

Now where was I? Oh, yes, charter schools (14)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Charter Schools, Education, Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues March 13, 2019

(14th in a series on Education and Charter Schools)

Gadfly went to sleep on charter schools. We were beginning to think about how they affect the Bethlehem Area School District. Through cost. Taking resources from other needs. They are funded through our tax dollars. And thus they affect us all through our wallets.

It's been a month since Gadfly posted on charter schools. Let's pick up the ball again.

In post 11 **Where do all the students go and why? (11)** we saw that approximately 2100 BASD students attend charter schools, about 13% of the total student population, at a cost of 29 million in charter tuition this year, which is roughly 10% of the budget.

And we saw that BASD-area students go to 12 charter schools, but about half to the Lehigh Valley Academy Charter School.

Gadfly suggested that we take a closer look to try to figure out why so many are going to charter schools and especially to LVA.

Gadfly has to admit he kinda likes the idea of choice.

We can see some differences in the schools that would account for their attraction.

Two follow structured national and international programs. LVA is "an IB World School." International Baccalaureate. Circle of Seasons is based on the Core Principles of Public Waldorf Education.

Several have a special focus. Like the Arts. For instance, our Charter Arts on 3rd St. is "a place where being an artist is celebrated." Admission is "academically blind." Students are accepted based only upon their artistic talent and potential. They audition for acceptance into one of seven arts majors: dance, instrumental music, literary arts, production design, theatre, visual art, and vocal music

Interesting. If you have a special talent you want to develop, or if you simply believe that such training has a general beneficial and perhaps utilitarian value, you can choose a school with a specific focus.

One looks very career/job oriented. Executive Education says “Our unique business education program is designed to meet the needs of the Lehigh Valley. With the growth of the Neighborhood Improvement Zone, we want to be able to provide quality employees for new jobs that are made available by this growth.”

Several have a multicultural or dual language emphasis. Appealing, perhaps, to immigrant populations.

The Lincoln founder “dreamed” of opening a public school where “at-risk” children and youth, who live in “at-risk” environments, and who are deemed “at risk” by our society, would receive a free, high-quality public education. As one of their students said, it was created “for students who want or need a second chance to have a better future.”

One has a mission statement quoting the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy. Wow!

Interesting range.

And like I said, I kinda like the idea of choice.

So Gadfly is getting more and more the idea that the “problem” with charter schools is not so much the curricular aims but how the schools are funded and how they are accountable.

Let’s come back next time and look in a bit more detail at LVA, the choice of about half of our BASD charter school students.