Taking Account of Charter Schools

What's Happened and What's Next?

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Contents

CHAPTER 5

Localized Ideas of Fairness: Inequality Among Charter Schools

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The ideals of common schooling still express the quite modern hope that institutions—through shared experiences for all children—will strengthen and integrate an otherwise disparate civil society.[1] Americans have long held faith in, and have invested heavily in, the public school and its alleged capacity to advance *universal* forms of learning that affirm the public facets of human life: a shared language, a commitment to democratic values and obligations, and fungible skills that allow individuals and groups to succeed in the economy.

All this has happened since the West's 18th-century rejection of an old regime that ensured dominance by particular groups, exclusive forms of culture and power, castelike boundaries defining class membership and who could accumulate capital. The modern state came to be seen as the public agent that could advance the individual's odds of moving up in a premodern class structure, reproduced by ascribed characteristics of the person, not his or her merit or achieved virtues. Premodern Europe had defined children's education as a private endeavor, advanced with the aid of tutors or local churches. This worked fine for some classes, some local "tribes." But for those of the lower classes and the fledgling middle class, the modern state was to build and advance the quality of public education.

RETHINKING WHAT'S FAIR

What is fascinating about charter enthusiasts, especially their spirited eagerness to be cut loose from the modern state, is their nonmodern return to

local cultural forms and particular ways of raising children. The widening rejection of common schooling—or perhaps it's the impersonal, bureaucratic rendition of the one best system—is energized by strange bedfellows, from Latino and African American activists fed up with unresponsive city schools to affluent parents who seek a pristine school behind their gated community.

At both ends of this political spectrum, parents and educators within local enclaves believe that the present system is unfair, since it does not advance their *particular* cultural agenda, way of raising children, or local identity. But if the modern state no longer has the credibility to define what's fair and hold schools or educators accountable to meet common benchmarks, how should we think about fairness in such a radically decentered society?

THE END OF COMPARABLE FORMS OF EQUITY?

In this chapter, we review how grassroots activists and national advocates talk about fairness. These two groups are engaging in distinct discourses that are recasting how we think about equity and what is fair among public schools. We also briefly examine how researchers are giving little credence to these *localized conceptions of fairness*, instead evaluating charters according to the old indicators of *comparative equity*. Stemming from these alternative conceptions of fairness, we then devise operational measures to assess how charter schools themselves vary along the two sets of gauges. Third, we discuss the implications of our empirical findings, asking whether the state still holds the political authority for or interest in redressing disparities among charter schools.

The foundational assumptions of the common school are no longer credible in the charter movement. What is defined as fair is no longer attached to modern conceptions of equity in the eyes of many charter school proponents, as measured by comparable and universally valued benchmarks: providing equal access to any school by diverse children, making school resources more equal, and tracking comparable gauges of what children are learning.

Instead, charter advocates rightfully define as unfair the fact that so many schools are ineffective in boosting achievement and fail in socializing youngsters to follow the cultural tenets of their local communities (or the wider civil society's values). But the decentralist's critique also attacks the state's authority and the bureaucratic organization of schooling that government and urban educators have been so adept in creating. While modernists have viewed public agencies as pro-equity in character, many charter advocates see them as failing miserably at promoting fairness.

For charter advocates, it is *particular opportunities*—situated in a particular milieu and defined by ethnicity, language, or child-rearing beliefs—and the ability to *choose schools* with these attributes that have become the icons of what's really fair. This casting of fairness enables parents and teachers to create or select schools that fit their beliefs or preferred way of raising children. Charter advocates believe that public rules cannot, through bureaucratic means, assure such localized forms of like community. Instead, public authorities should charter particular opportunities for particular collectivities among which parents may choose. Some would say that public dollars are now allocated to an archipelago of charter schools, each of which pursues privately defined interests. This is seen by many charter activists as more fair.

The origins and unrelenting forces that are driving this shift toward localized conceptions of fairness are intriguing. Scholars are debating whether this return to particular forms of community and insulated forms of schooling might stem from *postmodern* identity politics: the rejection of central institutions that advance a homogenized conception of learning and teaching; human-scale democracy enacted by parents, after being alienated by huge and unresponsive downtown administrations; or the revival of ethnicity and local ties that lend meaning to and direct control over children's daily settings (Wells, Lopez, Scott, & Holme, 1999).

Alternatively, the move away from universals and comparable gauges of what's fair may be *premodern* in character: parents with more wealth or chutzpah seek out better schools, or display more wherewithal in creating new schools that reproduce their own cultural or moral values (Fuller, 2000). This interpretation assumes a wider presence of publicly sanctioned market rules and intense local cooperation as preconditions for creating effective charter schools. It's reminiscent of how better-off parishes hired tutors or built village schools prior to the modern era (Fuller & Rubinson, 1992). Yet recurring community-control movements, from New York in the 1960s to contemporary Chicago, have also discounted the technical expertise or the centralized logic of accountability advanced by the modern state.

CHARTER ADVOCATES AS CULTURAL RELATIVISTS

We focus not on these antecedent forces but instead on how these localized conceptions of fairness differ from classically modern definitions of comparable equity. In short, charter schools have come to be defined as fair when they provide a range of organizational opportunities that map against segmented communities. Many grassroots enthusiasts and movement lead-

ers also define state controls over curriculum, standards, and testing as controlling and counter to local forms of communal participation. Thus, it is defined as more fair to break away from this oppressive state structure or to create alternatives to the homogenized, secular form of schooling that has come to be equated with *public* education in the minds of many.

In important ways, charter advocates have become the new cultural relativists—including those on the political right, who typically press for cultural convergence, and those on the left, who press for comparable forms of equity in other domains of public life. The "effectiveness" of each charter option is judged by some advocates only in terms of parental satisfaction and localized benchmarks for how children are to be raised. Whether my school with a Black nationalist curriculum in Lansing is more open, is more resourceful, or boosts test scores better than your school serving Mormon children outside Phoenix is no longer a relevant question when it comes to establishing their relative fairness. The two schools are just *different*, and this rise of institutional relativity is defined as being in the public interest, more fair than comparing schools along comparable gauges of equity.

TANDEM DISCOURSES OVER FAIRNESS: CHARTER ENTHUSIASTS AND CRITICAL SCHOLARS

Grassroots activists and national charter advocates, while talking in differing terms, are indeed concerned about fairness. After reviewing qualitative studies and media reports that contain the voices of charter adherents, we identified four features of their parallel conversations. These four dimensions counter historical and classically modern ideas about fairness, as summarized in Table 5.1. We cannot generalize to all advocates at national and local levels. Our aim in this section is simply to illustrate the localized conceptions of fairness that have arisen within the charter movement.

