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Schedule public hearings about closures and replacements</li></ul></div>
<div>MONTH 1-2 GOALS</div> <div>OVERALL STRATEGY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hire a Chief Transition Officer (CTO) and a General Counsel</li><li>Plan out new central office (CO) structure and find individuals to fill all needed cabinet roles</li></ul></div>		<div>MONTH 2-3 GOALS</div> <div>SCHOOL AUTONOMY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Task force meets and presents recommendations to CEO</li><li>Announce an autonomy pilot (20-30 schools) that will begin in the fall</li></ul></div>				<div>MONTH 5-6 GOALS</div> <div>TALENT-SEEKING STRATEGY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Restructure HR office to focus on intentional attraction and development of talent to the district</li></ul></div>	

MONTH 7 GOALS	MONTH 8 GOALS	MONTH 9-10 GOALS	MONTH 11 GOALS	MONTH 12 GOALS	MONTH 13-15 GOALS	MONTH 16 GOALS
<div>TALENT-SEEKING STRATEGY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Alert principals who are at risk of replacement</li></ul></div>	<div>GOOD OPTIONS AND CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Adopt and publicly describe the unified enrollment system</li></ul></div> <div>PUPIL-BASED FUNDING FOR ALL SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Inventory all district buildings to identify those that could be made available to new schools, whether or not others are closed</li></ul></div> <div>TALENT-SEEKING STRATEGY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Recruit new principal candidates for the next school year</li></ul></div> <div>SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reach out to schools in the autonomy pilot to gather feedback on supports they would like to be able to purchase</li></ul></div> <div>PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Finalize closure and replacement lists</li><li>Publish first iteration of new school report cards (not all data may be available but it is critical so that families may make informed choice decision)</li></ul></div>	<div>GOOD OPTIONS AND CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Run unified enrollment process</li><li>Announce which district-run schools are going to be chartered out</li></ul></div> <div>MONTH 9-11 GOALS</div> <div>SCHOOL AUTONOMY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prepare an assessment of the autonomy pilot</li></ul></div>	<div>GOOD OPTIONS AND CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Select new providers for buildings with schools that are being closed</li></ul></div> <div>EXTENSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Publish assessment of the autonomy pilot</li></ul></div>	<div>SCHOOL AUTONOMY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify additional schools that will become autonomous in the next school year</li></ul></div> <div>PUPIL-BASED FUNDING FOR ALL SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prepare buildings for transition to new providers</li></ul></div>	<div>GOOD OPTIONS AND CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prepare to open new schools that are replacing failing schools</li><li>Prepare to open 5 new charter schools in place of district-run schools</li></ul></div>	<div>GOOD OPTIONS &amp; CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>If there is going to be a second round of chartering for formerly district-run schools, announce which schools are being c considered</li></ul></div> <div>PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Test scores released</li></ul></div>
<div>MONTH 7-10 GOALS</div> <div>EXTENSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Engage parents around district-wide choice and the new unified enrollment system</li></ul></div>			<div>MONTH 11-12 GOALS</div> <div>TALENT-SEEKING STRATEGY<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Finalize list of principals to be replaced and identity of replacement principals</li></ul></div>			<div>MONTH 17 GOALS</div> <div>PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify schools that may be closed or replaced</li></ul></div>
			<div>MONTH 11-13 GOALS</div> <div>SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Initial group of former district organizations set up as independent nonprofits that can work directly with schools to provide</li></ul></div>			<div>MONTH 18 GOALS</div> <div>PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOLS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trim closure and replacement lists by identifying schools likely to benefit from assistance</li><li>Announce schools that may be closed or replaced</li></ul></div>

## **Attorney general rules that charter-district group is not subject to state open meeting laws**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: July 12, 2016

**Contact:**

[qualityforeverystudent@gmail.com](mailto:qualityforeverystudent@gmail.com)

The office of the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has ruled that the Boston Compact, a joint venture of the Boston Public Schools, charter and Catholic schools is not a public entity and therefore is not subject to the open meeting laws of the state. The ruling is in response to an Open Meeting Law Complaint filed by the grassroots parent organization QUEST (Quality Education for Every Student).

The complaint, filed on November 12th, 2015, was initiated in an effort to bring transparency and accountability to the Boston Compact, a group that is developing public policy for the district public schools, including a plan to drastically change the student assignment system that was developed through open community conversations in 2012/13.

“Parents and community members should be part of the process regarding the direction of our public schools. Being shut out of critical conversations about policy leaves us in the dark,” said QUEST member and parent Mary Battenfeld. “This is especially disturbing when charter industry lobbyists like the Massachusetts Charter School Association and the Boston Alliance of Charter Schools are invited into the room to take part in private discussions.”

A key argument for the defendant, the Boston Compact, is that the Massachusetts Public Charter School Association (via the Boston Alliance of Charter Schools), designates 4 members to the steering committee of the Compact and is a “private, nonprofit corporation,” so the Compact is not subject to public oversight. The ruling also hinged on the fact that funding of the Compact by such groups as the Gates, Barr and Boston Foundations and the Boston Schools Fund make it “not within government,” despite the role of the Compact in developing policy.

“We’ve heard supporters of charter schools claim over and over that they are public schools. Yet when the rubber meets the road, their supporters argue that they are not subject to public laws, just as they have contended in other states around financial transparency, first amendment rights and labor laws. You can’t

have it both ways,” said Boston Public School parent, QUEST member, and former member of the State Board of Education Harneen Chernow.

QUEST asks that the Boston School Committee reevaluate the Boston Compact on behalf of BPS students and families. Policies should not be developed behind closed doors without those with the greatest stake in the direction of our schools – students, parents and community members— having voice in the conversation. “It was bad enough that the Mayor’s office kept from the public and members of the School Committee, the McKinsey audit recommending the closure of 30 to 50 schools. But we simply can’t understand why they insist on having private conversations out of the public view that directly affect our kids,” said BPS parent and QUEST member Megan Wolf. The group noted that though the Compact promised to take and publish minutes on the Compact website, only very limited minutes have been publicly posted; none of these included minutes of the subcommittee working on the controversial new enrollment plan.

