

Fair Funding Formula – Charter Public Schools Fact & Fiction

Debunking 3 Myths* in 3 Minutes (or Less)

Myth #1: It is “fiscally irresponsible” to fund a “parallel school system” of charters.

FACTS:

By law, charters are **part of** the state’s public school system, not a separate or parallel system unto themselves. In RIGL §16-77-3.1, the General Assembly specified it created charters to “provide an alternative **within** the public education system.”

As for the allegedly “exorbitant” expense of charter schools, consider the following:

- In FY14, **charters educated just 4.2% the students who attended R.I. public elementary and secondary schools.**
- In FY14, **charters received exactly 2% of the local funds that were expended on public elementary and secondary education in Rhode Island** under the Funding Formula.
 - To put this in perspective, R.I.’s public school districts spent **1.5%** of the local funding they received in FY14 on health, medical and dental benefits **to retirees**, pursuant to obligations that they freely negotiated. In FY14, retirees educated **0%** of the students who attended R.I. public elementary and secondary schools.

Myth #2: The local share of education funding that flows to charters is “inflated and excessive” and should be “reduced by the expenses borne by the district and not by the charters.”

FACTS:

An objective comparison of expenses that districts and charters respectively bear exclusively and/or uniquely reveals that **charters bear more such expenses** out of the per-pupil funding that they receive.

- In FY14, expenses that the **districts** bore exclusively or uniquely from their per-pupil funding totaled **\$1995 per student** (or \$2245 if one includes the cost of freely negotiated retiree benefits).
- In FY14, expenses that **charters** bore exclusively or uniquely from their per-pupil funding totaled **\$2925 per student.**
- On average, the **unique costs that charter schools must bear out of their per-pupil funding are \$680 - \$930 more per student** than the unique costs that the districts bear from their per-pupil funding.

Myth #3: Many districts are “forced to send exorbitant financial resources to local charters, many of which were not providing students with more effective alternatives...”

FACTS:

- Again, just **2% of local spending on R.I. public elementary and secondary education went to charters**, which educated **4.2% of the state’s public school students** in FY14.
- Under the Funding Formula, funding attaches to students, not schools or districts. Local aid for residents of a particular district who attend charter public schools passes through that district on its way to the charter public schools those residents attend, but **at no time does it belong to that district.**
- What might constitute a more “effective alternative” for one student or another is a nuanced assessment. RIGL §16-77-3.1 provides “parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.” The **13,578 applications that R.I.’s charter schools received for just 1,871 openings this year** attest to parents’ and pupils’ assessment of charter public schools as effective alternatives.
- In a typical, 180-day school year, Rhode Island’s charter school students received the equivalent of 108 additional days of learning in math, and 86 additional days of learning in reading compared to their peers in traditional public schools, according to a 2013 study by Stanford University’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes. Rhode Island’s charter schools led the nation in both categories.

***Claims made by R.I. Schools Superintendent Association during 11/16/2015 Funding Formula Workgroup meeting.**

Rhode Island League of Charter Schools

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