

The pros and cons of charter school environment



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Alternative Education is emerging from being a small community to becoming the standard of offering educational classes. The No Child Left Behind implemented by President Bush has given students the opportunity to acquire their high school diploma. By this statement I mean to say that the students do not have to fall between the cracks, they can afford to go to an alternative school and get their diploma since alternative schools offer their services to students up until the age of 21. Alternative Education also known as Charter Schools are becoming the norm for parents to enroll their children in. Most of the charter schools were developed by parents, teachers, students, community members and government entities to restructure the educational standard. Many of the parents felt that their children were not getting the proper education for their children. Others felt that the educational setting was not a safe one. Some parents felt that their children were being discriminated upon by teachers not taking the time to teach the students that were falling behind. Others had no patience what so ever to teach the students that were slow learners or were considered a nuisance. Peer pressure, gangs and other parable caused concerned for parents and community members to petition for charter schools. The main goal of charter schools is to provide the students with the education they deserve.

According to TEA rules and regulations, Charter schools purposes are to provide a free learning environment, an opportunity to finish high school and a choice they want to attend a Charter school; unlike public school that they must attend the district that is in their jurisdiction. What is the requirement for admission? According to the rules and regulations under TEA charter school must allowed all students regardless of learning skills, social

economics, demographics and or family matters to apply to charter school. Since charter school face a magnitude of problems concerning space. Many of the students are on a waiting list for the following year until space is available. Under any other circumstances charter schools cannot deny services to a student.

All charter schools must adhere to the curriculum regulations that school districts must follow. Charter schools also follow the Texas Essential Knowledge Skill or TAKS, that public school are accountable for. Students are accepted regardless of their educational level as long as they follow the rules they sign at the beginning of orientation. Many environmental factors that charter schools face is the size of the schools. Many of the charter schools are held in small buildings that cannot accommodate a population of 300 at a time. In order for the school to accommodate 300 students some charters schools offer a. m. or p. m. classes. A. M. classes are held from 7: 55 until 12: 05. P. M. classes are held from 1: 00 till 5: 05 in the afternoon. Some charter schools offer tutorial afterschool or super Saturday to help students with the passing of the TAKS.

Furthermore another factor that some charter schools face are that most of the students are considered “ at risk” or “ drop outs”. (Terry) The motto of our school is that all students are capable of learning as long as they use self discipline and are meticulous in attending classes. The teachers and staff are willing to go beyond their call of duty to help the student accomplish their dreams of getting a high school diploma. In the process of helping the students educators must learn to handle their emotions to deal with conflict. (Moore) Having teachers work in collaboration instead of isolation from one

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another is also a great way of getting the students to learn from one class to another. Teachers offer tutorials for students that do not pass the TAKS. During the summer the school offers “ day care services” while the mothers and fathers are having tutorials at the school.

Many of the applicants are not able to receive service because the lack of space and the limit were required to service. Some of the contextual factors the school faces are a lack of text books. The school uses research based methods of keeping track on the objective the students need help on. The school uses DMAC. DMAC is web-based software program designed to calculate the percentages of the student’s progress. Teachers and staff can have the developmental and assessment data available for each of the individual student in the school. The school also has available PLATO, America Preparatory Instruction (API) and C-SCOPE all of these program help students recover credits and or work on a self pace curriculum. The math department hires a consultant to help the teachers learn strategies to help the students pass the TAKS. The Language Arts department has the literature available. The school does not have a library on the premises, but the students have access to computers with internet availability. The social studies classes have an abundance of documentations of the Wars, Civil rights movement and other educational and anti gang documentation. The science department has labs available that student use to have actual hands on knowledge of the content. The students use the TEKS based curriculum.

The school also offers a different approach to learning. The school does not have traditional setting implementation. Teachers are at their discretion to use whatever setting they wish to use. Teachers

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The curriculum being used is student-centered and competency based. The classrooms have a small group student-teacher ratio with individualized assistance. The school hours are flexible. Students can either go in at 9: 00 a. m. or 2: 00 p. m. if they are not lacking that many credits. The environment of the school is safe and respectful, the school has three security guards available and all the classes have cameras. Depending on the enrollment year seniors need a minimum credits, or recommended to receive a high school diploma; once all state requirements have been met. The students have an opportunity to learn from teacher directed instruction, and since the classes are small the students have a more interactive opportunity with the teachers. The school where I'm at, four counselors are available for all students. Community in Schools program is also offered at the school, they provide bus tickets, monies to help pay for prescription glasses, and or help the family with rent. According to TEA and the accountability " report card" from TEA about, 50% to 90% of the students enrolled in an educational programs administered by SAPI are defined as at-risk and/or of dropping out of school as defined in TEC Section 29. 081(d) (1). Most of the students we provide services to are students with poor self-concept, family difficulties, social misconduct, and poor decision-making, below grade level reading and verbal skills, the in availability to adjust to traditional method of classroom instruction at the middle and high school levels. (SAPI)

Poor academic accomplishment can generate a magnitude of problems for the student's behavior towards school-related areas, such as indifference from extracurricular activities; tardiness and truancy; inappropriate school

conduct resulting in frequent absences via suspension, the loss of academic credit; apathy; and poor peer/adult relationships.

In conclusion charter district offered an opportunity for all high school students to attend a school of their choice. Many students enjoy the interaction they get at a charter school. At a charter each student is treated equally and with respect. The teachers believe in the students; that they can succeed and charter schools have the capability to offer many services not offered in a public school setting. The teaching philosophy at charter schools is that the students are given the benefit of the doubt that they can achieve their full potential as successful, productive and caring members of the world. Students are teacher understand that regardless of their problem the student will persevere in achieving their goals of getting a diploma. One of the perks that charter school face is that if they get unacceptable performance for two consecutive years it can and will be shut down. Whereas, a traditional public schools are allowed to have five consecutive years of unacceptable performance before being shut down.