

# Charter Schools: Let's reset (2)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Charter Schools, Education, Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues January 21, 2019  
(2nd in a series on Education)

[Prothero, Arianna. \(2018, August 9\). Charter Schools. \*Education Week\*.](#)  
The impact of charter schools on our taxes has been significant, and Gadfly has wanted to investigate and learn more.

So Gadfly started a thread on charter schools a week ago, suggesting we start with a 2017 article focused on Bethlehem.

That was a mistake.

That Carol Burris article took me into the mud too deeply and too fast. Let's reset with the above basic article in the respected *Education Week* for a big picture overview.

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“As the first credible competition to the traditional system of public schooling—and a direct competitor for tight resources—charter schools are the source of ongoing controversy and debate.”

## What Are Charter Schools? How Do They Work?

- a tuition-free school of choice that is publicly funded but independently run
- conceived to loosen red tape around public schools
- conceived to free up educators to innovate
- exempted from many of the state laws and regulations that govern public schools
- bound to the terms of a contract, or “charter,” that lays out a school’s mission, academic goals, fiscal guidelines, and accountability requirements
- enjoying the “charter bargain”: more freedom for more accountability
- do not draw students from an assigned area
- families choose to send their children

## **Who Runs Charter Schools?**

- a school leader or principal overseen by an appointed board
- unlike public schools, not overseen directly by an elected school board
- an authorizer with power to approve and close down
- a growing share are run by larger management organizations

## **Are Charter Schools Non-Profit?**

- many of the best-known networks are run by nonprofit charter management organizations, or CMOs
- some states allow for-profit companies, education management organizations, EMOs
- non-profit schools may hire for-profit companies to manage the school

## **How Are Charter Schools Funded?**

- state and local money based on the number of students enrolled
- federal funds to provide special education services

## **Are They Public or Private?**

- a source of debate depending on how you define a public school
- generally viewed under state laws as public schools whose students are required to take all the same assessments as those who attend traditional district schools

## **Pros**

- classroom innovation
- freedom of choice
- competition for students spurs improvement
- alternative curricular approaches
- focus on specific fields of study
- virtual or cyber schools

## **Cons**

- divert vital resources from cash-strapped school districts
- educate proportionately fewer students with disabilities
- cherry-pick students
- punitive discipline practices
- more racially segregated
- financial mismanagement
- nepotism

## **Effectiveness: What the Research Says**

- mixed, contradictory

Ok, now Gadfly feels a little bit better. How about you?