### **Links to documents:**

Decision of the Attorney General re. Open Meeting Law Complaint 2016-83:  
<https://www.scribd.com/document/318059488/AG-response-stating-that-the-Boston-Compact-is-Not-a-Public-Entity>

Response from Kevin Conroy, Esq., Foley Hoag LLP (lawyer for the Boston Compact):  
<https://www.scribd.com/document/318059231/Response-to-Complaint-by-Boston-Compact-Attorney-Kevin-Conroy-LLP-Foley-Hoag>

Request for further review of Open Meeting Law complaint by QUEST, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016:  
<https://www.scribd.com/book/317969034/QUEST-Request-to-the-City-of-Boston-requesting-Boston-Compact-s-Compliance-with-OML>

Open Meeting Law Complaint filed by QUEST, November 12<sup>th</sup> 2015:  
<https://www.scribd.com/document/317968987/QUEST-Complaint-stating-that-the-Boston-Compact-should-be-subject-to-Open-Meeting-Law>



# Sample List of Schools for K2 Student

(Pleasant and Hesston)

## Home-Based List

### K2 Student (Pleasant and Hesston)

- ☐ Clap Elementary (D)
- ☐ Dever Elementary (D)
- ☐ Everett Elementary (D)
- ☐ Haynes EEC (D)
- ☐ Holland Elementary (D)
- ☐ King (D)
- ☐ Mason Elementary (D)
- ☐ Mather Elementary (D)
- ☐ Murphy (D)
- ☐ Russell Elementary (D)
- ☐ Winthrop Elementary (D)



## Unified Enrollment List (Simulated)

### K2 Student (Pleasant and Hesston)

- ☐ Bridge Boston 1 (C)
- ☐ Clap Elementary (D)
- ☐ Dever Elementary (D)
- ☐ Everett Elementary (D)
- ☐ Holland Elementary (D)
- ☐ KIPP (C)
- ☐ Mason Elementary (D)
- ☐ Mather Elementary (D)
- ☐ Murphy (D)
- ☐ Russell Elementary (D)
- ☐ Winthrop Elementary (D)

### Jersey Jazzman: One Newark: "Choosing" Segregated Schools?

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*Jersey Jazzman*

May 4, 2015

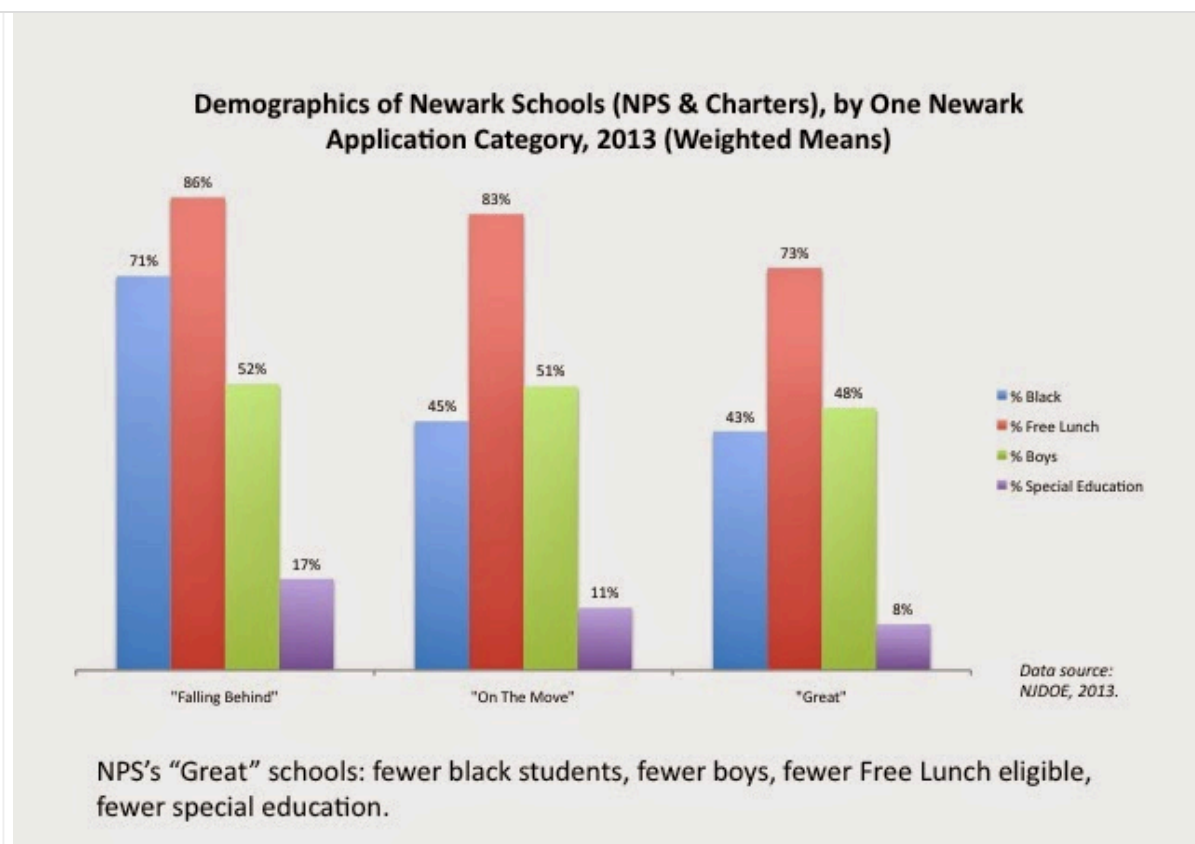
Poverty, High-Stakes Testing and Evaluation, Equity and Social Justice, Diversity: Race, Ethnicity, Class, Culture, and/or Gender, Charter Schools, Accountability and Testing, School Choice, School Evaluation, School Segregation

Last week, I released a [new brief](#) at the NJ Education Policy Forum about One Newark, the one year-old school choice plan in New Jersey's largest city. I think this subject is important enough -- not just for Newark, but for education policy in general -- that it's worth my doing some wonk-to-English translating here to explain what I found.

A little background: last year, State Superintendent Cami Anderson, over the objections of many, implemented a "portfolio" system in Newark that calls for families to choose from a menu of both charter and district schools. The district's role in this system, called One Newark, is supposedly to be both a facilitator and an impartial arbiter, providing necessary information for families so they can make an informed decision.

As I [wrote last year](#), economic theory suggests that consumers need high-quality information to negotiate a market, and that the state-run Newark Public Schools' role in One Newark should be to provide that information. The district does give both charter and district schools ratings under One Newark: "Great," "On The Move," and "Falling Behind."

The problem is that these ratings are tied to test scores, which have enormous biases against schools that serve more students who are in economic disadvantage, or have special education needs, or have more black students, or who even have more boys. Here's the breakdown on student characteristics and One Newark ratings:



This is, to my mind, the central question in whether One Newark will actually help improve the city's education system: **What are Newark families actually "choosing"? Are they opting for "better" schools, or merely schools that have differing student populations?**

Bruce Baker\* has been on this for a while: see [here](#) and [here](#). Given the unequal distribution of both students and resources across Newark's schools, it's both unfair and unhelpful to rate schools by test score outcomes. You can't ask a school with more students in disadvantage to compete with a school with fewer of those students, especially if they don't have similar resources.

