

SACRAMENTO DISTRICT-CHARTER COLLABORATION COMPACT

Date Signed: October 2011

Number of All Public School Students: 47,031 (2013-2014) [Ed-Data.org](#)

Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 11.5%

Charter Authorizer(s): Sacramento City Unified School District, Sacramento County Board of Education, California State Board of Education

School District Governing Body: Elected School Board

Compact Grant Amount: \$100,000

CURRENT STATUS OF COLLABORATION:



OVERVIEW

Sacramento's Compact once seemed uniquely poised to overcome historic tensions between the Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) and charter schools in the district, but the energy around achieving its more meaty goals has dissipated.¹ Former superintendent Jonathan Raymond, known for being reform-minded, approached the California Charter School Association and local charter leaders to improve the district-charter dynamic, leading to the creation of the Compact. The Compact included St. HOPE Public Schools, a local charter network notable for its founder, Sacramento mayor Kevin Johnson, a leader not shy in using the bully pulpit to champion citywide initiatives. (His wife, Michelle Rhee, previous chancellor of D.C. Public Schools, now chairs the St. HOPE board.) Prominent St. HOPE staffers had crossed over to work for the district, and lasting collaboration seemed possible. However, Raymond departed in 2013, and every other district leader who had worked on Compact efforts has since left.

In 2014, SCUSD hired Superintendent José Banda, previous leader of Seattle Public Schools, for a three-year contract. Although cordial toward the charter sector, Banda's hiring was [viewed](#) by the Sacramento Bee editorial board as an effort by the Sacramento City school board to hire a "caretaker over a trailblazer." The school board has since shown little appetite for identifying and turning around low-performing schools, effectively ending the district's intent to

build out its "Guide to Success" as a common performance framework for both district and charter schools. The guide would have achieved a key Compact goal.

The extension of lease agreements for charter schools in district facilities was the earliest and biggest win for charters from the Compact and it still stands, provided charters agree to certain concessions such as hiring district custodial staff to maintain the buildings. An oversight committee of district and charter leaders continues to meet regularly, keeping the lines of communication open. These efforts recently bore fruit when SCUSD changed its regulations, allowing charters to apply for renewal ten months in advance of the charter's expiration, up from the previous limit of six months. This allows charters to apply for renewal in the fall instead of the spring. Leaders also hope to establish a system for fast-track renewal based on results from annual programmatic audits and district site visits. Charter leaders also meet monthly through the Sacramento City Charter Leaders collaborative, which has helped to establish a common voice for charters and is currently working on implementing a shared statement of growth. While the earlier Compact wins have been sustained, collaboration on matters unrelated to authorizing decisions seems unlikely in the near future.

1. The Compact did not include other school districts serving the city of Sacramento.

COMMON AREAS OF COLLABORATION	COMPACT PROGRESS
High-Performing Schools	SCUSD modified renewal timelines so that charter schools would have more advance notice of renewal decisions. Independently, charter school leaders are working on a shared statement of growth.
Special Education & English Language Learners (ELL)	Charter schools committed to providing equitable access for special education students; however, there has been little collaboration in this area. Most charter schools belong to a separate Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA) from the district. (In California, SELPAs were created to coordinate services among groups of schools around the provision of special education.)
Facilities & Resources	California’s facilities law, Proposition 39, requires that charters have equitable access to buildings and all but one charter is in district facilities. SCUSD agreed to make facilities lease terms concurrent with five-year charter terms, rather than requiring yearly lease renewals. Charters make use of district janitorial services in exchange for the multi-year lease; there are tensions over the cost and quality of district provided services to charters. SCUSD provides an annual list of other services that charter schools may purchase on a fee basis.
School Performance Framework	SCUSD had dedicated significant time to the “Guide to Success,” incorporating community feedback and bringing charter schools on board. In addition to providing information to the public on school performance, the guide would have driven school development and improvement plans at district schools, as well as guided conversations on charter renewal. However, these efforts were abandoned by 2014, following turnover in district leadership.
Enrollment Systems	There has been little collaboration in this area. Charter schools run their own applications, timelines, and lotteries. In the past, charter schools benefited from invitations to district school enrollment fairs, such as those for eighth graders going to high school, but some now report difficulties gaining access.
Human Capital & Professional Development	At the outset of the Compact, there was collaboration between charters and the district around leadership development—charter members were invited to attend the district’s budding leadership academy, and even sit on a panel of school leaders. There has been little collaboration in this area since this initial foray in 2012.
Common Core	While charters and districts all hold open professional development sessions around the transition to common core, there has been little collaboration in this area.