

SPOKANE DISTRICT-CHARTER COLLABORATION COMPACT

Date Signed: April 2014

Number of All Public School Students: 28,778 (2012-2013) OSPI

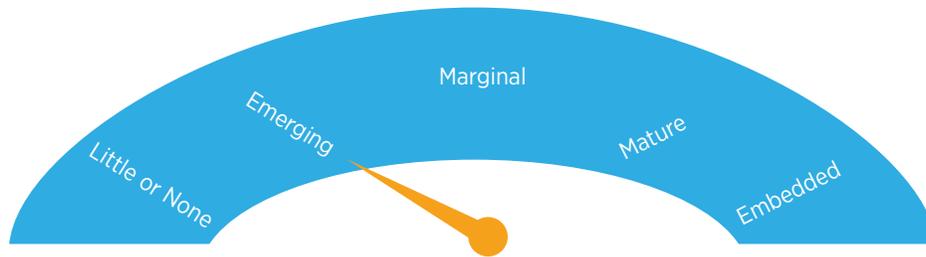
Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: N/A

Charter Authorizer(s): Spokane Public Schools

School District Governing Body: Elected board

Compact Grant Amount: \$100,000

CURRENT STATUS OF COLLABORATION:



OVERVIEW

The first two charter schools in Spokane, Washington—PRIDE Prep and Spokane International Academy—opened in Fall 2015, capping several years of successful planning and collaboration with their authorizer, Spokane Public Schools (SPS). Unfortunately their opening came just before the Washington State Supreme Court issued a [tentative ruling](#), citing the state constitution, to overturn the voter-approved 2012 initiative that led to the establishment of charter schools. Charter operators and the state’s Attorney General plan to file motions to reconsider in October 2015. All nine of Washington’s charter schools have secured philanthropic support to remain open this year. However, if the Supreme Court does not reconsider its ruling, the Governor and state legislature would need to take action to keep charter schools open permanently beyond 2016.

If it stands, the ruling will negate the significant collaboration between charter schools and SPS. Spokane’s District-Charter Compact could be poised to serve as a model for other Washington cities. Charter schools attracted far less controversy in Spokane compared to communities like Seattle, where a statewide commission authorized several charter schools. Spokane’s school board is the only one in the state to apply for authority to authorize charter schools directly. During the 2012 campaign, SPS superintendent Dr. Shelley Redinger publically voiced her support for charter schools, citing her past success working with one as superintendent in Oregon. Under Redinger’s leadership, the district adopted a portfolio strategy and

view charter schools as partners that can help increase the number of high-quality school options in Spokane.

Given the district’s unfamiliarity with charter schools, Redinger wisely hired Jeannette Vaughn as Director of Innovation; she liaised with charter school leaders as they started up their operations and worked through issues including funding, transportation, and enrollment. Vaughn previously worked for the San Diego Unified School District, and led a high-performing charter school there. Additionally, Brenda McDonald left a district administrative position to found PRIDE Prep. The Compact benefited from her longstanding relationships with district administrators.

Among the Compact’s achievements, the district developed an open enrollment portal on its website with a common application so parents can apply to both the new charter schools and other district-operated schools of choice. While the district was working to make some operational services available to charter schools, it did not share facilities, citing overcrowding. All parties agreed that collaboration must balance the autonomy of the charter schools with the needs of the entire city, but the charter schools occasionally needed to push back against the institutional instinct for micro-management. Other Compact initiatives—developing performance frameworks and planning for sharing special education resources—seem promising but will only be truly tested if charter schools are allowed to remain open in Washington.

COMMON AREAS OF COLLABORATION	COMPACT PROGRESS
High-Performing Schools	Spokane Public Schools (SPS) considers charter schools a strategy for meeting the community's demand for high-quality school choices. Two charter schools—PRIDE Prep and Spokane International Academy—have survived a rigorous authorizing process, opening in Fall 2015. The district was planning to issue a request for proposal for new charter applications in Spring 2016, which could lead to more charter school authorizations if the State Legislature and Governor find a way to keep charter schools open.
Special Education & English Language Learners (ELL)	The Compact indicated a joint promise to help charter schools receive services and resources available to serve all students, including those with disabilities.
Facilities & Resources	The SPS finance office is determining costs of various central office services (e.g., nutrition and health screenings) and Special Education programs like speech therapy so that these programs can be provided to charter schools on a per-student fee basis. The district also hopes to provide charter schools the option to purchase from vendors through existing district contracts. Existing district facilities do not have available space, resulting in charter schools leasing space elsewhere. However, the district will provide a share of locally-raised tax revenues to charter schools as required by the state's charter school law, which could help cover some of the costs.
School Performance Framework	SPS collaborated with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers and the Washington State Charter School Commission on developing academic, operational, and financial performance frameworks for its charter schools. The frameworks bear some similarity to data dashboards used by the district, but these dashboards aren't currently made available to the public. Once the charter schools have established themselves, compact leaders may revisit using common benchmarks for charter and district schools with similar student populations.
Enrollment Systems	In January 2014, SPS brought its new common application system online. Families can apply to district schools outside their neighborhood, district school choice programs, and charter schools through this system. The district also held its first open enrollment fair at which charter schools participated. However, charter schools will run their own enrollment lotteries.
Human Capital & Professional Development	Compact leaders are exploring the possibility of holding joint board meetings or other venues where school district board members and charter school board members can get to know each other. Compact leaders have jointly presented information on charter schools to other school districts in Washington state.
Common Core	Common Core-aligned curriculum was launched at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year at district schools, but has not been a focus of collaboration with charter schools.