

A Vision for Boston: Questions for the 2009 District City Council Candidates

CHARTER SCHOOLS

What role should Commonwealth charter schools play in serving students and parents in Boston? Should the existing cap on Commonwealth charters be lifted in Boston? If you support a charter school-style structure other than Commonwealth charters, what is its advantage over the current system? Do you think the current funding mechanism for Commonwealth charter schools should be modified and if so, how?



District 7

Chuck Turner

A) The Mayor needs to appoint a Task Force with those supporting and opposing charter schools to do an assessment. I think that it will be difficult to develop an effective policy regarding charter schools without more clarity in terms of comparative performance.

B) Keep cap in place until the unfairness in the funding formula is eliminated. The fact that charters in Boston take a limited number of ELL and Special Education students and yet get financial allotments as if they were taking their share is an unfairness that should be eliminated before any more charters are approved.

C) We need to recognize that charter schools can be used by conservatives to develop a funding strategy to keep salaries in public education low by busting the unions. This could result in turn over in teachers with better teachers at charters moving on as they grow older while the assault on unions discourages quality teachers from staying in public schools. We must remember that public education was not established in this country until after the civil war. I believe that there are forces that would be very comfortable with the undermining and destruction of public education.

District 8

Oscar Brookins

I oppose policies that do not serve their stated purposes. I was a member of the Public School Board in South Bend, Indiana adopting a desegregation plan. The plan approved had nothing to do with the welfare of black children and my efforts to stop this plan that would destroy the value of inner city real estate. I convinced citizens that school desegregation had nothing to do with the educational welfare of children.

The Charter School movement is the oft-touted solution to what ails urban education and poorly performing school systems; however, although it allows the extrication of a few from a failing system which is good for those leaving the school system remains in the poor condition it was. Failing schools require systemic approaches that improve the lot of all students. Charter schools remove funds and pupils from the system and make it ever harder to develop a functional school system that serves the well being of the lot of public school pupils. I do not support removing the

charter school cap. The legislature recognized charter schools should be limited to a small proportion of the school population and that Charter schools cannot rescue public from failure.

Michael Ross

The City of Boston is seeing a shift in how residents view the schools. Many parents who once would have sent their children to private schools are now joining waiting lists for schools like the Eliot School in the North End. The quality of the Boston Public Schools is improving. Charter schools can be very successful, but I believe we must fund these schools in a way that does not leave students in our public schools at a disadvantage. In addition, we must always ensure that any successful innovation taking place in Charter schools gets communicated to the rest of BPS.

District 9

Mark Ciommo

Low performance is not acceptable in our City's schools. While Charter schools have been established to experiment with educational programming, instead of commissioning new charter schools, we must take extra measures to identify the keys to success in our exemplary Charter schools and implement these best practices in our public schools. This is the very reason Charter Schools were established through education reform over fifteen years ago. We can not rely on the establishment of new Charter Schools while abandoning our Public Schools.