



Sacramento District-Charter Collaboration Compact¹

Date Signed: October 2011

Number of Students: 47,609 (2010-2011)

Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 8.7%

Charter Authorizers: California Department of Education Charter Schools Division, Sacramento City Unified School District

School District Governing Body: Elected school board

Overview

Sacramento’s mayor, Kevin Johnson, founded a charter management organization. He raised funds to convert his alma mater, Sacramento High School, from a district school to a charter school, and his wife, Michelle Rhee, has made Sacramento the home base of her education reform organization. Yet anti-charter rhetoric has long been strong in Sacramento, and the city is new to collaboration. Jonathan Raymond, a reform-minded former chief accountability officer, was appointed superintendent in 2009 and has been an outspoken advocate for charter schools. Raymond’s conversations with the state’s charter school association and with leaders from several top local charter schools on how to improve the district-charter dynamic formed the basis for the compact. Agreements outlined in the compact include developing a common accountability framework, sharing professional development, and improving services for special education students and English language learners. The compact also addresses long-term facilities and funding inequities, including sharing local bond and parcel tax revenues. The big win for Sacramento has been the shift in the renewal process for charter schools from one to five years for high-performing schools. The annual renewal process was cumbersome for charter schools, and they welcomed the change. There are some other indications that district-charter collaboration has resulted in easing of tensions between the sectors. In 2012, a charter school founder was elected to the school board, and recently a top administrator from the St. HOPE charter school management organization became the district’s chief of staff. To oversee and monitor the progress of the compact, a joint oversight committee was formed, made up of community members and district and charter school representatives.

Key Compact Agreements

Big Wins

Creating an accountability framework that includes an annual oversight process that recognizes excellence and provides an early warning system for low-performing charter schools.	
Establishing a framework for fast-track renewal and/or replication of successful charter schools and non-renewal of chronically underperforming ones.	Renewal requirements for high-performing charter schools shifted from one to five years.
Co-developing a blended technology school.	
Sharing human capital and leadership pipelines.	
Charter schools to provide equitable access and high-quality supports for students with special needs and English language learners; will ensure all student data, including demographic, enrollment, and perceptions surveys, is accurate and accessible to the district.	
Establish Sacramento Pathways for College and Careers.	
Collaborate on professional development and Common Core planning.	

Challenges and Next Steps

Although there are signs that some entrenched negative perceptions of charter schools have begun to shift in Sacramento, progress on the compact work is contingent in part on the political realities in the city. The big win of shifting the charter school renewal cycle from one year to five years is a good example of progress without much protest. Because charter schools are still controversial in Sacramento, compact signers who hope to sustain collaboration work would be wise to choose battles carefully. Improving transparency for charter schools around special education students or working toward a common performance framework are examples of areas where the committee sees the potential for significant progress without strong opposition. The compact committee continues to meet and Superintendent Raymond regularly attends. While the meetings have strengthened the individual relationships between the leaders in each sector, there is growing concern that conversations at meetings tended to get mired in detail. Moving forward, the committee hopes to expedite the work by using sub-committees to craft concrete proposals that can then be quickly moved through the full committee and implemented.

1. See this compact on CRPE’s website.