And we shouldn't be surprised that schools with less challenging students and better resources are more "popular" in a choice system. In fact, given the preliminary release of the results of the initial One Newark applications, that seems to be exactly what happened. Here are the results released by NPS as reported at [NJ Spotlight](#):

School	Pct. First Choice	Pct. Any Choice	One Newark Rating
Phillip's Academy Charter School*	6%	26%	n/a
Marion P. Thomas Charter School*	2%	18%	"On The Move"
Ann Street School	5%	13%	"Great"
North Star Academy Charter Schools of Newark*	25%	50%	"Great"
First Avenue School	5%	13%	"Great"
TEAM Academy Charter School*	17%	40%	"Great"
Lafayette Street School	2%	11%	"Great"
Wilson Avenue School	2%	-	"On The Move"
Ridge Street School	2%	-	"Great"
Oliver Street School	3%	-	"Great"
Newark Legacy Charter School*	-	16%	n/a
University Heights Charter School*	-	15%	"Falling Behind"
Lady Liberty Academy Charter School*	-	16%	"On The Move"

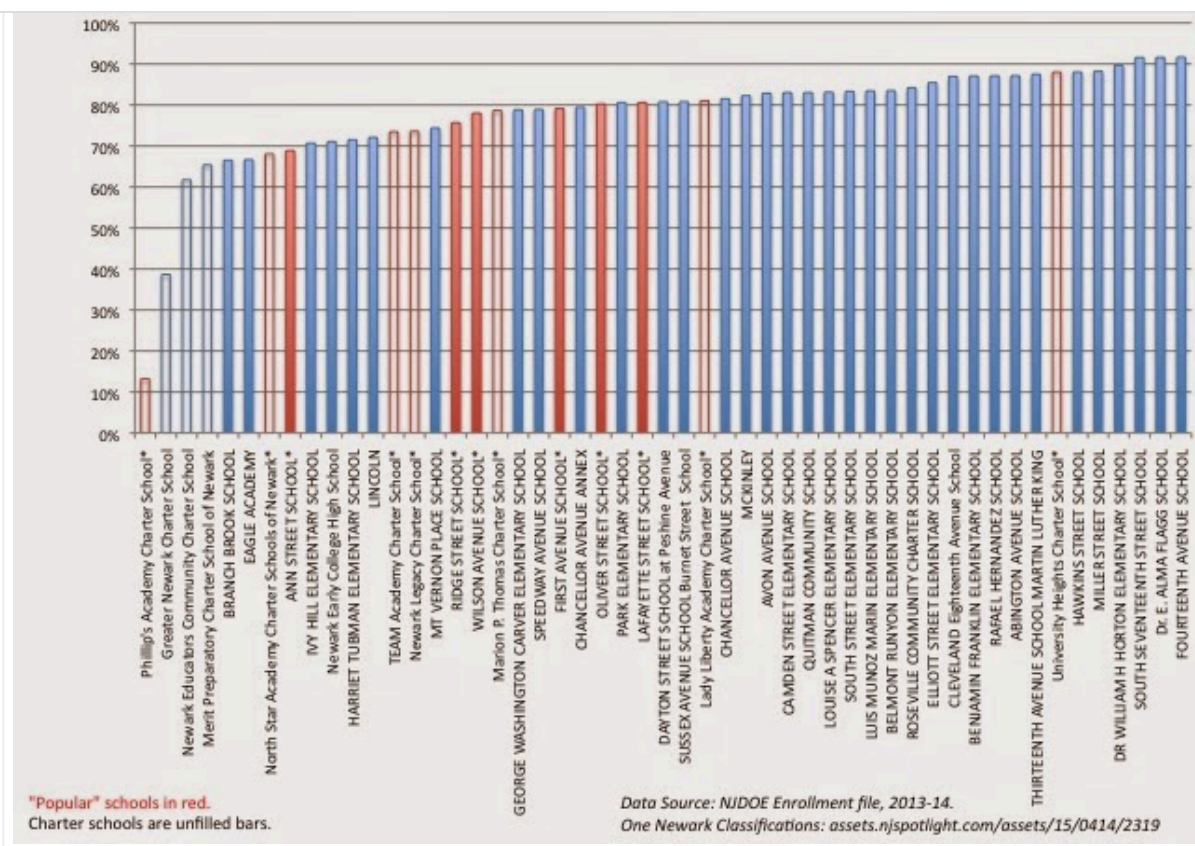
\* Charter School

Most popular schools under One Newark are "Great" according to NPS. Again, that shouldn't surprise anyone, as the district has set itself up in the role of a sort of "Consumer Reports" supplier of information to families making school choices.

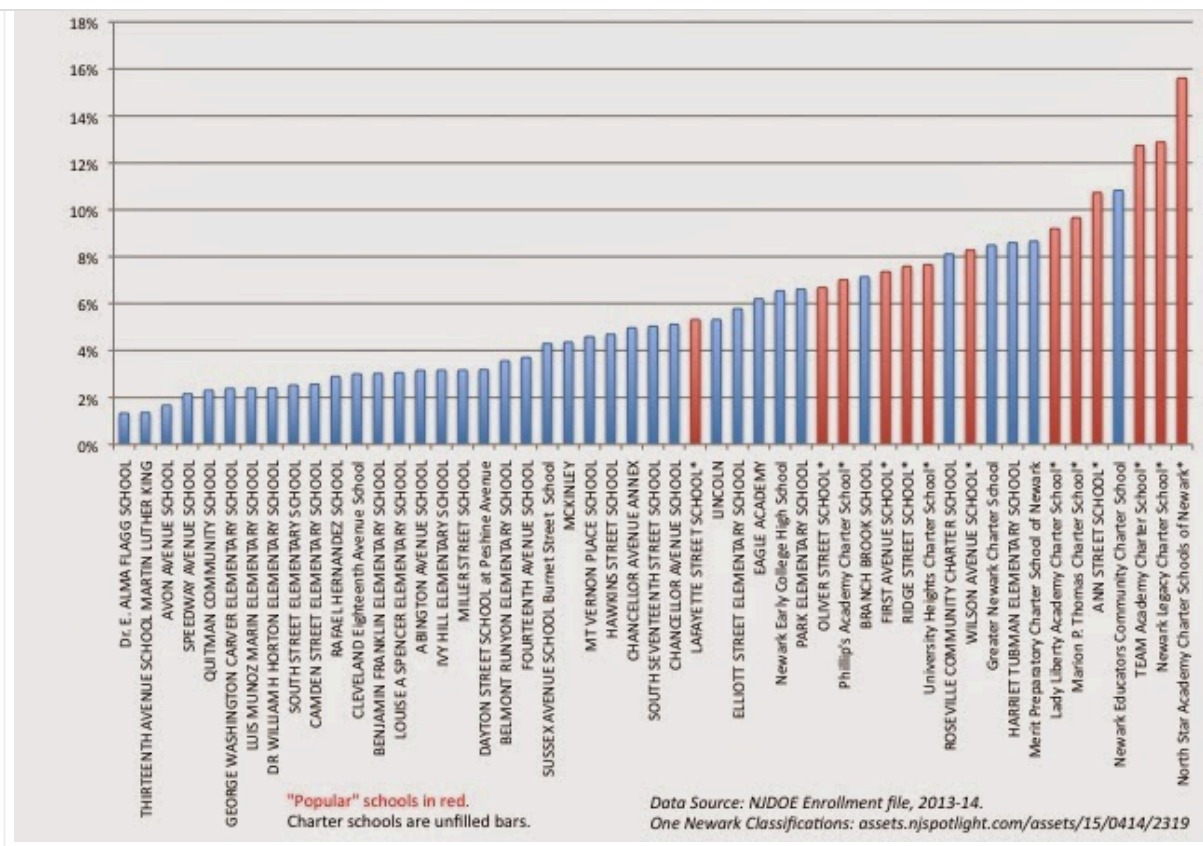
Let me add a caution here: NPS did not release all of its data on the relative popularity of One Newark schools, so we can't do a full analysis of how popularity correlates to student and school characteristics. This is a *preliminary* analysis, and the central conclusion I make in the brief is that we need to have all of the data on One Newark if we're going to make a full program evaluation.

