

From: John Austin
To: Gantert, Tom E.

I think it is important to note there are several different types of accountability needed for schools.

One are clear rules, accountability and sanctions for bad behavior: self-dealing, conflicts of interests, profiteering with taxpayer money...in this instance we need changes in law and regulation to ensure charters are just as transparent as traditional public schools in how tax dollars are spent, clear rules and sanctions for illegal and unethical behavior, and tools and clarity around who will enforce sanctions for misdeeds. It introduces a different dynamic when for profit education vendors are introduced, versus non-profit. A marketplace of for profit entities whether on wall street or in the classroom does not "police" itself but must have clear "rules of the road" and sanctions for violating them

Another type of accountability is for educational performance. You are either ignoring or not acknowledging the detrimental effects on education outcomes and performance of allowing an open unregulated school marketplace where parents are left to decide.

1. Parents don't have perfect information about education quality, but wrestle with conflicting information about what schools are "good".
2. Many parents and their students can't execute a choice if they wanted to..they don't have time energy, transportation money to pick or get to a different school.
3. Many schools, charter and none-- "market their product" successfully--bright, shiny, new different-- attract new customers, than deliver mediocre or worse education offerings.
4. This harms all students, those who make the choice lose out on learning; those left behind-- since dollars follow students--are in schools with reduced funding and diminished offerings-- often spiraling into decline--those kids lose to
5. Dollars follow students 2/3rds of all traditional schools lost students in recent years; 1/3rd of charters too!-- too many schools (many poor performing) chasing too few students--means everyone loses.
6. Even if you believe as i do that some healthy competition is good-- there is no excuse for letting charters with bad educational track records-- poor performance-- open more schools and market to students!

The best charter accountability strategy to ensure quality is like Massachusetts. Tight control at the state for who gets to open a charter; have to continue to demonstrate better than average performance or you are closed or not renewed. Purposeful use of quality charters to replace failing schools, and/or create a new innovative option that local school communities want.

Paul Reville - Massachusetts Commissioner of Education whose system outperforms ours by miles--was at MSU Ed Policy Summit-- he said clearly: "we don't treat charters the same as other schools, they have to be innovative or better than other schools. Otherwise there is no reason to have them."

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