



# Charter Schools in Massachusetts

## Separate, unequal system undermines local public schools

A Fact Sheet from Citizens for Public Schools

*These facts highlight charter schools in the state and Boston. The large number of charters in Boston facilitates comparisons between charter and non-charter schools in the same district.*

### Charter Schools Educate a Small Percentage of Students but Undermine Public School Budgets

- In the 2015-2016 school year, 14.8% of Boston students are expected to attend charter schools. As a result, **\$121.9 million of state Chapter 70 funding will be diverted to charter schools**, after reimbursement (Mass Teachers Assn, based on DESE data, projected FY2016).
- **School districts budget gaps will increase as more students attend charters.** The district sending the student to the charter must pay for the total cost of educating that student. In the meantime, the sending district still has to fund all the fixed costs, which remain the same even without the students who have left for charter schools.
- **In the law, public schools are granted reimbursement for students from their district who attend charters**, at a declining rate over a few years. **It has been many years since that reimbursement was fully funded.** In FY15, only 54% of the reimbursement was funded--the statewide shortfall was \$35 million. In FY16 it is expected to be 51%--a shortfall of \$47 million (Massachusetts Municipal Association and Department of Education, 2015 and 2016).



- Moody's Investor Services released a report in 2013 entitled, "Charter Schools Pose Greatest Credit Challenge to school districts in economically weak urban areas." The report notes that **many districts with charter schools will have to pay higher interest rates to borrow money because of the outflow of money to charters and the resulting budget gaps** [bonds issued to some of these districts will be downgraded](Global Credit Research, Moody's 2013).

## Charter Schools are Cost Ineffective

- A study of 22 approaches to improving student achievement concluded that **charter schools were the least cost-effective approach** (Yeh, 2010). Yeh found **charter schools are both expensive and produce very small achievement gains**.
- An evaluation of a study from the Center for Research on Educational Outcomes found that the **achievement differences between public and charter schools are very small**, less than 1/10 of a standard deviation unit (Maul, 2015).



## The central argument for lifting the charter cap – that 34,000 students are “trapped” on waitlists because of the cap – is UNTRUE

- The **lists published by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) are inflated because they include schools that are not subject to the cap**. They are further **inflated by the practice of rolling over old, obsolete waitlists year after year**, a practice that State Auditor Suzanne Bump has repeatedly warned against (Bump, 2016).
- Most students on charter waitlists would not be affected by lifting the cap** because they live in districts where the current law already allows for more charter seats.
- A study (funded by charter advocates) found that **when Boston students are offered charter school seats, nearly half turn them down**.

*"The education of our children is too important to base these important decisions on misleading information."*