That said: we have more than enough here to make an initial assessment. **And what becomes clear is that the popular choices, spurred on by NPS, are likely leading to a school system that will be *more* segregated than it is already.**

Here, for example, are the popular schools (marked in red) compared to the rest of the One Newark choices as ranked by their percentages of free lunch-eligible students:



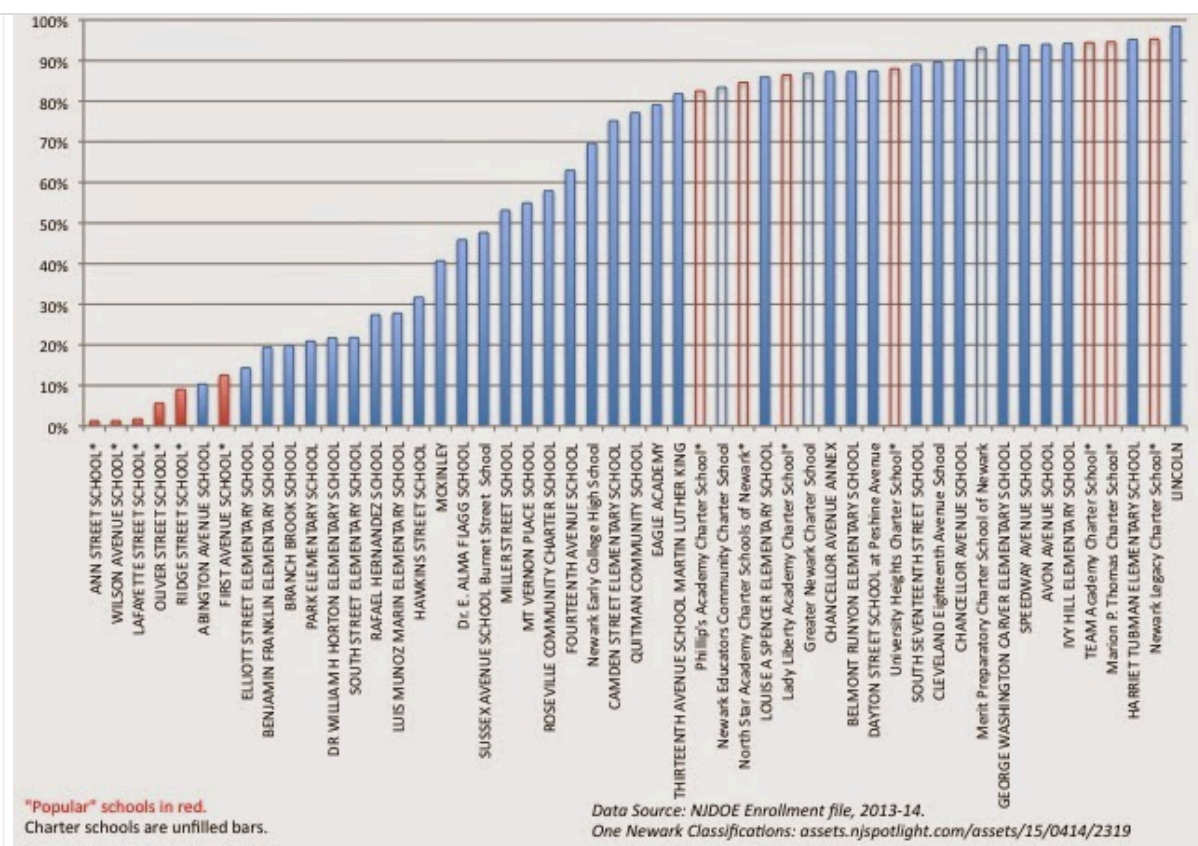
See the trend? The popular schools under One Newark tend to serve fewer students in economic disadvantage. This becomes more obvious when looking at the percentages of students who qualify for reduced price lunch:



As both Bruce and I have explained time and again: in a district where nearly all students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, RPL is a marker of *relative* economic advantage. FL families have incomes at 130% of the poverty line or lower; RPL families are at 130% to 185% of the poverty line. That's surely economic disadvantage compared to families who don't qualify at all; however, RPL eligibility is *relatively* better than FL eligibility.

As the chart above clearly shows, popular schools under One Newark serve proportionately more students who are RPL eligible. This is true for both district and charter schools, which means we aren't seeing economic segregation just between charters and districts: we're seeing economic segregation across the entire system.

And it's not just economic segregation:

