



Are Charter Schools a Push Towards Better Education?

By: Tanesha Brown

Silberman School of Social Work

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Introduction

In 1954, the segregation of public schools was ruled as unconstitutional, yet the public school system seems to be more segregated today than it was before (Silverman, 2012).

Due to increased media attention, charter schools have been offered as a remedy for the problem of failing public schools in inner-cities across the United States. (Silverman, 2012).

However, they encompass many of the same racial disparities and harsh disciplinary responses faced in public non-chartered schools.

They also face disparities of inclusion amongst children with disabilities.

“At the district level, Ascher and colleagues (1999) found that only 35% of charter schools were socioeconomically diverse (between 20% and 80% of students on free/reduced lunch) as compared to 72% of public schools in surrounding districts” (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003).

Defining the Problem

Charter schools were pushed forward to promote a better education for at risk youth, such as:

Children who come from low-income backgrounds

Minority children

Children with disabilities

However, when we look at the data, the populations in which charter schools are meant to serve are not treated equally:

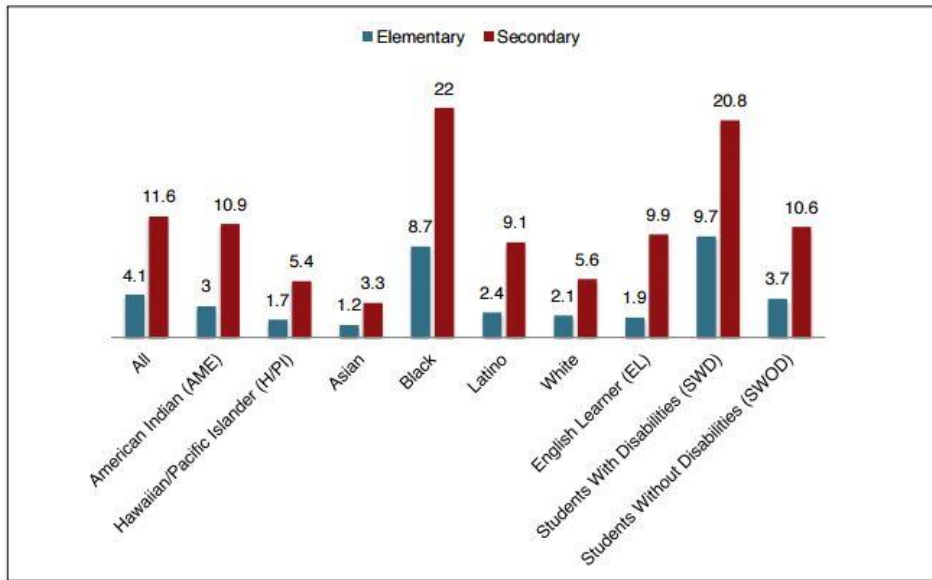
We see higher rates of suspension amongst these groups.

Also, less enrollment rates amongst children with disabilities.

Research has also shown that black students are suspended for infractions that white students are not, as well as for subjective behavioral categories like defiance or disrespect. (Rich, 2016).

Disparities within Suspension Rates Amongst Different Groups

National Average Suspension Rates for Charter Schools at the Elementary and Secondary Levels, by Subgroup, 2011-12

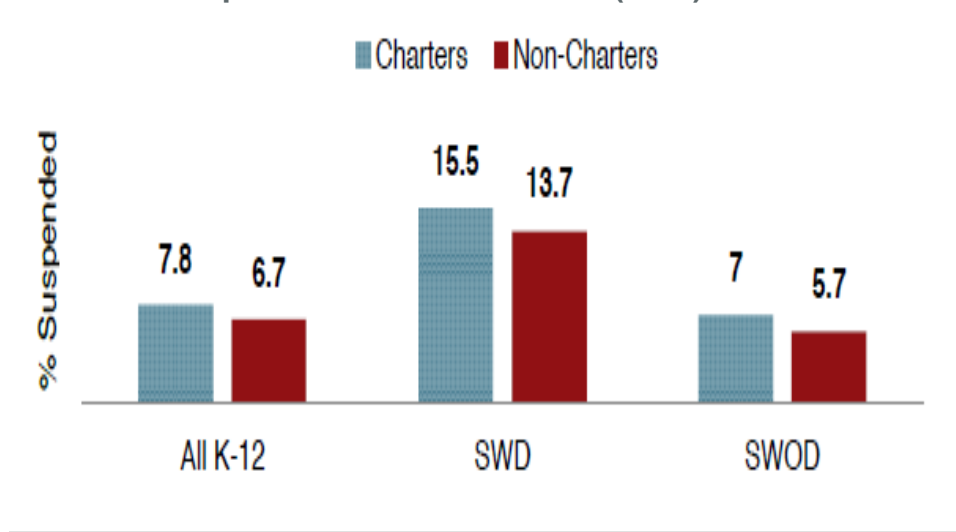


(Losen, Keith II, Hodson, & Martinez, 2016)