Talk of Fairness Inside Charter Schools

Selective Inclusion to Advance Community Cohesion. The common school ideal of bringing diverse children under one roof has come to be viewed as hollow and unfilled, or simply less important, by many charter activists. After spending several days inside the all-Black El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz Academy in Lansing, researcher Patty Yancey asked Mr. Hollingsworth, the "at-risk specialist," whether such charter schools in Michigan were resegregating students along racial lines. He vehemently objected. The family feel of El-Shabazz bred trust between parents and teachers, and this sense of community was linked to being African American. Mr. Hollingsworth had earlier written an opinion piece in the *Lansing State Journal*:

Table 5.1. Conceptions of Fairness—Common Schooling Versus Charter Schooling

Charter School Model—Modern Tenets	Charter School Model—Nonmodern Tenets
Equal access and affirmative policies for inclusion	Community cohesion, purposeful exclusion to reinforce (local) social unity
Professional management, hierarchical division of labor	School-level democratic participation, communal division of labor locally
Integrating diverse children, school as melting pot	Legitimating separate groups, schools that reproduce local cultures, classes, norms
A uniform school institution, accountable to public authority, managed choice among alternative schools	Diverse forms of school organizations directly accountable to neighborhood parents

> Racial segregation means to be excluded, to bar or prevent someone from a right or privilege. Therefore, to conclude that the highly Black populated charter schools . . . were developed with the evils of racial segregation is highly inaccurate. These schools are not practicing exclusion, but simply offering choices. We are catering to our clientele. This is the school we never had, a school for the community. This is why many Blacks have flocked to these schools, because children who seem to have no place have now found a place. (quoted in Yancey, 2000, p. 92)

Similarly, parents at the Yoder Charter School in Kansas—more than half of whom are Amish—sounded ecstatic about receiving public funds to pursue what many would consider private virtues. The school won a waiver to avoid having to cover sex education in their instructional program, and it explicitly advances "the values taught at home, including responsibility, compassion, honesty, and a strong work ethic" (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000, p. 232).

Some advocates inside the Washington beltway, such as Chester Finn (2000), argue that such community building is a primary policy goal. "Charter schools are not only education institutions. They also are examples—and wellsprings—of community rebirth. They are instruments of civil society as

well as places of teaching and learning . . . imparting a sense of control to people, giving them status, and making them members of a community that embodies their values and transmits their norms" (pp. 221–222). Thus we hear a broader public strategy that is built on a collection of private interests. Whereas modernists view the state as provider of public goods when the market fails, charter advocates suggest that market dynamics can yield public virtues.

Democratic Management and Grassroots Participation. Few Americans believe that unresponsive, bureaucratic management is fair; it violates the individualistic tenets of our political culture. By breaking away from downtown school offices and voluminous state rules, charter enthusiasts hope to pursue a fairer, more invigorating form of participation.

This represents an ideological bridge from the 19th-century New England ideal of schools run by townships, a quaint model later situated within Horace Mann's argument that only the state could equalize school access and quality. Some charter advocates are reinvigorating a radically decentralized variant. Take, for example, the words of Nina Lewin, founding parent at the Chelmsford (Massachusetts) Public Charter:

> We were involved . . . in everything from serving on the planning committee, to finding a company to help with the management of the school, to cleaning up the building and painting the walls. It's been an intense experience. It takes an extremely dedicated group. (quoted in Finn et al., 2000, p. 229)

After studying charter schools in 12 California school districts, Amy Stuart Wells and colleagues (1999) were struck by school-level activists' desire to open-up "identity-building spaces," using the charter structure to express and operationalize their own local conception of how their children should be raised and how teachers' work should be crafted for particular communities. Rather than the school springing from culturally homogeneous New England villages, charters have become organizational devices for bounding and invigorating a pluralistic range of ethnic, linguistic, or religious collectives.

Legitimating the (Publicly Funded) Reproduction of Particular Social Groups. The images of a coherent and supportive community were vividly portrayed by teachers and students alike at Amigos Charter Academy in Oakland, California. Two former students from this small middle school told researchers:

> It was just really like a community setting . . . like we were learning at home . . . with a bunch of our friends. They had really nice teachers who were, you know, mostly Chicano and Chicana. . . . We could relate to them. . . . They know your culture, your background. . . . [T]hey talk to your parents. . . . And your parents trust them, and it's like a family. (quoted in Wexler & Huerta, p. 100)

Other students reported feeling more comfortable because they could speak Spanish in class and on the playground.

Another intriguing example is the Valley Home School Charter, created by an enterprising school board that enticed more than 600 parents from their church-based networks to enroll in the public option, generating millions of dollars in new revenue for this small rural district. Many of the parents, a range of Christian fundamentalists, were delighted to now receive free curricular materials and send their youngsters to learning centers, dance classes, computer labs, and even the homeschool marching band. But the district superintendent candidly said that this approach "is not for everyone. . . . These parents prefer familial, church, and intergenerational educational experiences made possible through home schooling" (quoted in Huerta, 2000, pp. 187–189).

One parent said that "the main reason [for joining the charter school] was for religious reasons . . . different Christians take it from different viewpoints." Another parent said, "I'm raising my kids the way I want to raise them, not the way government-run schools think I should. I believe it's my right to pass on the values that I believe" (quoted in Huerta, 2000, p. 187). The school board also believes that public monies are appropriate in supporting this constructed "civil right" to a particular form of schooling.

Stimulating Growth in Alternative Forms of Schooling. The voices of charter advocates often celebrate the importance of having diverse forms of schools that are tightly linked to their immediate communities. Chicano activist Marcos Aguilar helped to found the *Academia Semillas del Pueblo* (Seeds of the Town) in East Los Angeles. At the school's opening, Aguilar promised an "alternative, community-based and culturally sensitive" pedagogical approach. "We are not following something we bought and paid for two months ago with a grant. What we are developing is a living, breathing way of teaching as a community." Veteran teacher Maria Isabel Rodriguez said that the new charter school "will give us a sense of unity . . . it helps us come in touch with our inner selves, a fine balance between mind and body" (quoted in Cardenas, 2002, p. B1). Surveys of local charter activists also reveal this legitimated commitment to "serving special populations," a major impetus among one-fourth of all charter directors in one survey (RPP International, 2000, p. 42).

