

Attrition at charter public schools is the same as it is in district public schools.

Here are the facts:

First and foremost, children are not leaving charter public schools in large numbers. According to The Boston Globe, which received its information from the Boston Public Schools, only 73 children left all Boston charters during the 2011-12 academic school year. That's 1% of total charter enrollment in Boston - not nearly enough to skew academic results.

Students who leave charter schools do so because their parents choose to opt out – they are not “counseled out” or “sent back” to their district schools.

Charters keep track of why students leave, and there are many reasons. They may simply want to return to their district schools, they may have a desire for more extracurricular activities (such as sports programs), or their families may be relocating out of town/out of state. One common reason is to avoid being held back a grade. Charters promote their students from one grade to the next only when they have satisfied the academic requirements to earn a promotion. When parents are told their children may have to repeat a grade, they often transfer back to district schools where they know their children will be promoted. “Social promotion” is rampant in public education and is one reason why high school graduates are not ready to perform college-level work. In Boston a new study showed that only 1 out of every 11 ninth graders earn a college diploma in four years.

In 2009, one Boston charter school reported the following about students who returned to the district:

- 90% of the students who returned earned a high school diploma; the district average is 60%;
- 95% of the transfers were proficient on MCAS. Among this same group of students, only 10% of them had been proficient when they first enrolled at the school.

So, the students who were supposedly “dumped” back to district schools were stronger academically than average BPS students and had progressed academically while attending the charter school.

DESE data also debunks the myth that Boston charters routinely “dump” children:

- The **Attrition Rate** of Boston charters is almost identical to the Boston Public Schools (BPS) – 9.7% to 8.7%.
- The **Stability Rate**, which measures how many students remain in a district or school throughout the school year, is much higher in Boston charters (91.5%) than in BPS (83%).

That means more students are staying in Boston charters for the entire school year than in BPS schools.

- The **Dropout Rate** in Boston charters is 0.6% versus 7% in BPS, hardly the “dropout factories” they are accused of being. This also means that students who transfer out of charters for BPS are finishing school; they are not poorly performing students being dumped back on the district. They finish their studies and graduate.

Is it fair to condemn charter schools for having high academic and disciplinary standards? Should charter schools lower their standards and expectations in order to retain students? Last but not least, is it fair for district schools to complain about students returning to their ranks while also complaining when they leave?

No. No. And no.

For more information, contact:

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