



Nashville District-Charter Collaboration Compact¹

Date Signed: December 2010

Number of Students: 78,750 (2010-2011)

Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 1.6%

Charter Authorizers: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, Achievement School District

School District Governing Body: Elected board, Achievement School District (eligible to oversee state's bottom 5% of schools)

Overview

In Nashville, district leaders collaborated with charter schools to provide more school choice to families as well as to avoid state intervention. The number of charter schools has increased sharply, and the district has also expanded the number of charter-like schools through its iZone, which comprises the lowest-performing district schools designated for turnaround. The newly created Achievement School District, which allows the state of Tennessee to authorize charter schools within Nashville, has put strong pressure on the district. District leaders must authorize more charter schools or risk losing students to state-authorized charter schools. Nashville's compact includes a wide range of agreements, and leaders have made significant progress on several. Most notably, leaders have designed a common school report card and have used charter schools as part of the district's efforts to turn around low-performing schools. It remains to be seen how deeply district leaders and school board members support the compact. Some of these leaders view charter schools as exceptions to a larger school system and remain skeptical that charters can provide systemwide benefits.

Key Compact Agreements

Big Wins

Charter schools will work with the district to locate schools in the highest-need areas.	Charter application lists district priority areas, so charters can target neighborhoods of greatest need.
Develop long-term strategic plan for new schools and work with existing and future charter operators to meet those needs.	LEAD Academy/Cameron College Prep has shown early success turning around a low-performing district school; LEAD opened its second district turnaround, Brick Church Middle School, in fall 2012.
Implement a common and coordinated choice enrollment system.	
Create an intradistrict joint communication and marketing plan informing parents of the wide array of public school choices.	Director's Parent Advisory Council expanded to include charter school parents.
Remove barriers for all eligible students to attend public charter schools by offering information regarding school enrollment and pertinent data in all languages.	
Ensure complete transparency regarding calculation and distribution of 100 percent of the per-pupil share of all eligible district expenditures, including facility allocations.	
Maintain annual identification of surplus facilities available for charter schools; give high-performing charter operators first right of refusal for access to those facilities.	
Create a team of highly effective instructors, from both district and charters, to take part in exchange programs.	13 district and charter teachers completed Lipscomb University's Shared Practices Fellows Program.
Charter schools commit to sharing resources, such as data templates, student tracking systems, lesson plan templates, etc.	
Ensure transparency and publicly accessible reporting of data on student demographics, achievement, mobility, discipline, exceptional education, and English language learners.	Common school report cards rolled out in fall 2012 include student performance and demographics data.
Collaboratively establish a common high-performing school indicator.	Design of common report cards includes extensive feedback from community members.
Continue to support parents in all public schools through programs like Parent University.	

1. See this compact on CRPE's website.

Challenges and Next Steps

As in many cities, tensions exist in Nashville over whether charter schools choose which students they want in their schools, push out students during the school year, or serve their fair share of special education students. The detailed student demographics data included in the new school report cards should help dispel these rumors in some charters and in others pressure them to serve more students with greater needs. Other points of contention include inequitable distribution of school facilities (for example, the district has provided high-performing charter schools only limited access to facilities) and the district's failure to reduce costs when charter schools attract students. How fast district leaders move to share buildings with potential charter partners may depend on how much pressure the Achievement School District applies. Moving forward, compact leaders are committed to coordinating district and charter school enrollment timelines (schools already use the same application and process) and completing a district academic performance framework that aligns with charter school renewal standards. District leaders have already sent a draft performance framework to principals for feedback.