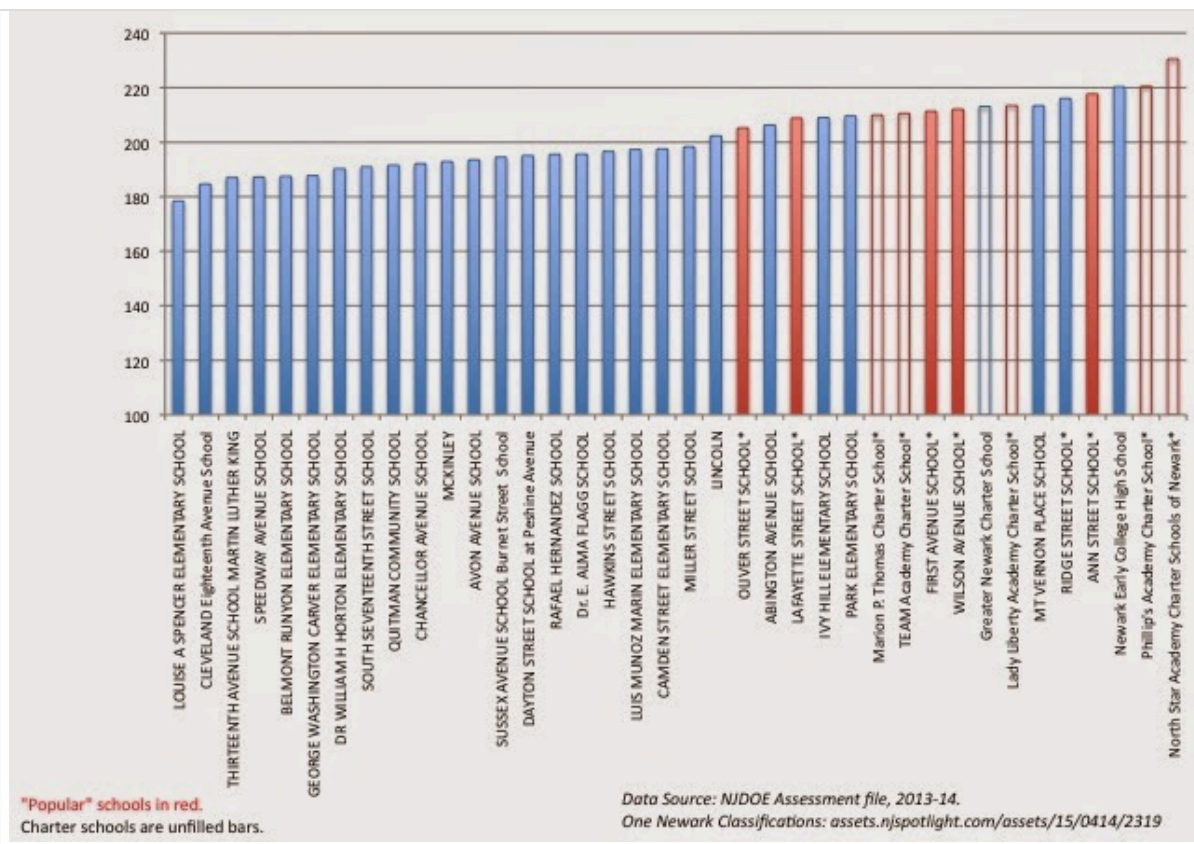


Stop and think about this graph for a moment and you'll realize just how striking it is. All of the popular schools have student populations whose proportion of black students is either above 80 percent or below 15 percent. There are quite a few schools in Newark that are relatively integrated, meaning they have a black student population between 20 and 80 percent. None of these schools, however, are "popular."

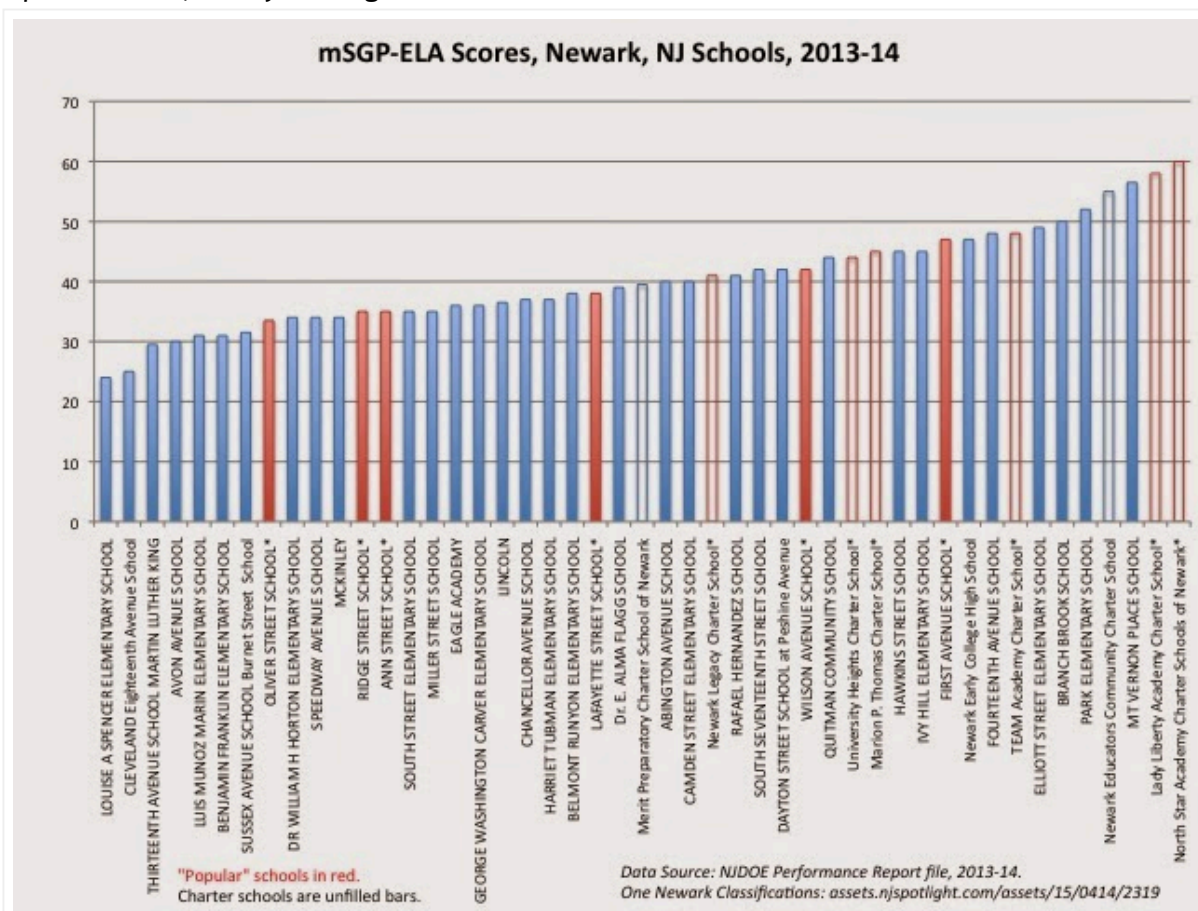
Further: all the "popular" charter schools have large proportions of black students, but all of the "popular" district schools have small proportions of black students. Those popular district schools are all in the North and East Wards, where there are relatively high concentrations of Hispanic and white families compared to the rest of the city. One Newark, then, appears to be reinforcing the patterns of racial segregation within the city itself.

To be clear: these patterns are not analogous to the segregation that occurs *between* New Jersey school districts. This is an *intensely segregated state*, and I don't mean to suggest for a second that One Newark is contributing at all to this level of segregation. Rather, One Newark seems to be reinforcing a pattern: segregated *charter* schools for black students, and segregated *district* schools for Hispanic and white students. Given the very real concerns about the *abrogation of students' and families' rights* at charter schools, this is a serious issue.