Reminiscent of earlier research in the "effective schools" tradition (e.g., Rutter, 1979), charter founder Rosanne Wood in Tallahassee argued that

"more choices allow schools to have a theme or focus instead of an all-purpose curriculum. We'll have more students with schools that fit" (quoted in Nathan, 1996, p. 5). This emphasis on a particular school mission is often coupled with the claim that direct accountability to local parents, and to charter teachers who will enjoy more democratic participation, will advance fairness. For example, one co-founder of another ethnocentric charter school said, "Speaker after speaker said [to the school board] that maybe we needed to have our own schools. We need to decide our own curriculum. We can decide how our children are going to learn, what they are going to learn" (quoted in Wells et al., 1999, p. 193).

Fairness Talk of Charter Wonks

Our earlier fieldwork revealed that many charter parents and teachers do not identify with a broader movement per se; they are too busy trying to stay afloat and strengthen their own school (Fuller, 2000). Nor do they necessarily compare their school to others on equity grounds; relative gauges of fairness are rarely cited.

But most professional charter advocates, working in state associations and national think tanks, must blend old and new conceptions of fairness. They do invoke the new discourse, emphasizing particular opportunities, crisp school missions and norms, and a participatory spirit. Yet they also must fight a rear-guard action—defending charters against claims that they are selective, unfairly aided by private donors, or no more effective than garden-variety public schools. This pushes charter wonks to engage the old equity logic and comparative indicators of fairness vis-à-vis garden-variety public schools.

Rather than highlighting the particularistic taste of many charter schools, Finn, Manno, and Vanourek (2000) argue that markets will more effectively advance fairness than will the state: "Instead of a government-style enforcement of racial balance, a market-based alternative . . . would leave it to people's good judgment to set checks and balances on charter schools. The marketplace will usually do a decent job, but charter schools should also be vigilant" (p. 164). While not invoking market dynamics, President Clinton's assistant secretary of education, Gerald Tirozzi (1997), expressed similar optimism at a hearing before a congressional committee:

> An important principle [of charter schools] is equity. Sufficiently diverse and high-quality choices among charter schools, and genuine opportunities to take advantage of those choices, must be available to all students. Admission to charter schools must truly be open and accessible to all students. . . . Legislators, charter authorities, and charter developers should take steps to ensure that such things as the absence of a free lunch program, or a specialized curriculum of a school, do not preclude certain students from attending.

What's notable about both sets of comments is that Finn and the Clinton Administration were talking in the old language of equity, focusing largely on egregious forms of discrimination or barriers to access. Few charter advocates would disagree. But nor would they take seriously affirmative efforts to attract the diverse range of children and families that Tirozzi's comments imply. This would violate the principle of purposeful exclusion in the name of community under the new logic of what's fair. And little empirical work has examined what's being implied: All charter schools may not be created equal, and disparities within the movement across schools have gone unexamined.

Other national advocates simply reject old conceptions of fairness. Listen to Viteritti's (1999) upbeat citation of new evidence from the African American community: "Although a majority of black parents view desegregation as a worthwhile social objective, most do not want to have their children transported out of their communities just to achieve racial balance." Citing recent findings from a Public Agenda Foundation poll, Viteritti summarizes that "80 percent of black parents said that they would prefer schools to focus on achievement rather than integration" (p. 33).

How Researchers Frame Fairness

Empirical studies of charter schools—looking across schools or within their organizational guts—include an important focus on fairness. Two questions dominate this young field: What kinds of parents and children express demand for charters? What are the effects of charter schools on children, parents, or teachers?

Most scholars to date have tacitly worked within the old equity framework as they define their questions and interpret findings. Take, for instance, the question of whether charter schools segregate children (or teaching staffs) along lines of class or ethnicity. Initial empirical work reveals that charter enrollments are similar to the ethnic composition of other public schools overall. About two-thirds of charter schools enrolled a student body that was within 20% of their surrounding district's share of non-White students in the late 1990s. Close to 18% enrolled a higher share of students of color (RPP International, 2000).

Yet charters do tend to isolate Black or Latino students in some states: 69% of all charter students in Michigan are African American, largely situ-

ated in the Detroit area, while just 14% of the state's enrollment is Black (Public Sector Consultants Inc., & Maximus, Inc., 1999). Similar statewide patterns have been detailed in Arizona, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania (Bulkley & Fisler, 2002b; Cobb & Glass, 1999; Horn & Miron, 1998; Miron & Nelson, 2000). More comparative work is necessary to determine whether there is less racial or class isolation in neighboring public schools.

Many charter schools have sprouted in low-income neighborhoods. A recent national assessment found that 39% of charter students were eligible for subsidized lunches, compared to 37% of students in all public schools (RPP International, 2000). In 11 of 27 states permitting charter schools, the share of low-income students exceeds statewide enrollment shares by at least 10%. In 17 states the share of charter students designated as English learners (EL) is within 5% of overall enrollment shares. Remaining charter states, including Colorado and Florida, serve low percentages of EL students relative to statewide enrollments. Concerns have been raised about charters possibly discouraging enrollment of children with disabilities. Legal action has been taken by parents against specific schools (Fiore, Harwell, Blackorby, & Finnegan, 2000). Yet state-level analyses to date have not revealed systematic exclusion.

Do Charter Schools Invite Certain Kinds of Families? The case studies briefly reviewed above suggest they do—justified as a means of unifying parents and nurturing like-minded members within an enclosed community.

Even when charter directors attempt to build a more diverse range of students, this effort may be constrained by the school's particular mission. Wells, Jellison Holme, and Vasudeva (2000) detailed how a Los Angeles charter director pursued diversity and preserved magnet school funding by targeting recruitment of Asian American and largely middle-class students of color. "Charter school operators have more power than educators in regular public schools to shape who becomes a part of their school . . . control over recruiting efforts, student academic requirements, and discipline practices" (Wells et al., 1998, p. 42). Another evaluation from California found that three-fourths of all charters required parents to work at the school, perhaps unintentionally excluding certain families (SRI International, 1997).

Are Charter Schools More Effective? The research community seems stuck in the old comparative logic of equity on this topic as well. Movement leaders claim that charter schools will boost children's learning curves, relative to garden-variety public schools, given the dynamics of market competition, a coherent school community, and direct accountability to parents (Finn et al., 2000; Nathan, 1996). But it's not clear that local charter activ-

ists worry much about test scores or whether cognitive gains are of paramount importance, relative to shared socialization aims.

