

TAKE AWAY POINTS

Innovation, Educational Excellence, & the Role of Charter Schools

The Honorable Florence Shapiro, Chair, Texas Senate Education Committee

- Charters are public schools, and as a state we must recognize this.
- Charters deserve support from the state but have the responsibility to adequately educate the students they serve.
- Innovation in education is one measurement for successful charter schools, and Texas needs more high performing charter schools.

Linda Bridges, President, Texas Chapter of American Federation of Teachers

- AFT supports charter schools under the following conditions:
 - they are accountable to the public and open to all students,
 - the staff have a real voice in decision making,
 - the instructional program is research based, and
 - employees have a good work environment and students have a good learning environment.
- Charter schools were promoted as developing from the community, led by strong teacher leaders, and would be created as schools of innovation.
- When examining charter schools, do we see schools of innovation?
 - Does the charter school have a stable workforce?
 - Does the charter school have a curriculum that is based on sound research?
 - Does the environment within the charter school encourage risk-taking?
 - What is the method for teacher input in decision-making?
 - What is the level of parent involvement within the charter school?
 - Does the charter school have effective discipline policies and are they carried out?
 - What are the class sizes?

Tom Torkelson, CEO & Founder, IDEA Charter Schools in Texas

- Charter schools are state-funded public schools held accountable to the same academic outcomes and performance standards as district schools.
- Charter schools serve a disproportionately high percentage of low-income and minority students.
- An aim of the education system is to prepare students for success in college, citizenship, and careers—charter schools that show remarkable success in doing this should be rewarded with additional resources to grow in scale.

Paul Vallas, Superintendent, Louisiana Recovery School District

- Charter schools provide school choice. There is unprecedented school choice in New Orleans, largely because of the explosion in charter schools. In New Orleans, more public school students attend charter schools than attend conventional public schools.
- Charter schools promote competition. The Recovery School District has identified a number of exceptional national charter school models to help transform the educational landscape in New Orleans. Success is not an option. Charter schools that fail to improve student academic achievement face having their charters revoked.
- Charter schools help spur innovation and new ideas. Charter schools can design a school day and school year that ensures enough instructional time to help children reach academic standards. They can also hire the best and brightest teachers and school leaders without the institutional obstacles that sometimes stand in the way of decisions that are in the best interest of children.