



New York City District-Charter Collaboration Compact¹

Date Signed: December 2010

Number of Students: 1,019,553 (2010-2011)

Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 3.8%

Charter Authorizers: New York City Department of Education (until 2010), New York State Education Department, State University of New York

School District Governing Body: Mayoral control

Overview

Over the past decade, under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the number of district and charter schools in New York City grew rapidly. Through a portfolio strategy, the district closed low-performing schools and opened new schools to provide families with more high-quality options. But it was often easier to change the policies around charter schools than to shift community members’ perceptions about them. Charter schools were seen as the “favorite child,” and union opposition was loud and strong. New York’s compact leaders have worked to shift the tone regarding charter schools and build more productive relationships among district and charter principals, teachers, parents, and community members. Under Chancellor Dennis Walcott, who took the job in 2011, the district has listened more to community input around charter school decisions, such as openings, closings, and co-locations. Leaders at the New York City Charter School Center have designed opportunities for principals and teachers to showcase classroom practices and have made accessible charter schools’ data on student performance and demographics. Compact leaders feel an urgency to step up their efforts to build goodwill about district-charter collaboration, as no one knows what a post-Bloomberg charter world looks like.

Key Compact Agreements

Big Wins

Support high-quality charters to open and replicate.	26 new charters expected to open in 2013.
Equitable distribution of resources; continue to co-locate and locate charter schools in underutilized district buildings.	
Charter schools commit to ensure transparency around student demographics and recruit and retain comparable percentages of students.	<p>NYC Charter School Center published the first-ever State of the NYC Charter Sector report, which provides transparent data on charter schools’ student performance and demographics.</p> <p>NYC Charter School Center launched a citywide Special Education Collaborative, with 75 percent of charter schools participating.</p>
Make available to charter schools the benefits of school district economies of scale (e.g., provide charter schools access to district data systems).	Charter schools have access to NYC DOE’s Common Core training and online resources.
Advocate for mutually beneficial state legislation, including making conversion of district schools to charter schools more affordable.	
Pursue accountability across all schools in the city, including by supporting or working to close, reconstitute, or by other means immediately address persistently low-performing schools.	NYC DOE continues to pursue a school closure and replacement strategy; refined process for communicating information about struggling schools early.
Actively share demonstrated best practices with the public schools in New York City.	<p>NYC Collaborates, an initiative to directly advance the compact work, organizes district and charter principals and teachers to visit high-performing schools.</p> <p>New Visions for Public Schools will provide Common Core training for a cohort of 16 district and charter middle schools (eight per year for two years).</p> <p>Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Public Charter Schools cohosted the What Works in Urban Schools conference to unite district and charter teachers under an instructional focus.</p>
Develop a program where district principals can take a leave of absence to work in a charter school.	Principals’ union approved that district leaders can take a leave of absence to work in a charter school.

1. See this compact on CRPE’s website.

Challenges and Next Steps

Compact leaders want to build trust between district and charter leaders, but it's hard to measure a change in opinions and mindset. Misinformation about charter schools persists, and educators and families continue to question the fairness of comparing district and charter schools. Egos get in the way of the charter sector working together and with the NYC DOE. There is a disincentive for district principals to showcase strong charter partnerships because of union resistance. External partners are taking the lead on new compact initiatives, as district leaders are distracted with the impending mayoral race. The pressure is on compact leaders to advocate for state legislation that provides sustainability plans for charter schools, including long-term access to district facilities and facilities funding. The recent \$3.7 million Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation award will support these advocacy efforts as well as other compact priorities, including developing and implementing Common Core training and tools across district and charter middle schools.