Most studies to date have found that charter schools, on average, do not outperform other public schools when it comes to standard achievement measures. In Michigan, Horn and Miron (1998) assessed standardized test scores, comparing charter schools with nearby conventional schools, and found that charter students displayed weaker learning gains than students attending other public schools. No advantage has been detected in schoolwide scores among charter schools in California, compared to other public schools, after taking into account social class, language, and other student characteristics (Brown, in press). In Arizona, researchers tracked student-level scores over a 3-year period; charter students demonstrated slightly higher reading gains across the grade levels, but no significant difference could be detected in math gains (Solmon, Paark, & Garcia, 2001).

More encouraging findings have emerged in Texas, where low-income and "at-risk" students attending charter schools outperformed similar students in other public schools on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (Gronberg & Jansen, 2001). Yet for all other students, charter attendees did less well than middle-class students in garden-variety public schools. This research team also found that newly opened charter schools were not as effective in raising achievement as were older ones. Additional evidence on achievement is detailed in Chapter 8 of this volume.

ILLUMINATING SHADES OF FAIRNESS AMONG CHARTER SCHOOLS

We propose another way to explore the extent to which charter schools are advancing fairness in public education. Our new line of analysis focuses on levels of fairness and equity observed among charter schools themselves. Let's apply these localized conceptions of fairness, advanced by charter advocates, along with conventional conceptions of equity, still emphasized by modernists. Then we can illuminate the extent to which charter schools are created equal—or whether they reflect disparities that persist in garden-variety public schools. We turn next to this empirical analysis.

National Charter School Survey

We are able to study multiple indicators of charter schools' fairness and equity, thanks to the 1999–2000 school survey by the National Center for Educational Statistics. This Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) included an

unprecedented effort to reach all public charter schools that operated during 1998–1999 and 1999–2000, totaling 1,010 known institutions (Gruber, Wiley, Broughman, Strizek, & Burian-Fitzgerald, 2002).

Just over 86% of the schools eventually participated in the SASS, which yielded school-level information reported by the principal or site administrator, a principal survey (90% response rate, $n = 870$), and questionnaires from 79% of a sample of charter school teachers ($n = 2,847$). Data from the 870 participating charter schools were then weighted to provide national estimates pegged to the original universe of 1,010 schools. In the analysis that follows, we report on this weighted sample.[2]

Gauging Fairness Across Diverse School Contexts

Our empirical study examined how multiple indicators of fairness—stemming from the old and new conceptions—varied among charter schools that are situated in highly variable contexts. We could not measure all dimensions of equity and access (along conventional gauges), nor could we fully operationalize localized conceptions of fairness. A portion of the measures do not fit exclusively in one framework. But our analysis shows how the two conceptions of fairness, taken together, more fully illuminate variation among charter schools in their capacity to address fairness and equity concerns.

Conventional Indicators—School Resources. First, we assessed how charters differ in their level of resources and material inputs. We looked at staffing levels by calculating the ratio of students per full- and part-time teacher. We also studied the number of instructional computers available per student, and the midpoint in teacher salaries among incumbent teachers within a school, and the principal's salary. In addition, we constructed a simple index of the relative generosity of health benefits available to staff. A list of all measures, details on constructed indices, and inter-item reliability statistics appear in Appendix A.

Conventional Indicators—Student Attributes and Access. We also reported on basic attributes of students to shed light on who is accessing charter schools, including children's ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, eligibility for Title I and lunch subsidies, and the share of students for whom individualized education plans (IEPs) have been developed, as reported by charter school principals.

Conventional Indicators—Teacher Qualities. We examined important characteristics of teachers, including their qualification levels and tenure in the classroom and the ethnic distribution of the workforce. We calculated the percentage of teachers with incomplete credentials, be they called emergency, probationary, or provisional by their home state (see Chapter 1 of this volume for alternative ways of defining teacher quality). These indicators provide evidence on the kinds of teachers who have joined charter schools and how this may vary systematically among charters situated in differing contexts.

Localized Indicators—Specialized Mission and Autonomy. Next, we described how charter schools differ along the kinds of indicators associated with the new conceptions of fairness. For example, we report on the share of schools that report specialized or "alternative" school missions, discrete classroom innovations aimed at strengthening teacher–student relationships, and the level of influence reported by the principal, as well as the principal's perceived autonomy from state education agencies. We also described variability in teachers' perceived influence and individual autonomy within their charter schools (aggregated to the school level). These facets of social organization capture the new claim that giving teachers and school principals more control and autonomy from the bureaucratic district or state will enhance school-level community and particular missions (Table 5.1).

Localized Indicators—Coherent Community, Parent, and Teacher Participation. Finally, we operationalized direct indicators of each school's cohesive community, as gauged by teachers' reported levels of support from their colleagues and principal, and the extent to which staff expressed shared beliefs. We constructed a simple index of ethnic diversity or homogeneity among students—the number of non-White groups making up at least 10% of the school's enrollment. Under the old conception of fairness, a more integrated student body is desirable. In contrast, we noted above how some charter enthusiasts advocate for the inclusion of particular kinds of children, but not others, to advance a like-minded community.

Two indicators of parent participation were also constructed, measured by the kinds of programs that a school offers to appeal to parents, including parent resource advisers and training for parents on how to help their children with homework.

For each of these indicators of fairness, we examined mean levels across four types of school contexts: the school's *grade level* (elementary, secondary, or combined), charter school *origin* (start-up, converted public school, or converted private school), *community type* (central city, suburb, or rural), and whether the school is managed by a *private company* or not (be it for-profit or nonprofit).

We also began to explore the state policy regimes under which charters operate across the states. For example, some states require charters to em-

ploy only credentialed teachers; others provide state aid targeted to charter schools. Yet this line of analysis proved to be complicated—when we found differences associated with state policies, they were difficult to interpret. For instance, are charters with more highly qualified teachers more likely to operate in states that share certain demographic characteristic, which also are associated with more pro-charter state policies? In general, more urban states tend to have more assertive policy regimes (targeted spending and slightly tougher credential requirements). But these dynamics don't necessarily drive differences inside charter schools.

Analytic Overview

Our analysis is exploratory—we set out to illuminate how charter schools varied along the two sets of fairness indicators. We were curious about how conventional indicators of access and equity would be informative, and then about how the new conceptions of school mission, participation, and tight community might also shed light on variability among charter schools. Following a presentation of descriptive statistics, we specify how variations in school contexts help to account for between-school variation along these indicators of fairness and equity.

DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS: ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT AND EQUITY

We would not necessarily expect elementary and secondary schools to exhibit the same levels of fairness and equity. Elementary schools have traditionally been smaller organizations drawing from spatially more confined communities; they have displayed less segmentation internally compared to high schools. But it turns out that this initial dimension of school context was not important in explaining levels of fairness and equity. A few exceptions should be noted.

Charter elementary schools did report having richer teaching staffs: The ratio of students per teacher is significantly lower in elementary charter schools (18:1) compared to secondary charter schools (25:1; $p < .001$).[3] Charter high schools enroll smaller proportions of African American students (22% of their total enrollment) compared to elementary schools (31%; $p < .001$). Yet charter high schools enroll a larger share of Latinos (23%) compared to elementary schools (15%; $p < .001$).

A smaller share of elementary charter teachers reported holding a full credential, just 45% compared to 53% of secondary charter teachers ($p < .05$). That is, 55% of all elementary teachers were working with an emergency, probationary, or provisional certificate. And elementary charters reported more specific programs that encourage parent participation than did high school charters ($p < .001$). This index took into account eight possible programs, including whether the school conducts parent education workshops, requires written contracts between school and parent, and regularly involves parents in budget and governance issues. Beyond these notable differences, elementary and high schools looked similar along our two sets of fairness indicators.

Conventional Indicators of Fairness: Resources, Access, and Teacher Quality

Other dimensions of organizational context proved to better differentiate the extent to which charter schools advance fairness and equity. Turning to Table 5.2, we look at several conventional gauges of fairness, focusing first on the levels of basic resources mustered by charter schools. The three dimensions of school context define the rows: school type, community type, public or private management. We then report weighted means for fairness indicators within these differing contexts.

In column 1 we report on the ratio of students per *full-time teacher*. No significant differences arise that are associated with school context. But reliance on *part-time teachers* (column 2) does vary markedly across different types of charter schools. For example, on average, 103 students are enrolled per part-time teacher in start-up charters compared to a ratio of 249:1 in regular public schools that converted to charter status. That is, start-up charters rely much more on part-time teaching staff. This may allow for a more differentiated curriculum if more specialized teachers are being employed. On the other hand, what are the implications for building a tighter community of fully committed staff? Charters in rural areas also rely more heavily on part-time teachers compared to those situated in central cities or suburban areas.

We see in column 3 that the index of benefits available to teachers is significantly lower in private schools that had converted to charter status. An index value of 2.1 simply means that, on average, private-conversion charters offer just over two of three possible benefits: health coverage, dental, and life insurance. All indices are detailed in Appendix A.

The final two columns in Table 5.2 focus on salary levels, an obvious dimension of school resources. Public school conversions offer significantly higher teacher salaries ($37,103 is the median salary) compared to start-ups ($32,001) or private-conversion charters ($29,985; $p < .001$). These differences may be linked to teacher experience levels, as detailed below. Principal salaries are also considerably higher in public-conversion charters

Table 5.2. Conventional indicators of fairness—variation in school resources among charter schools (n = 1,010 weighted schools; weighted means and significant differences reported)

	Students per full-time teacher	Students per part-time teacher	Health and related benefits (index)	Teacher salaries, mean midpoint ($)	Principal salary($)
Charter school type		***	***	***	***
Start-up	20	103	2.5	32,001	54,530
Conversion—public	22	249	2.5	37,103	62,031
Conversion—private	16	87	2.1	29,985	46,938
Community type		***	***		***
Central city	20	116	2.5	32,154	55,980
Suburban	21	173	2.5	32,160	58,397
Rural	18	57	2.3	30,487	44,692
State context—categorical charter funding		***	*	***	
Schools in state without funding	20	103	2.5	30,965	54,354
Schools in state with funding	20	152	2.4	33,171	55,823
Public/private management			*		
Schools under district or state	20	122	2.4	31,907	55,770
Schools managed by private firm	21	133	2.6	31,990	53,459

Note: Significance of mean differences, based on ANOVA or chi-square test, appears above the variable: *, $p < 05$, **, $p < .01$, ***, $p < .001$. Standard deviations and f-values available.

($62,031) compared to start-ups ($54,530, $p < .001$). And suburban charters pay principals more compared to charters in central cities or rural areas ($p < .001$).

Next we focus on traditional indicators of student access: Who do charters enroll across differing school contexts? Charters are clearly serving significant numbers of African American and Latino students, as shown in Table 5.3. Charters that converted from private school status serve the highest proportion of Black children, 33% of their total enrollment, compared to 29% among start-up charters and just 17% among public-conversion charters ($p < .001$). The latter type tends to serve a higher share of Latino students, 22% of total enrollment. Not surprisingly, central-city charter schools serve higher proportions of Black and Latino students compared to suburban and rural charters (both mean differences are significant at $p < .001$). Asian American students are somewhat more concentrated in public-conversion charters, about 4% of total enrollment compared to 1.8% among start-ups ($p < .001$; not shown).

Substantial shares of charter students appear to be eligible for lunch subsidies, as reported by principals. Half of all urban charter students are eligible, falling to 31% among suburban charters ($p < .001$). We also see greater diversity among schools managed by private firms. This begs for further analysis of whether management firms are drawn to states with higher per-pupil spending, including access to categorical aid that may benefit low-achieving students.

But very slight proportions of students actually benefit from Title I compensatory education services. Even in central-city schools, principals estimated that only 5.2% of their students were receiving Title I program support. Nor are charter schools identifying many English learners—just 6.2% of total enrollments in central-city charters. Public-conversion schools identify more English learners, 10.1% of total enrollment, relative to start-ups (4.0%; $p < .001$).

Finally, we report on traditional indicators of fairness that pertain to how teachers are distributed across charter schools. This indicator might also be linked to a localized conception of fairness. For example, a higher percentage of teachers that share ethnic membership with their students could be an indicator of greater community cohesion. With this caveat in mind, Table 5.4 reports on the ethnic composition of teaching staffs, including significant differences between central-city and suburban schools. Just over 18% of all charter teachers are African American in central cities, and about 9% are Latino. This compares to almost 7% Black and 6% Latino in suburban charters ($p < .001$ for Blacks when including rural schools, $p < .05$ for Latinos). Schools managed by private management firms employ a significantly higher share of Latino teachers (11%) compared to

Table 5.3. Conventional indicators of fairness—variation in student attributes and access among charter schools (n = 1,010 weighted schools; weighted means and significant differences reported)

	Student Composition: African American (%)	Student Composition: Latino (%)	Students eligible for reduced-price lunch (%)	Title I students receiving services (%)	English Learners Identified (%)
Charter school type	***			*	***
Start-up	29	17	42	5.1	4.0
Conversion—public	17	22	48	2.8	10.1
Conversion—private	33	16	42	2.3	2.2
Community type	***	***	***		*
Central city	39	22	50	5.2	6.2
Suburban	17	13	31	3.9	3.6
Rural	8	12	44	2.9	3.2
State context—categorical charter funding	***	*	***	***	***
Schools in state without funding	22	16	39	5.8	3.3
Schools in state with funding	33	19	47	3.0	6.6
Public/private management	***	*	**	*	
Schools under district or state	25	16	41	3.8	4.6
Schools managed by private firm	32	20	47	5.9	5.6

Note: Significance of mean differences, based on ANOVA or chi-square test, appears above the variable: *, $p < 05$; **, $p < .01$; ***, $p < .001$. Standard deviations and *f*-values available.

publicly managed charters (6%; $p < .001$). Only about 2% of all charter teachers are Asian American.

