

Public schools vs. charter schools

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The American Dream is a celebrated one: in this capitalist land, anyone and everyone can succeed if they try hard and work hard. Free public education is meant to provide everyone equal access to opportunities and freedom, but are public schools really providing this? How about charter schools? In the city of New York, with a population of 8 million, there are undoubtedly many schools. There are also different types of schools, and when young children are old enough to start going to school, parents have to decide what education system they trust enough to hand over their children's future. There are private schools, public schools, and then there are charter schools. Private schools are funded and cost parents money, while public and charter schools are free to everyone.

Which school system is the best is no easy question and parents do not want to waste hard earned money if their children cannot have the best education. In a recent study by Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) comparing charter schools to public schools "found that the typical student in a New York City charter school gains more learning in a year than his or her district school peer, amounting to about one more month of learning in reading and five more months of learning in math." Some parents believe that charter schools are better than public district schools and work hard to gain entrance for their children so they could get the best education. But it turns out charter schools might not be as good as some think. Nicolas A.

, a high school student from a NYC public school has a friend that attends a charter school. "They're struggling [in charter school.] I do better than them and I attend a public high school." According to the School Superintendents

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Association website, “ National Center for Education Statistics study found [that]...

Fourth grade public school students performed better than charter school counterparts when school and student characteristics were taken into account.” Nonetheless, charter schools are very popular. A recent 2010 documentary directed by Madeleine Sackler called “ The Lottery” addressed the controversy between charter schools and public schools. Like the title itself, the film showed many parents who are trying to get their children into charter schools. In fact the specific charter schools showed in the film are so popular that there is not enough space for everyone. They have lotteries to be fair; every kid’s name is put into the lottery, and only a lucky few are chosen.

Though this is supposed to be the case, it might not always be. “ It has been my experience, limited though it is, that too many charter schools which theoretically subscribe to a ‘ school choice model’ in fact do the choosing themselves insofar as they often accept broadly and counsel out students with persistent needs, frequently,” states Kerry MacNeil, Director of Student Affairs at Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School (WHEELS). This mean that charter schools statistical benefits may be overstated because they counsel out needier students. Sadly this complicates ideals and beliefs that certain parents hold about our school systems and what is best for their child. Of course there are different types of public schools, charter schools, and private schools.

The best bet is to find specific schools that provide the help that each individual children needs, generalizing all public schools or all charter schools as either good or bad will be of little help.