



Chicago District-Charter Collaboration Compact¹

Date Signed: November 2011

Number of Students: 400,874 (2010-2011)

Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 9.5%

Charter Authorizer: Chicago Public Schools

School District Governing Body: Mayoral control

Overview

Chicago’s District-Charter Collaboration Compact was signed at an opportune time. The newly appointed superintendent, Jean-Claude Brizard, used the compact to signal the importance of charter schools in his portfolio management strategy (an effort to diversify the district’s array of school options and signal that the performance of a school, not its governance, mattered). District leaders immediately worked to equalize funding between district and charter schools, something charter leaders had advocated for years. District leaders have also committed to providing charter schools equal access to facilities. For their part, charter school leaders have committed to participate in a common application for school enrollment and a common accountability system. This also includes adopting the district’s student assessments. Though the work has started strong, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has a long history of struggle and leadership instability, and progress has already slowed. In October 2012, Mayor Rahm Emanuel replaced Brizard after 18 months on the job. A new common enrollment process was delayed due to the union strike, and the school board hasn’t approved a new annual performance scorecard that includes charters. Moving forward, reforms will have to withstand possible resistance from a powerful teacher’s union, overcome district central office inertia, and remain a priority of the mayor and the new superintendent, Barbara Byrd-Bennett.

Key Compact Agreements

Big Wins

CPS and charters agree to prioritize the authorizing of new schools in high-need areas in CPS buildings. Charters commit to locating new schools in the highest-need areas, aligned to district portfolio plans.	District created the Call for Quality Schools, an application process for new schools operating as district, charter, or contract (includes replications and turnarounds).
By the 2013 enrollment cycle, the district will have established a common high school enrollment process that all high schools (traditional, charter, or contract) are permitted to use (or opt out of); same for elementary schools by 2016. ²	Plans in place for a common high school enrollment process in 2014-2015 school year; no charter schools have opted out yet.
Charter schools commit to a comparable representation of all student populations.	Compact provided clear, transparent data on the percentages and types of students that charter schools serve.
District commits to ensuring that funding for a student’s education will be equitable. District will make every effort to ensure that charters do not have to divert operating funds toward covering facility capital costs.	Increased amount of special education and Title I funds to charter schools in fiscal year 2013; start-up funding available for charter schools; increased facilities supplement from \$425 to \$750 per pupil (with \$1,000 expected next school year).
CPS and the Chicago Leadership Collaborative will partner with multiple providers to recruit, train, support, and retain effective principals, tripling the number of seats in residency programs from 32 to 100.	
Programs run by the Chicago Leadership Collaborative will serve to foster collegial relationships and ongoing best-practice sharing between district and charter leaders.	
A more streamlined authorization process will be developed to support the replication of high-quality local and national charter management organizations.	Streamlined authorization process implemented in 2012-2013 for national and local high-performing options.
Provide all schools access to actionable, comparative data that will enable teachers and school leaders to answer the questions “How am I doing?” and “Who is doing better?”	
Commit to a common accountability framework in which all public schools will participate. District will publish an annual performance scorecard for each school.	

1. See this compact on CRPE’s website.

2. See the “Chicago Common Enrollment Policy.”

Challenges and Next Steps

More so than in any other compact city, leaders in Chicago have made concrete compact agreements that provide a strong mechanism for future collaboration. With clear indicators of success, district and charter leaders should be able to hold each other accountable. Furthermore, the mayor and former superintendent Brizard pushed through some hard-fought changes in union negotiations that mimic the structures of high-performing charter schools (including teacher evaluations linked to test scores). Compact leaders, however, will have to make sure Byrd-Bennett feels pressure to follow through with the agreements. (The new superintendent has already replaced one district leader that steered the compact work, and she does not share Brizard's commitment to use external operators.) If compact implementation continues, district leaders will have to negotiate with charter leaders, who worry that agreements to join the district's common enrollment and accountability systems could limit their autonomy and success.