As I said: it appears that test scores are driving the school choices Newark family are making. For example, here are the Grade 8 average scale scores on the NJASK English Language Arts test:



Clearly, popular schools get higher test scores. But these scores are strongly correlated to student characteristics, particularly economic disadvantage. What happens when we judge the schools not by their absolute performance, but by their "growth" in test scores?

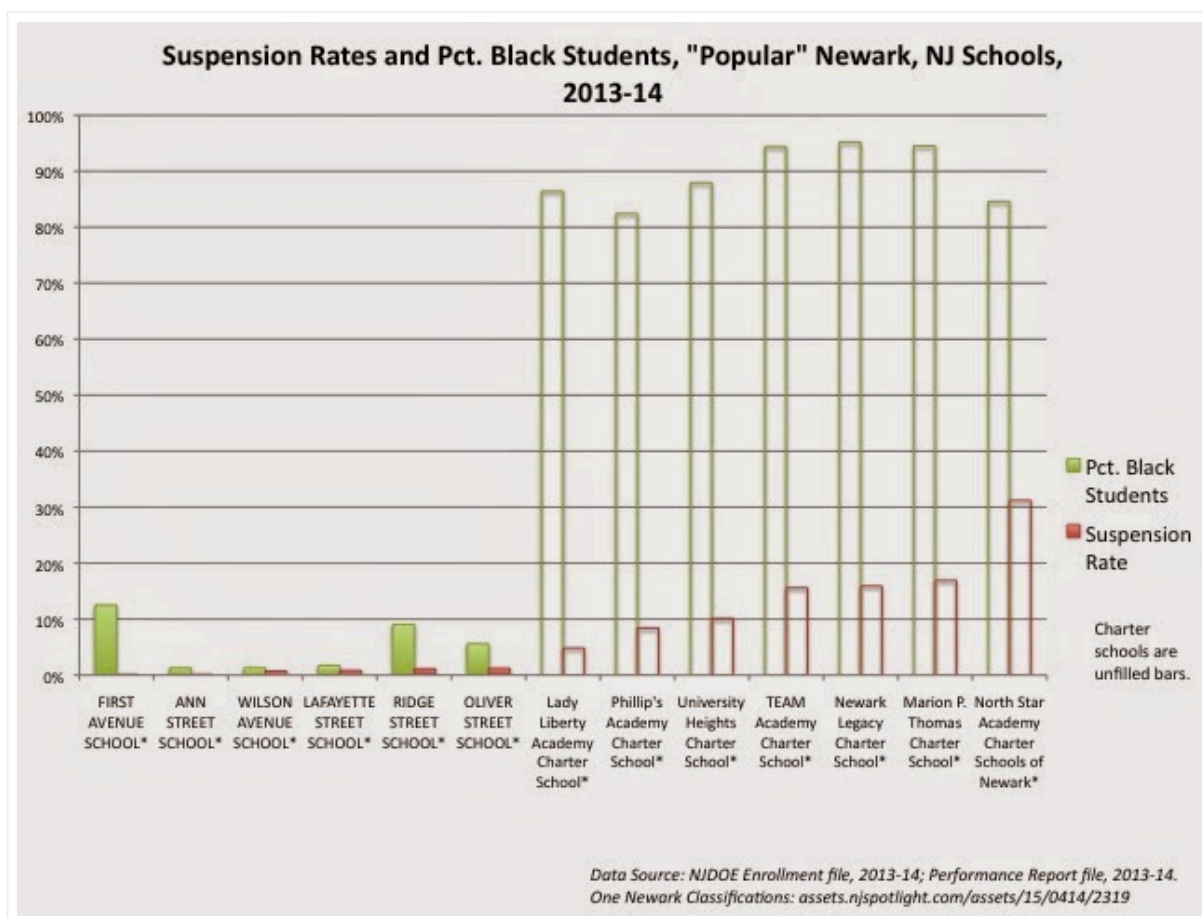


absolute test scores. Which means that a school with more students who qualify for FL has a better chance of doing well when judged by SGPs than by mean scale scores.

Here we see that popular schools vary a lot more in their growth measures. That suggests that being "effective" -- doing well with students even if they are in economic disadvantage -- is less important for popularity than doing well by absolute measures. But, again, those absolute measures are correlated to student characteristics.

Let's state the issue plainly: **"Popular" schools under One Newark may be superior on test scores measures, but they enjoy an advantage in enrolling fewer students who are economically disadvantaged. Is One Newark rewarding schools for their effectiveness, or for their differing student characteristics?**

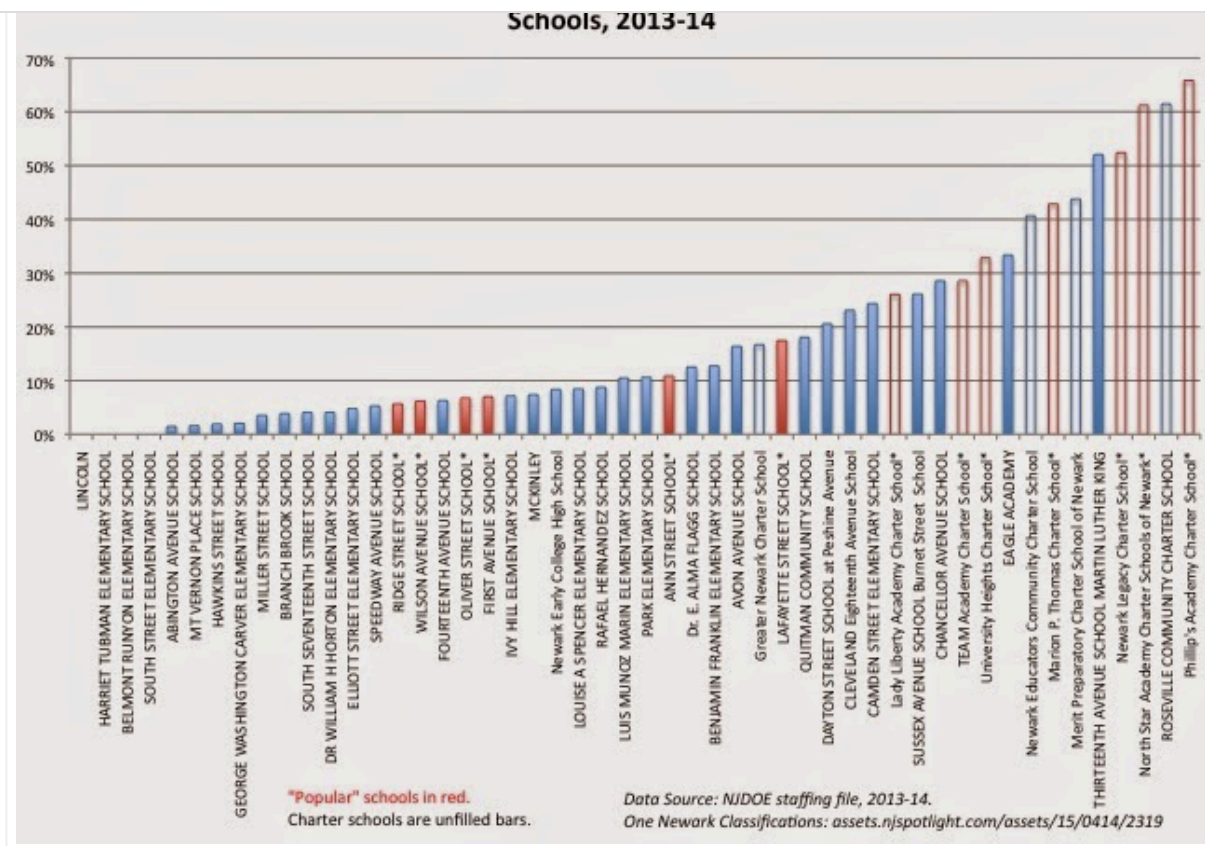
One more thing -- it's not just the students themselves who differ:



Here are the 13 popular schools, charter and district, with their percentage of black students and their suspension rates. Again, the popular charters have many more black students proportionately than the popular district schools. But note something else: the popular charters have higher suspension rates. North Star Academy, the most "popular" school in Newark, has the highest suspension rate in the city.

Are the parents clamoring to get into North Star aware of this? If so, do they think it is a *good* thing? Or do they see it as a price to pay for attending North Star? And why don't the popular district schools -- again, serving largely Hispanic and white students -- have those high suspension rates as well?

Another big difference is the experience of staff:



The popular charter have staffs with many inexperienced teachers. At North Star, again Newark's most popular school, more than 60 percent of the faculty has fewer than three years of experience.\*\* Again, do the parents who chose North Star think this is a *good* thing? Or do they not care? Or do they care, but think staff experience isn't nearly as important as other factors -- including student population characteristics?

We don't know, and that's the critical point. **We just don't know enough yet about how One Newark is going to continue to affect the city and its families to allow it to continue without fully analyzing the data from its first year.** Which is why NPS needs to release its numbers immediately. From my report:

The questions require study over and above the analysis of data gathered in the administration of One Newark. Nonetheless, a complete release of the One Newark data would be an important first step in addressing these issues. To that end, NPS should release as full a set of data regarding One Newark applications as soon as possible.

Ideally, this data set would link every student to their demographic profile and locale (as designated by zip code) as well to all of the choices they and their families made under One Newark. If this is not feasible, NPS should, at the very least, release the complete list of preferred choices for each school, numbered 1 to 8, based on the One Newark application. This would allow for a more comprehensive analysis of the effects of One Newark on student sorting throughout the city.

This is, to my mind, a perfectly reasonable request, and more than justified by my initial analysis. **It's irresponsible to implement a system like One Newark without fully evaluating its effects.**

Anderson has repeatedly said her goal is to create more "great schools" in Newark. While that's laudable, she should not be allowed to continue with her plans to create those schools unless and until she is willing to allow stakeholders to determine *how* her plans are affecting Newark's families and schools.



*One Newark: [buyer beware](#).*

ADDING: As if on cue, [Bruce has more](#) on the very real issues of charter school expansion. The fact that the issues of charter proliferation fall on a racially segregated population of students and families in Newark is not a trivial concern.

Are we ever going to have a frank conversation about this?

*\* As always, Bruce is my advisor in the Ph.D. program at Rutgers GSE.*

*\*\* I should point out that Phillip's Academy is an exceptional case. It's the only charter conversion in the state: it was a private school that converted to a publicly-financed charter school. It's reasonable to assume that at least some of the staff has significant experience teaching in a private school setting, even though their public school experience would be limited.*

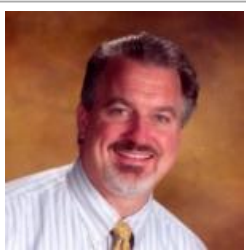
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Find the original post here:

**Jersey Jazzman**

*The views expressed by the blogger are not necessarily those of NEPC.*



### Jersey Jazzman

Jersey Jazzman is the pseudonym for Mark Weber, a New Jersey public school teacher and parent. Weber is also a doctoral student at Rutgers University in Education Theory, Organization, and Policy.

[Author Profile](#) →

## **MIXED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN DENVER'S CHARTER SCHOOLS:**

**Flawed DPS Authorization Process  
Leaves Many Underperforming  
Charters in Need of Support**

# Mixed Academic Performance in Denver's Charter Schools:

## Flawed DPS Authorization Process Leaves Many Underperforming Charters in Need of Support

### Background

When state lawmakers passed the Colorado Charter School Act in 1993 they mandated high performance. The Act stated that charter schools must "implement new and innovative methods of educating children that are proven to be *effective*..."<sup>1</sup>

Colorado's largest school district, Denver Public Schools (DPS), has most deeply embraced the Act, bringing online an additional 27 charter schools in the last five school years, with six more set to open this fall.<sup>2</sup> At the start of the 2016/17 school year, the total number of charters will be 59 – making charter schools a quarter of all DPS schools.<sup>3</sup>

Denver schools' academic performance is tracked using the School Performance Framework (SPF), which rates each school through a rubric that is primarily focused on testing, but also student/parent satisfaction and enrollment. Each school is assigned an SPF score that places it on a scale on which it is either meeting expectations, or it is not.<sup>4</sup> Our analysis of this SPF data finds that while DPS has been able to grow the charter sector quite quickly, two of every five charter schools authorized by DPS are underperforming.

### Findings

Our research looked at the performance of existing Denver charter schools. According to the School Performance Framework,<sup>5</sup> we found:

1. **Forty percent of Denver charter schools are performing below expectations.**<sup>6\*</sup>
2. Using the same data, we found that **of those schools that are below expectations, 38% are significantly below expectations.**<sup>7</sup>



**40%**  
of denver charter  
schools performing  
below expectations

**38%**  
of those schools  
are significantly  
below  
expectations

\* Based on 2013/14 SPF data, which is the most recent available.



3. At the start of school this fall, **the number of charter schools in Denver has doubled**. An additional six schools coming online this fall will take the total to thirty-three new schools in six years.<sup>8</sup>

4. DPS has not provided School Performance Framework data since the 2013/14 school year because of changes to state tests that were the foundation of the data, leaving the **public without a consistent tool to gauge whether DPS' rapid charter approvals are sound policy. However, DPS officials say that they are continuing to use SPF data to inform their decisions regarding charter approvals.**<sup>9</sup>

5. This fall, 19 new charter schools will have been opened since the 2013/14 school year when the last SPF scores were issued, leaving DPS parents with **no performance data for 32% of available charter schools in the 2016/17 enrollment process.**<sup>10</sup>

## Recommendations

By rapidly expanding the number of charter schools in Denver without clear evidence that charter schools are providing a high-quality education to Denver's children, DPS has only made a structural change – to private-operation of publicly-funded schools – and not the strategic change it claims.