Large numbers of charter teachers are working without a full credential, comprising 51% of a school's teaching staff in start-ups on average, 28% in public-conversions, and 60% in private-conversion charters ($p < .001$). Teachers who are not fully credentialed are more concentrated in central-city charters (56%), compared to suburban charters (39%; $p < .001$). Private management firms employ significantly higher shares of teachers who are not fully credentialed (55%) compared to publicly managed schools (45%; $p < .001$). The final column of Table 5.4 also shows that private companies employ teachers with 2 years less experience in the classroom, on average ($p < .001$). Future work should examine whether privately managed charters—representing 31% of all charters—intentionally hire low-cost teachers or whether their relatively stronger presence in central cities makes it more difficult to find fully credentialed teachers.

Localized Indicators of Fairness: Mission, Tight Community, and Participation

Next we report on indicators that stem from the new discourse around localized conceptions of fairness. Column 1 of Table 5.5 reports on the percentage of schools reporting that they operated from a "special program focus" or self-identified as an "alternative school." About 44% of all start-up charters designated their school in this way, as did 50% of private-conversion charters. Privately managed schools were significantly less likely to define themselves in this way (35%) compared to publicly managed charters (48%; $p < .001$). This suggests that the rise of private management may moderate the innovative impulse celebrated by early charter advocates.

Principals also reported on classroom innovations that aimed to strengthen social relations, such as having students stay with their teacher for more than a year, relying on block scheduling, or forming children into smaller cohorts or "houses" (6-point innovation scale). Schools reported using an average of 2.8 of 6 such structural innovations (Appendix A).

To gauge levels of perceived autonomy, an identical index was constructed for the perceived influence reported by principals and teachers in each of six domains as well as how principals saw the state's influence in the same domains.[4] For example, principals reported stronger influence in private-conversion schools (4.7 on the 6-point scale) compared to 4.5 in start-up and public-conversion schools on average ($p < .05$). But no other contextual factors were related to the principal's reported influence.

Principals view the state's influence as modest, compared to their own influence, measured along the same six domains. The lowest level of state

Table 5.4. Conventional indicators of fairness—variation in teacher qualities among charter schools (n = 1,010 weighted schools; weighted means and significant differences reported)

	Teacher Composition: African American (%)	Teacher Composition: Latino (%)	Emergency, probationary, or provisional credential (%)	Tenure (years teaching)
Charter school type			***	***
Start-up	12.7	7.4	51	6
Conversion—public	8.0	7.7	28	9
Conversion—private	13.6	7.6	60	6
Community type	***	*	***	
Central city	18.4	9.1	56	6
Suburban	6.7	5.8	39	6
Rural	1.3	5.6	42	7
State context—categorical charter funding	***			
Schools in state without funding	15.7	6.3	46	6
Schools in state with funding	9.1	8.9	50	6
Public/private management		***	***	***
Schools under district or state	11.4	6.0	45	7
Schools managed by private firm	13.2	11.1	55	5

Note: Significance of mean differences, based on ANOVA or chi-square test, appears above the variable: *, $p < 05$; **, $p < .01$; ***, $p < .001$. Standard deviations and f-values available.

Table 5.5. Localized indicators of fairness—variation in mission and autonomy among charter schools (n = 1,010 weighted schools; weighted means and significant differences reported)[1]

	Alternative schools with specialized mission[2]	Classroom innovations: relationships (index)	Principal's reported influence (index)	Principal's report of the state's influence (index)	Teacher's reported influence (index)
Charter school type			*	**	
Start-up	44	2.8	4.5	2.6	3.0
Conversion—public	42	2.9	4.5	2.9	3.2
Conversion—private	50	3.1	4.7	2.7	2.9
Community type					**
Central city	46	2.9	4.6	2.7	3.0
Suburban	39	2.8	4.5	2.6	3.0
Rural	46	2.8	4.4	2.7	3.3
State context—categorical charter funding		*			
Schools in state without funding	44	2.7	4.5	2.6	3.0
Schools in state with funding	44	3.0	4.5	2.7	3.0
Public/private management	***				**
Schools under district or state	48	2.9	4.5	2.7	3.1
Schools managed by private firm	35	2.8	4.5	2.6	2.9

1. Weighted principal data, rather than the school survey data, yields different weighted n for selected variables.
2. Percentage of all schools self-reporting as having a "special program focus" or "alternative" instructional mission is reported. This excludes a small number of special education and vocational schools.

Significance of mean differences, based on ANOVA or chi-square test, appears above the variable: *, $p < 05$; **, $p < .01$; ***, $p < .001$. Standard deviations and f-values available.

influence was reported by principals in start-up charters (2.6 on the 6-point scale) compared to principals in public-conversion schools (2.9; $p < .01$).

Teachers reported a modest level of influence within the same domains, with higher levels reported by those working in rural charters ($p < .01$) and lower levels by teachers in privately managed schools ($p < .01$). While principals reported higher levels of influence largely independent of their context, teachers do not feel the same level of autonomy or efficacy over these six areas of school policy and practice.

Finally, we examined indicators of community cohesion observed among charter schools. For example, teachers were asked a series of questions regarding the extent to which norms and beliefs about learning objectives were shared and the level of support by the principal around these dominant expectations. An index of "cohesive school beliefs and principal support" was built from five items that emerged from factor analysis. For each item, a 4-point scale indicated the teacher's agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Turning to Table 5.6, we see that teachers' levels of agreement that their fellow teachers shared core beliefs, and that these commitments were reinforced by the principal, were quite high (averaging 3.1 on this 4-point scale).[5] School contexts were not significantly related to levels of perceived cohesion. This suggests that the charter organization itself advances a strong normative consensus, somewhat insulated from the surrounding environment. Direct comparisons with garden-variety public schools would help to confirm this claim.

