Charter Schools & Traditional Public Schools

Wind Crest, Highlands Ranch

Tracie Rainey & Renee Howell
Colorado School Finance Project

Charter School (CS) - History

• National movement – part of public school system
  – Serve struggling student populations
  – Create theme schools: Core Knowledge, Expeditionary
  – Opt out of some state education regulations
  – “Choice” for parents and students

Acronyms

CS = Charter School
TPS = Traditional Public School

Colorado School Finance Project

• School finance research since 1995.
• Mission: **Compile, collect and distribute research-based, non-partisan information and data on topics related to school finance for state and local policy makers.**
  – School districts – Superintendents, Boards of Education, CFO, COO
  – State Legislators
  – Colorado Department of Education

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Choice in Colorado

- **TPS**: Open enrollment – attend any school in state (if space). Not Home School: No transportation
- **CS**
  - Lottery (if full)
  - No transportation
  - More restrictive policies: dress code, behavior, grade retention, expulsions, volunteer expectation
  - 1993: 2 CS
  - 2013-14: about 216; 50 districts & CSI (30 CS)

Similarities

- Educate Colorado’s public school students
- Public Schools – elected Boards – no tuition
- Colorado State Standards – State Board of Education
- Administer CSAP, TCAP, state level tests
- Serve similar racial/ethnic minorities – 43%
- Federal, State and Local share dollars
- Public Employee Retirement – PERA (no social security)
- May or may not have association/union agreement (similar to medium - small districts in CO).

CS Differences

- Any group of parents, teachers, etc. form CS
  - Apply to and receive “Authorization”
- Elected Charter Board – each CS
- Parents provide transportation
- 2012 Colorado CS teacher salary gap of $-15,210 with TPS.
- Member of National or State Charter group
  - DSST, KIPP, Strive, Edison, etc.
- National Foundation Support ($) for CS
  - Walmart Foundation, Broad Foundation
**CS Differences**

- Request at State Board: Not follow some Colorado Revised Statutes
- Require Authorization
  - Individual contract for each CS (each different)
  - Formal application process
    - Enrollment, budget, curriculum
  - School District OR Charter School Institute
- $13.5M Charter School Capital Construction Funding
- May not accept students mid-year.
- HS may not accept student after 9th grade.
- Higher mobility

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**State and Local Funding**

- State and Local Share Funding – per pupil district funding. District – Central Admin support of CS
- CS can contract with district for services (technology, safety, special needs students)
- CS don’t have overhead: transportation, HR (larger districts), Financial, Reporting to state and federal agencies.
- Most CS are K-5 or K-8.
- MS and HS more expensive, more programs, electives, sports, arts, etc.

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**District Charters**

- Each CS: Negotiated contract – District Board of Education:
  - Renewal Process
  - Each CS has its own contract with the Authorizer
- May or may not include local override dollars:
  - Mill Levy Override dollars (general operating $)
  - Bond dollars (Buildings – capital expense)

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**In General**

- TPS typically serve needier students: (district is Local Education Agency)
  - Poverty
    - CS: 32.4%  TPS: 41.7%
  - Students learning English (191 languages in CO)
    - Special education students (higher needs at TPS)
      - CS: 6.9%  TPS: 9.2%

  Higher needs typically require more time and services; Increases costs and can impact test scores.
General Summary

- Choice for parents and their children
- No clear cut “winner” or “best choice”
- Pros and cons to both CS and TPS

No education “magic bullet”
No financial “magic bullet”

Questions & Concerns

- Today
- Later – contact me

CDE: CS Information

- Colorado Department of Education: Charter Schools [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart)
- The State of Charter Schools, April 2013 (2011-12 data) [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart)

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