- Black students are four times as likely to be suspended from charter schools as white students (Rich, 2016).
 - These suspensions include minor offenses such as clothing violations (Rich, 2016).
- Among students with disabilities, 15.5 percent of students at charter schools are suspended, compared with 13.7 percent at non charters
 - 235 charter schools suspended more than half of their students with disabilities .
- Advocates worry about out-of-school suspensions because of the aversions linked to them (Rich, 2016).
 - These suspensions risk that students will drop out of high school or lead to higher rates of crime and imprisonment.

Comparison of Charter Vs. Non-charter Suspension Rates

Comparison of Charter and Non-Charter Suspension Rates in 2011-12 (K-12)



(Losen, Keith II, Hodson, & Martinez, 2016)

In 2011-2012, 3.45 million students were suspended out-of-school.

(Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011-2012)

Of the school districts with children participating in preschool programs, 6% reported suspending out of school at least one preschool child.

(Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011-2012)

Students with disabilities and students of color are generally suspended and expelled at higher rates than their peers.

(Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011-2012)

Enrollment of Students with Disabilities

Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in Charter

Enrollment Percentage for Students with Disabilities In 2011-12	All School Levels ²⁸	Elementary	Secondary
Charter	8.9	7.8	9.7
Non-Charter	11.9	11.3	11.7

(Losen, Keith II, Hodson, & Martinez, 2016)

- Charter schools were not necessarily designed to address the needs of children with disabilities (Losen, Keith II, Hodson, & Martinez, 2016).
 - These schools have been criticized regarding the discouragement of enrolling children with disabilities (Losen, Keith II, Hodson, & Martinez, 2016).
- Charter schools are often managed by nonprofit organizations, government agencies or universities (Silverman, 2012).
 - This gives teachers and principals more flexibility in terms of the administration of their schools
 - This could also have an affect on the type of services, staff training and resources they are able to provide for children with disabilities.

What Has Been Done?

Mayor Bill de Blasio has emphasised school-discipline reform during his campaign.

Since he took office, there has been a push to modify school discipline and cut the number of suspensions .

The city has also provided different alternatives to traditional school punishments. These include:

Staff trainings on how to resolve conflicts

School officials have made changes in school rules

i.e, allowing students to bring cell phones into schools

In recent years, educators have focused on other approaches that help keep students in school. (Harris, 2016)

Recommendations for Interventions

Schools should place just as much emphasis on the social emotional component of learning as they do with academics:

Many of the at risk children in which charter schools set out to serve are dealing with issues outside of school which in turn affected their ability to cope and learn in the academic environment.

Because charter schools are independently ran, there should be more monitoring by the Department of Education in terms of the types of disciplinary actions used.

There should be less out of school suspensions.

In school suspensions should place emphasis on forming psychoeducational groups and actually addressing the problems.

Staff training on how to deal with social emotional crisis that occur in the classroom.

Focusing on what occurred, why, and if there may be other services needed for the child.

Conclusion

Although the issue of racial disparities in the public school system is occurring in both charter and non-charter public schools I chose to shed light on the disparities in charter schools due to

The increase in attention they have received due to popular media.

The fact that they were created to address and decrease the occurrence of these issues.

To share insight on how they may need more regulation on their disciplinary actions.

To shed light on the disproportionality within their school system, especially with the population of children with disabilities.

In order to maintain funding, charter schools emphasize high achievement rates and benchmark requirements, which can be part of the reason they place tough disciplinary rules and exclude many children (Silverman, 2012).

Issues with maintaining and receiving funding may have an affect on the resources provided to children with disabilities.

Overall, advocated should push for more inclusion, less suspension (especially out of school suspensions) and more focus on the social emotional needs of children in the public school system.

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