The school's immediate community obviously affects the mix of students enrolled. The student heterogeneity index did vary systematically by school context. For example, 1.2 non-White groups with at least 10% of school enrollment were observed in central-city charters, on average, compared to 0.5 non-White groups in rural charters ($p < .001$). And privately managed schools were slightly more diverse in their enrollments ($p < .05$).

We constructed two indices of parent participation, as described above. The final column in Table 5.6 reports on the second index, which counts the presence of structured programs and activities for parents, from drop-in centers on site to organized ways for parents to help their children with homework. The average school offered about four of the possible eight programs for parents. Public-conversion schools had created more such programs, on average, as had central-city schools (both significant at $p < .001$).

Which Organizational Attributes Explain Fairness and Equity?

A thorough accounting of the factors that may explain these disparities among charter schools is beyond our scope here. But we did construct sev-

Table 5.6. Localized indicators of fairness—variation in school cohesion and parent participation among charter schools (n = 1,010 weighted schools; weighted means and significant differences reported)[1]

	Cohesive school beliefs and principal support (index)		Student heterogeneity (index)		Homeschooled students (%)		Parent participation programs (index)[2]	
Charter school type						***		***
Start-up	3.1		0.9		3.3		4.2	
Conversion—public	3.1		0.9		7.1		4.7	
Conversion—private	3.2		0.9		0.1		4.6	
Community type				***		***		***
Central city	3.1		1.2		0.9		4.5	
Suburban	3.1		0.8		6.4		4.4	
Rural	3.3		0.5		7.1		3.8	
State context—categorical charter funding				***		***		*
Schools in state without funding	3.2		0.8		6.1		4.2	
Schools in state with funding	3.1		1.1		6.7		4.5	
Public/private management				*		***		
Schools under district or state	3.1		0.9		6.6		4.3	
Schools managed by private firm	3.2		1.0		6.1		4.4	

1. Weighted teacher data, rather than the school-level data, yield different weighted n for selected variables.
2. One of two parent participation indices detailed in Appendix A. This index pertains to structured programs that invite parent participation or training at the school, as well as structured home-based activities for parent and child.

Significance of mean differences, based on ANOVA or chi-square test, appears above the variable: *, $p < .05$; **, $p < .01$; ***, $p < .001$.

Standard deviations and f-values available.

eral preliminary models to disentangle the effects of differing school contexts. Technical readers may obtain these regression analyses from the authors.

Public-conversion charter schools (making up 16% of sampled charters) look stronger on conventional gauges of equity compared to start-ups and private-conversion schools. For example, the median teacher salary was significantly higher in public-conversion charters (about $4,600 higher than start-ups on average; the β coefficient is significant at $p < .005$), compared to the other two types, after taking into account school grade level, urban or suburban setting, and public or private management.[6] This is partially explained by the fact that the mean public-conversion teacher has 9 years of experience, compared to 6 years for the average start-up teacher (Table 5.4).

The average share of students eligible for lunch subsidies is almost 10% higher in public-conversion charters as a share of total enrollment, compared to start-ups ($p < .001$). And public-conversion schools employ fewer teachers who are not fully credentialed (about 21% fewer than start-ups as a share of the school's mean total teaching staff; $p < .0001$), after taking into account the other covariates.

When we focus on the localized conceptions of fairness, public-conversion and elementary charters report more discrete programs aimed at parent participation ($p < .002$ and $p < .0001$, respectively), again after taking into account the other aspects of school context. Private school conversions tend to be more innovative in creating methods for strengthening student–teacher relationships, again compared to start-ups (the base; $p < .06$).

Central-city charters, not surprisingly, serve more diverse children and families, as we saw in the descriptive analysis. The share of students eligible for lunch subsidies is 18% higher in central-city charters compared to suburban charter schools ($p < .0001$). These more urban schools also report about 12% more teachers who are not fully credentialed compared to suburban and rural schools ($p < .002$). And central-city teachers report less convergence in staff beliefs and less consistent support from their principal than do teachers in suburban or rural schools ($p < .02$).[7]

CONCLUSIONS: CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

These findings reveal wide variability among charter schools in their interest in, or capacity to, advance fairness and equity. The organizational history of a charter school—especially whether it is a converted public school rather than a start-up—makes a large difference in the resources it has mobilized, quality of teachers, salaries paid to teachers and principals, and the school's propensity to serve children from lower-income families, especially Black children.

Public-conversion charters tend to be better resourced but not always more equitable along old conceptions of equity. They are more vigilant in identifying English learners yet, overall, serve a lower share of African American students. Public-conversion charters also display more numerous efforts to involve parents compared to start-ups.

This more resourceful character of public-conversions may stem from stronger funding streams, or perhaps from an a priori spirit of public schooling—manifest before and after conversion to charter status. Or it may be that public-conversion charters display a greater survival rate, compared to poorly resourced start-ups that may suffer from higher mortality. Survival of the fittest may benefit conversion charters that do not sever their ties with home districts and the resources these interdependencies yield.

Attending to Low-Performing Students

One troubling finding is that charter schools overall rarely draw Title I funds to serve eligible children, even though 43% are reportedly eligible for subsidized lunches. Even charters in central cities reported that just 5% received services supported by Title I. The average public-conversion charter identified just 10% of its students as limited in English proficiency. It could be that charters are disproportionately serving middle-class Latino families where Spanish is no longer students' home language. More likely, charter schools appear to be uninterested in identifying children's language proficiencies. More research should look into why support efforts are not being mounted for children from lower-income families.

The disparate quality of charter school teachers is another important issue to explore further. Credentials are not the only valid gauge of teacher quality (see Chapter 1, this volume). But 51% of all charter teachers in start-ups are not fully credentialed. This share drops to 28% among public-conversion charters and rises to 60% among private school conversions.

Charter schools managed by private companies rely more heavily on teachers who are not fully credentialed (55% of their staff on average) compared to schools operating under district boards (where 45% are not fully credentialed). Privately managed charters do serve higher shares of Latino students and children from poor families, offer slightly stronger benefit packages, pay principals slightly less, are less likely to have specialized educational missions, and employ teachers who report lower levels of influence within their schools.