Rather than continuing in this direction, we recommend the following:

1. In the absence of data that clearly shows Denver charter schools are performing effectively in fulfilling the reform mission they are legislatively required to fulfill, **DPS should pause its authorization of new schools** and focus on reengineering its authorization process to better predict quality, before resuming its authorization of new charters;
2. DPS should focus on **bringing the 40% of charter schools that are currently below expectations up to levels where they exceed expectations**;
3. DPS must provide Denver parents and taxpayers with an **ongoing framework through which to assess school performance**;
4. The Colorado legislature should declare a **statewide moratorium on all new charter authorizations** unless and until authorizers can prove that this school model is fulfilling the legislature's high-performance mandate.

# Notes

1. Colorado Charter School Act, C.R.S. 22-30.5-102, Legislative declaration. Emphasis Added.
2. DPS does not publicly provide a comprehensive list of both existing and approved, but not yet open, charter schools, so we compiled one using the DPS charter school list & the DPS school list. See the DPS charter school list: <http://portfolio.dpsk12.org/our-schools/charter-schools/charter-schools-of-denver-public-schools/> & the DPS school list: <https://www.dpsk12.org/schoollist/default.aspx>. 27 schools currently open includes schools opened in the 2011/12 through the 2015/16 school year.
3. See DPS charter school list and DPS school list: <https://www.dpsk12.org/schoollist/default.aspx>. Calculated based on 59 charter schools out of 230 total schools
4. Schools that DPS defines as meeting expectations are rated “Distinguished” or “Meets Expectations,” and schools that DPS defines as not meeting expectations are rated “Accredited on Watch,” “Accredited on Priority Watch,” and “Accredited on Probation.”
5. Zubrzycki, Jaclyn, “Here’s How Denver Schools Are Going to Be Evaluated This Year,” Chalkbeat, March 23, 2015, <http://co.chalkbeat.org/2015/03/23/heres-how-denver-schools-are-going-to-be-evaluated-this-year/>.
6. DPS does not provide a comprehensive list of all charter schools and their SPF ratings, so we combined sources. See the DPS charter school list, the DPS school list, and DPS’ SPF spreadsheets: [http://spf.dpsk12.org/spf\\_districtsummary.html](http://spf.dpsk12.org/spf_districtsummary.html). To calculate the rate of “below expectations” schools, we found 16 out of 40 charter schools were rated “accredited on watch,” “accredited on priority watch,” or “accredited on probation” on DPS’ School Performance Framework in 2013/14. Definitions of each rating category are available here: <http://spf.dpsk12.org>.
7. 6 of the 16 schools that were below expectations were rated “accredited on priority watch” or “accredited on probation,” both of which are considered “significantly below expectations” according to DPS’ SPF definitions: <http://spf.dpsk12.org>.
8. Calculation is based on 26 schools open prior to the 2011/12 school year, and an additional 27 schools open from 2011/12 until 2015/16. An additional six schools to be opened in the fall of the 2016/17 school year takes the total of newly opened schools to 33.
9. See Zubrzycki.
10. Calculated based on 19 charters with no SPF data out of 61 charters total.



**The Center for Popular Democracy** works to create equity, opportunity and a dynamic democracy in partnership with high-impact base-building organizations, organizing alliances, and progressive unions. CPD strengthens our collective capacity to envision and win an innovative pro-worker, pro-immigrant, racial and economic justice agenda.

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twitter: @popdemoc

# Newark schools, feds strike deal to halt probe into civil rights complaints



Newark Superintendent of Schools Chris Cerf, shown here in a file photo. The state-controlled district has reached an agreement with the federal Department of Education that will halt a probe into allegations of civil rights violations surrounding the controversial "One Newark" reorganization plan. (Star-Ledger file photo)



By **Dan Ivers** | [NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

[Email the author](#) | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on December 16, 2015 at 8:15 AM

**NEWARK —** The city's public school district has reached an agreement that will halt a federal investigation into whether the controversial "One Newark" reorganization plan unfairly harms minority students and their families.

The agreement signed Nov. 9 will require the state-controlled district to take a number of steps to address the alleged discrimination in the suit, including handing over an assessment of the academic performance of students whose schools were either closed, moved or transitioned into charter schools as part of the plan.

Officials will also need to submit data on transportation services provided to those students, the capacity and facilities of the schools where they were transferred, and whether students with disabilities or special needs were provided with appropriate services at their new schools.

Through the reporting, officials will need to identify any students harmed by the reorganization, and take steps to remedy the adverse effects. No monetary penalties were included in the deal.

District spokeswoman Dreena Whitfield said officials had no comment on the agreement.

In a letter to Superintendent of School Christopher Cerf dated Dec. 9, U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights Director Timothy Blanchard said a preliminary investigation into a number of **schools closed at the end of 2011-12 academic year** found that a "significantly disproportionate" number of black students were affected compared to their white peers.

Former superintendent Cami Anderson, who oversaw the closures, told federal investigators that the closures were not based on race or location, but were chosen because each had deteriorating facilities, low enrollment compared to building capacity and less than a third of students reading at grade level, according to the letter.

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Since 2009, Newark has closed 13 schools — largely in the poor and heavily African-American South and West wards - several of which have since been **turned over to charter management organizations**.

Many of the displaced students have been **transferred to eight so-called "Renew Schools"**, where the district concentrated efforts to turn around previously failing facilities by hiring high-performing teachers and extending learning hours. According to Blanchard, however, investigators found the efforts had made little impact in the year following their implementation in September 2012.

"OCR's preliminary review of data indicated that the NPS's closing of schools and transitioning of students did not appear to afford the affected students any measurable, improved educational outcomes," his letter reads.

Newark parents and national civil rights advocacy groups filed the **trio of complaints that prompted the investigation** between 2012 and 2014. Among their allegations was that black students made up 51 percent of the district, but comprised 86 percent of those affected by school closures.

Federal authorities **revealed the probe in July 2014**, as public ire over "One Newark" and other Anderson-backed reforms reached a fever pitch.

After **repeated protests** and **calls for her resignation** by city officials, Anderson **left her post** in late June. She has since given way to Cerf, a former state education commissioner who appears to have **forged a truce with Mayor Ras Baraka** and other critics of state control over the district.

Tawanda Sheard, a parent who joined a complaint filed by advocacy group Newark PULSE, said Tuesday that school closures had had a "devastating impact on our children, families, and community", but was relieved to hear the district was addressing her concerns.

"I am excited about the agreement and hope it helps not just my daughter, but students across Newark," she said.

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