



Analytics

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RE: Delaware School Choice

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According to the Wall Street Journal, Republican Ron DeSantis owes his gubernatorial victory in Florida to the support of about 100,000 African American women who were advocates for *school choice*. Of the roughly 650,000 black women who voted in the Florida election, 18% chose Mr. DeSantis. Could this happen in Delaware?

Certainly, the Delaware public schools have not delivered to the black community. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test over 80% of black public school 8th grade students test below proficient in reading and math. Overall, according to the Delaware Department of Education's report card, 47% of all public school students are below proficient in reading and 58% are below proficient in math.

Delaware's 23 charter schools provide *choice* for 16,364 of the almost 141,000 public school students. It is notable that while 30% of all Delaware public school children are cited as black, 36% of the charter school students are black. Apparently, black parents are looking for an alternative to the traditional public school.

Delaware Department of Education data shows that the state's charter schools perform better on the report card than the traditional public schools (61% proficient in reading and 49% proficient in math) and have a lower rate of out-of-school suspensions and incidents of violence. The spending per pupil is 20% lower in the charter schools and the average teacher salaries are 13% less.

There appears to be selective segregation as eight charter schools have enrollment that is 75% black or greater (e.g., Edison with 97%, East Side with 93% and Kuumba with 91%) and one charter school where enrollment is 74% Latino (Academia Antonia Alonso). The three largest charter schools (Newark, Odyssey, MOT) do have a racial balance similar to the general population. And charter school enrollment is by *choice*.

The decision to teach in a charter school is by *choice* as well. Four of the Delaware charter schools have average teacher salaries that exceed the public school average. Adjusted for inflation, the public school average teacher salary today is less than it was in 1990. And charter school teachers are not subject to the recent surge in public school administrators telling them how and what to teach.



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In his recent budget presentation, Governor Carney advocates giving all Delaware children an equal opportunity to succeed. The Governor sets aside \$75 million over three years for English learners, low-income students and mental health support and \$50 million for construction of a new Wilmington public school and renovations.

Why not respond to the citizens who are already voting with their feet and increase *choice* for students and their parents through an expanded charter school system to efficiently enhance the opportunity to succeed?

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