Generally, low levels of teacher resources and benefits may stem from the fact that privately managed schools are more frequently found in lower-

income communities compared to the typical location of publicly managed schools. Why privately managed schools report less commitment to alternative programs, employ teaches who feel less influence, and rely on less experienced teachers are questions that cry out for further research. On balance, the resource flows that conversions experience may outweigh the claimed efficiencies pursued by privately managed charters. On the other hand, *if* the latter can boost student performance levels at lower costs, then lessons about cost-effectiveness may abound.

Who Will Equalize Charter School Opportunities?

We are left with a broader, more troubling question: Do public authorities possess the political will or legitimacy to address the disparities observed among charter schools as revealed by this analysis?

The charter movement is founded in part on the assumption that excessive state authority and the bureaucratic organization of schooling must be surrounded and confined. And in many quarters—from state legislatures to local school boards—there's an attitude that charter schools asked for autonomy, so let's allow them to sink or swim on their own accord.

Two problems arise, however, if public authorities choose to ignore questions of fairness and equity across charter schools. First, charters may be reproducing structured forms of inequality based on unequal levels of resources and insufficient attention to low-performing and non-English-speaking students. We have detailed how start-up charters in particular display weaker resources, less qualified and lower-paid teachers, and even less attention to engaging parents. Start-ups comprise the bulk of all charter schools—three-fourths of all schools in the national sample. Privately managed charters, to their credit, serve disproportionately higher numbers of low-income communities. But similar to start-ups, they are serving central-city neighborhoods with lower levels of resources compared to suburban charters. So, unless the state steps in—or charter associations seriously raise fairness and equity concerns—the movement will reproduce the very inequalities that charter advocates claim they will erase.

Second, charter advocates have shifted the modern discourse around equity and fairness down to very local levels of civil society. Rhetoric around options and community are replacing the old conceptions of equal access, equal inputs, and comparable measures of teacher quality. This conceptual shift is shaking how we think about fairness in the radically decentralized pockets of the education sector. This debate is important and may open up discussion on how to define what's fair in garden-variety public schools. But as the old conceptions of fairness erode, charter advocates inadvertently subvert the state's legitimacy in trying to make all segments of public schooling more fair. As some charter advocates have recognized in recent years, they occasionally need a *strong* and active state—when it comes to education funding and regulatory standards—not a weak and diminished political structure.

Future Work on Fairness

The research community has been slow to explore how charter schools may be advancing fairness in their own terms, offering organizational alternatives, tighter school communities, and participatory social rules for teachers and parents alike. We found that charters vary less along these new conceptions of fairness, under differing school contexts, compared to wider inequities when it comes to material resources, staff qualities, and which students gain access. Future research, however, might build from both logic and concrete indicators when it comes to assessing fairness and equity—both among charters and when charters are compared to garden-variety public schools.

Focused work on start-up charters—which continue to make up the bulk of all charter schools—might ask whether they are advancing teacher well-being and advancing *student* achievement with fewer resources compared to conversion charters. The ability of the latter to hire more experienced teachers and pay them more does not necessarily lead to higher student performance. In fact, many charter advocates argue that it's a different spirit and social commitments, not school inputs, that power their success. Let's test this claim empirically, looking at different kinds of charter schools. The life cycles and mortality rates of start-ups and conversions also deserve more research. It may be that conversion charters are more robust, compared to start-ups, because only the strong survive.

Finally, we know almost nothing about how state policies aid, subvert, or simply ignore the health of charter schools. Certain state policies may be moderating the between-school disparities that we have illuminated. Conversely, certain state policies may exacerbate how charters are reproducing unequal outcomes for children and teachers.

This leads to a dilemma for charter advocates: Their minimalist instincts, when it comes to state activism, may act to reinforce the resource gaps that appear to be dragging down start-up and privately managed charter schools. Put another way, inaction by the state may advantage public-conversion charters that are disproportionately serving suburban families. And if state policymakers elect to ignore such disparities, they again forfeit political authority and, inadvertently perhaps, undercut the charter movement's own legitimacy over time.

NOTES

1. Authors are listed alphabetically. Gordon Gibbings helped in reviewing earlier literature. Special thanks to Luis Huerta for his plentiful contributions to our thinking over the years. This work is supported by the Hewlett Foundation and the Spencer Foundation's research apprenticeship program at Berkeley's Graduate School of Education.

2. The original list of charter schools provided by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) included 1,122 that were operating during the 1998–1999 schoolyear. By the following year, when the SASS survey was conducted, 112 schools had shut down, resulting in 1,010 schools included in the sampling frame. Methodological details appear in the Technical Notes of Gruber and colleagues (2002, p. 195ff).

3. All significance levels are derived from ANOVA or chi-square tests unless otherwise mentioned. F or χ^2 values are available.

4. Principals and teachers reported on their perceived levels of influence (along a 4-point scale) on each of six items, including influence over student performance standards, evaluating and hiring new teachers, setting discipline policies, establishing a curriculum at the school, the content of in-service professional development, and deciding how the school budget will be spent.

5. These items included "The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging" and "The principal knows what kind of a school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff." Appendix A includes details and inter-item reliability statistics.

6. All regression findings stem from weighted least-squares analyses. Standard error terms are not adjusted for possible design effects resulting from the nesting of units within particular states; marginal significance levels should be interpreted cautiously. Regression statistics are available.

7. Weaker relationships and larger error terms were observed when estimating coefficients for central-city, suburban, and rural schools with alternative bases for the weighted least-squares models.

CHAPTER 6

Balancing Act: Educational Management Organizations and Charter School Autonomy

Katrina E. Bulkley

All things considered, you can go from one school to the next and essentially see the same type of program in place. . . . A teacher from one of those schools [in another state] could come to one of our schools here and still, you know, be able to function quite well.

—Representative of Educational Management Organization

What we did is we stressed to all of our people that we give them the car. We give the destination, with the parameters . . . we don't choose the road for them.

—Representative of Educational Management Organization

What we can do, if need be, we can go in and assist a school in developing their own curriculum for a particular discipline. . . . There is really no area that we can't assist them in, but again, we sit back and wait until we are asked to do it as opposed to imposing it.

—Representative of Educational Management Organization

As charter schools have flourished nationally over the last decade, one of the most intriguing—and controversial—aspects of their growth has been the increasing use of contracts with both for-profit and nonprofit companies, often called education management organizations (EMOs), that take responsibility for a wide range of school-related activities.[1] EMOs, including large companies (such as Edison Schools, Mosaica Advantage, and Chancellor-Beacon) and a growing number of smaller companies, offer a range of services to schools. Services offered by EMOs include administrative services such as payroll, budgeting, and personnel management as well as educational services/programs such as curricula, assessments, and teacher