

RISSA Position on Charter Schools

January, 2015

RISSA strongly believes that education must be focused on the learner and not the system. District Superintendents have the responsibility to ensure that every student receives a high quality public education. To accomplish this goal, Superintendents must be freed from restrictive laws and regulations and be provided with adequate financial and human resources.

Should high quality public education not be available to all students, RISSA acknowledges their entitlement to approved, publicly-funded educational alternatives. These alternative settings must guarantee federally protected rights and provide educational services that represent a substantial improvement over those provided by the traditional district. RISSA opposes privatization and attempts to profit from education.

At the current time, some districts are severely burdened by charter school tuition payments. Yet the Board of Education continues to grant approval of new charters and the expansion of existing ones. As a result, RISSA calls for:

1. An **immediate freeze** on new charter applications and the expansion of existing charters until the Fair Funding Formula Commission of the House of Representatives completes its recommendations for subsequent changes to the funding formula.
2. R.I.G.L.16-77.1 states that charter schools receive payment from the State and local contribution the **per pupil amount** of the district. RISSA's position is that this amount be **reduced** by the expenses born by the district and not by the charters (e.g.: career and technical education, out-of-district special education, child find)
3. **Greater efficiency:** the *School House Report* identified surplus buildings in districts, yet the Board of Education continues to expand existing charters and approve new proposals, this compounding the problem of surplus facilities. Furthermore, it is fiscally irresponsible to create a parallel school system of charters when students could be educated more economically in their home district.
4. **Local voter approval** of charter budgets and expansion. Currently, once the Board of Education approves a charter, there is no local oversight of the charter budget despite the significant financial responsibility of the sending district.
5. **Tuitions for charter school** are withheld when the performance of the district schools exceeds that of the charter.
6. **Districts** are held harmless via the receipt of state aid when students leave for charters and districts are unable to reduce expenses.