

The Real Charter School Agenda in Boston

by **Jamaicplainiac**

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By just about any honest measure, charter schools in Massachusetts have failed. What they've shown pretty clearly is that if you lengthen the school day and weed out the students with special needs and English Language Learners, you can get marginally better standardized test scores than regular public schools and yet fail to graduate the majority of students who walk through your door.

So why is Boston preparing an unprecedented transfer of students and staff to charter schools?

This is what Carol Johnson's school closing plan amounts to. The city is already in talks with charter schools to lease the closed school buildings to charter schools.

It's about union busting, of course, but it's also something uglier than that.

Here's how the union-busting part works:

Close 12 schools. This throws a whole bunch of staff out of work, and senior staff will bump junior staff out of jobs. (Yes, this is problematic, but a side issue right now) So, basically, this leads to a bunch of young teachers looking for teaching jobs. The charter schools can then hire the same young teachers at a lower salary!

This is going to happen, and it's shameful that it's going to happen under the watch of people who are nominally friendly to the idea of organized labor.

But, as I said earlier, there's something even uglier going on here. Because the more charter schools we have in Boston, the more they are going to begin resembling the regular public schools. Is there a limitless supply of young, idealistic teachers willing to work long hours for short pay? Can charter schools continue to dodge the inevitable discrimination lawsuit from special ed parents? Can charter schools continue to dodge the attrition question forever?

I don't think any smart person believes the answer to all those questions is yes. So what we end up with, ultimately, is a network of charter schools with the same issues as the Boston Public Schools. This doesn't benefit the perception of charter schools, though it does accomplish the union busting goal. But what else could be happening here?

The answer lies in accountability. Charter schools in Massachusetts have almost no accountability to the public. They are governed by self-appointing boards and are reviewed by the (decidedly pro-charter school) Board of Ed only once every five years. So who are they accountable to? By and large, the corporations who fund the grants that allow charter schools to exist. Many of these corporations have seats on the aforementioned self-appointing governing board.

So what this is about is not just union busting. It's an attack on the very idea of government controlling the services it provides for the public good. What we'll end up with in Boston is a corporate-controlled, publicly funded school system.

Does the transfer of governing power over public education to corporations worry you at all? I'd like to suggest it should. Here in one of the bluest states in the union, we're about to preside over the corporatization of public education, an incredible undermining of pretty much every progressive idea about government and the public schools.

Please, please stand up against this. If we lose this one, it'll be the first nail in the coffin of public education nationwide.

