

Charter schools: data to help us think about comparisons with other districts (9)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Charter Schools, Education, Serious Issues February 5, 2019

(9th in a series on Education)

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Data from a Pennsylvania Department Education report

2018-2019 Building Data Report

Here's an executive summary:

Bethlehem Area School District has **57.92 percent of its students enrolled in the Federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program**. The program is a measure of area wealth/poverty some agencies and granting institutions use to apportion funds for educational need.

I have ranked BASD's three tiers (elementary, middle, and high) by ascending percentage of participation so you see the degree of participation by each school's catchment area. It's a good indicator of household income.

Fun fact: Liberty and Freedom are about the same.

Allentown School District has **100 percent** of its students enrolled in the program.

To the west of us (and note that Bethlehem is classified as a Northampton County school, entitling residents to NCC resident tuition):

- Parkland School District, which is partly in the city of Allentown, has **24.59 percent** enrolled in the program.
- Salisbury School District, which abuts Fountain Hill/BASD to the east and Parkland to the west, has **41.17 percent** in the program.
- East Penn School District (Emmaus) has **25.71 percent** in the program.
- The wealth winner is Southern Lehigh School District, with **19.02 percent** in the program.

To the question of charter schools: if the superintendents of each of the districts I cited answered the same questions as Dr. Roy (THANK YOU FOR YOUR PROMPTNESS, DR. ROY!!!), what differences would we see in terms of students leaving their districts for charters?

I am a Southern Lehigh graduate (1973) and am proud of the great public education I received. As a resident of Bethlehem, I'm proud of the effort the teachers and administrators make to turn out great graduates. I appreciate their dedication and understand they have challenges far different from what they may have found in classrooms 50 years ago.

John