-Auditor Suzanne M. Bump  
discussing new charter school campaign

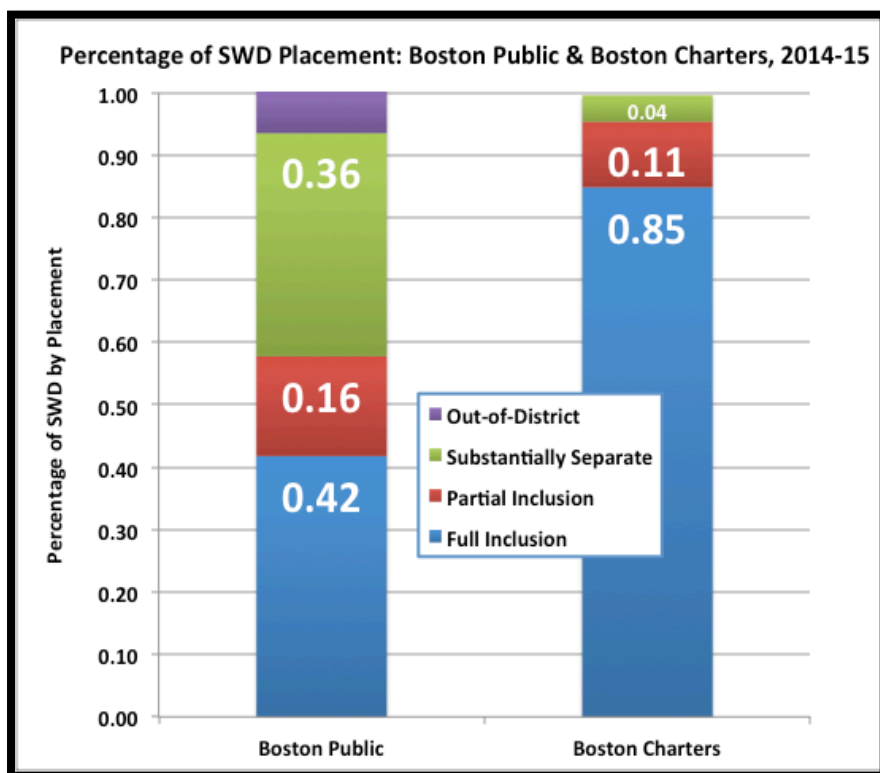
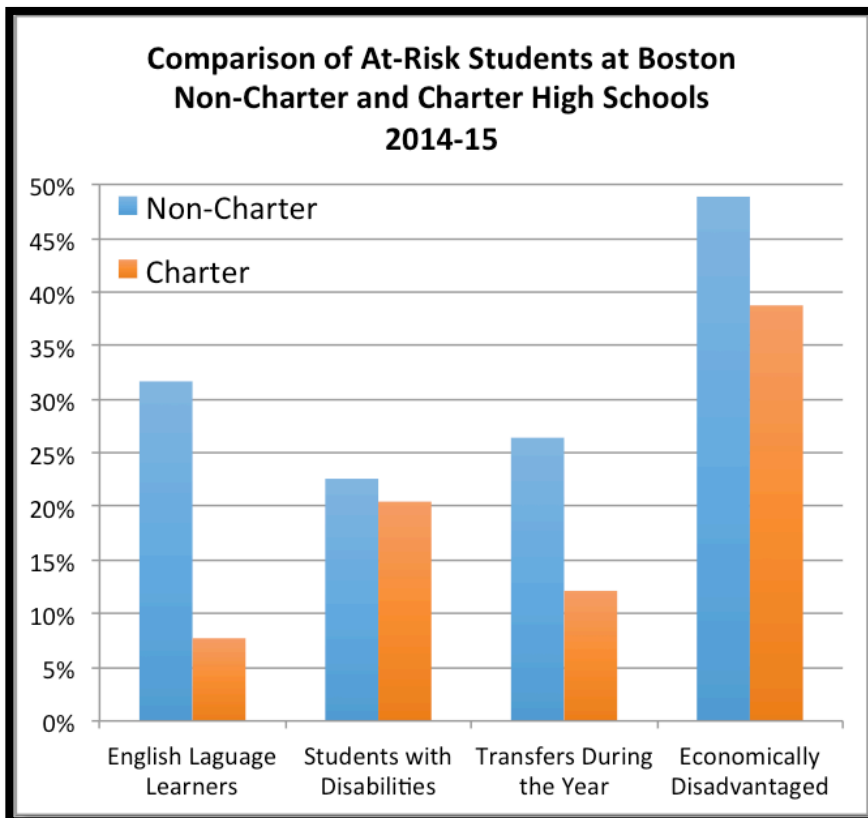
## Charter Schools Have Fewer At-Risk Students

- **Students in Special Education**

- 78% of charter schools have a **lower percentage of students with disabilities** than their sending districts (Office of the State Auditor, 2014).

- **Charter schools tend to have far fewer students with disabilities that require intensive and expensive services.** The percentage of students in charter schools with severe disabilities (developmental delay, emotional impairment, intellectual impairment or autism) is less than half, 19%, that in sending districts (39%) (Blackwell, 2013).

- In the city of Boston, **only 15% of the charter school students in special education require instructional services outside of the regular classroom**, whereas 58% of the district's students in special education spend all or part of the day outside of the regular classroom (Skinner Research, 2016).



- **English Language Learners (ELLs)**

- **Charters schools have 54% fewer ELLs** than their sending districts (Office of the State Auditor, 2014).
- **In Boston, the differences are even more dramatic.** Boston's charter schools have **73% fewer ELLs** than district schools (Office of the State Auditor, 2014).

- **Economically Disadvantaged Students**

- The **percentage of economically disadvantaged students in non-urban charter schools is 25% to 50% lower** than the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the sending districts (Massachusetts Association of School Committees, 2015).
- Among Boston high schools, charter schools have **10% fewer economically disadvantaged students** than the non-charter schools (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015).

- **Transfer Students**

- **Charter schools accept fewer transfer students than non-charter schools.** By law, all charter schools can refuse to accept transfer students after February 15. In addition, charter high schools can refuse to accept students after 9<sup>th</sup> grade (Massachusetts Association of School Committees, 2015).
- Among Boston high schools, **charter schools have less than half the transfer students (12% per year) that district schools have (26% per year).** (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015).

## **Charter Schools are More Likely to Resort to Harsh and Ineffective Punishments**

- Although only 4% of Massachusetts' public school students are in charter schools, **their schools make up 14% of the schools with discipline rates over 20%** (Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice, 2014).
- Charter schools **suspend twice as many male students** as non-charter schools (Massachusetts Association of School Committees, 2015).
- **In Boston, the three high schools with highest out-of-school suspension rates were all charter schools.** City on a Hill in Dudley Square, for example, used out-of-school suspension with 39% of its students during the 2014-15 school year (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015).
- **Students who are given out-of-school suspensions are ten times more likely to drop out** (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).
- **Schools with high suspension rates are no safer** than schools without high suspension rates (Civil Rights Project, 2000).

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