

Talk

about Today's Public Schools

Editor's Note:

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Funding for charter schools draws resources from public schools

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One of the interim charges in the Texas Senate was to, "Study the approval, expansion and revocation of public charter schools in Texas..." To that end, a Senate Education Committee hearing was recently held and a couple of very interesting items came out of that hearing.

Senators heard, for the first time I believe, that the often-stated phrase that charter schools in Texas have a 100,000 student waiting list is only partially true. TEA staff reported that while the waitlist exists, it only applies to specific charter schools. Staff went on to say that when you examine charter school capacity across the state there are actually 108,000 seats available over current enrollment.


Public tax dollars continue to expand charters even though 30 percent of current capacity is unutilized

This situation exists while we continue to allow the expansion of charter schools at a rapid pace. In fact, there are only about 250,000 students enrolled in charter schools across the entire state of Texas (about five percent of all public school students). That means that of a capacity of around 358,000 there are 108,000 empty seats. That is over 30 percent!

The other revelation examined by Senators was a new study on the funding of charter schools versus that of ISDs. A well-respected educational consulting group released a report examining the various

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funding structures. Among their findings was that (quoted from a Texas Association of School Boards report) if ISDs (of all sizes) were funded like charters, total state support would increase by over \$4.7 billion.

That \$4.7 billion would equate to about \$940 per public school student per year or over \$20,000 per elementary classroom! What a dramatic difference that could make to Texas public schools.

Playing field is built to advantage charter schools

This is what we mean when we say that funding for charter schools does draw resources from independent school districts. Even though the playing field is built to advantage charter schools, when comparisons are made between charters and ISDs, like the ones posted [here](#), ISDs almost always perform better.

While we wait on a decision from the Texas Supreme Court in the funding lawsuit, one can only hope that the justices have access to this data.