



Los Angeles District-Charter Collaboration Compact¹

Date Signed: December 2010

Number of Students: 667,378 (2010-2011)

Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 11.9%

Charter Authorizers: Los Angeles Unified School District, California Department of Education Charter Schools Division

School District Governing Body: Elected school board

Overview

Los Angeles is the second largest school district in the county, and over 100,000 of its students attend charter schools—roughly twice as many as in New York. But these numbers belie a historically difficult relationship between the district and charter sectors. Most elected school board members have not been pro-charter, and charter schools have long struggled for access to facilities and equitable funding. Initiatives including Proposition 9 (which ensures charter schools have access to vacant district buildings) and the Public School Choice program (which invites providers, including charter schools, to compete to take over failing district schools) have eased some tensions, but conflict remains. In Los Angeles, restrictions on state bond money create inequities between district and charter school facilities. New buildings are awarded to district schools regardless of enrollment and parent demand, while some oversubscribed charter schools operate out of subpar buildings without a gym or cafeteria. More than 100 charter schools signed the compact; they hoped that the district could support them in providing special education services and that the efforts might help end what they saw as the district’s failure to comply with the law. Leaders also saw opportunities to assemble district help with their short-term working capital needs (the state of California is months behind on funding charter schools). For its part, the district had been frustrated by many charter schools’ unwillingness to share student retention or special education enrollment numbers and hoped the compact would provide leverage. The biggest win in Los Angeles has been the reorganization of the Special Education Local Plan Area to allow for charter school participation.² The sectors have also, via the College-Ready Promise, shared best practices in educator effectiveness.

Key Compact Agreements

Big Wins

Jointly identify academic performance standards that include status and growth metrics and that set minimum performance expectations across all schools.	A joint School Performance Framework for all schools was developed. ³
Commission an independent evaluation of demographic patterns for students living in the city combined with academic performance to ensure all children have access to high-quality schools.	
Ensure all parents are aware of and are able to access all enrollment options within the district boundaries.	
Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the charter community will propose to local and state boards that the regional special education service delivery system should allow charter schools.	The California State Board of Education unanimously approved the reorganization of the special education system.

Challenges and Next Steps

Anti-charter sentiments are still common in Los Angeles. Although the current school board president is supportive of charters, several members are not. Recent school board elections indicated a public leaning in favor of reform. Evidence includes a school board member’s recent proposal to prohibit the opening of new charter schools and the superintendent’s announcement that charter schools would no longer be eligible to compete to take over failing district schools. Further complications include the revocation of a charter management organization charter after testing irregularities were uncovered, and the public problems facing a handful of the 50-plus charter schools in the district. Data sharing is another point of tension between the sectors. Charter schools in Los Angeles have resisted using the district data systems, which they believe are not as robust as their own. Additionally, due to the state’s interpretation of the charter law and charter schools’ local education authority (LEA) status, the California Department of Education does not report charter school student performance scores directly to the district. Instead, the district must rely on charter schools to manually provide the district with charter school scores they receive from the state. LAUSD is not able to count charter schools’ test scores towards their student results.

1. See [this compact on CRPE’s website](#).

2. See CRPE’s webinar, “How District and Charter Schools Coordinate Supports for Students with Special Needs: Lessons from Denver and Los Angeles.”

3. See the “[Los Angeles School Performance Framework](#).”