We Can Learn from the Charter Middle School Model: Teachers Talk

Abstract

While serving as a university supervisor for a student teacher at an area charter school in Southeast Georgia during the fall of 2006, it became obvious that the middle school students at this school were succeeding. A few months later, this school was honored as one of the top ten charter schools in the nation. It was then that this examiner decided to administer a face-to-face survey to the charter school faculty during a regularly scheduled faculty meeting. In the fall of 2007, this examiner asked faculty to respond to two respective questions: 1.) How does the charter middle school differ from the traditional public middle school? 2.) How does the charter middle school classroom differ from the traditional public middle school classroom? The survey revealed that the teachers were able to successfully rank the characteristics they valued most in the charter middle school environment and in the charter classroom. Finally, the examiner decided to return to that same charter school in the fall of 2010 to query the same questions.

Background

Charter schools have come a distance since the first charter school opened its doors in 1992. Bluffview School in Winona, Minnesota began as an independent Montessori school in 1987. No one knew, not even the parents who helped to organize it, that one day it would be the site of the first official charter school slated to open in 1992.

During the spring of 1991, the Minnesota legislature was debating a new concept that might be called a "charter school." The charter bill before the legislature was delineated as follows: 1.) Charter schools would be public schools yet exist independently from school boards. 2.) Charter schools would be exempt from traditional public school mandates. 3.) There would be no tuition charge for k-12 school programs and 4.) Teachers in the school would serve as the

majority members on charter school governing boards. The charter bill was successfully passed in the 1991 session of the Minnesota legislature, but then the pressure was on to create a "charter" and seek approval. Thus, the first charter (--ISD861) was created and presented to the Winona school board on October 21, 1991. Shortly after, on December 10, 1991, the state board voted and approved the newly created charter. Consequently, the first U.S. charter school, a Montessori school, was born on December 10, 1991 in Winona, Minnesota (Dorer, "The First Charter School," 2002).

Introduction

The charter school movement has ballooned into the spotlight as one of the most controversial and fast-growing education reform efforts of recent times (Barr, 2000). Charter schools have been introduced as a catalyst for reinvigorating and improving the effectiveness of public schools. The need for change gained national attention after the publication of reports such as Nation at Risk which alleged that the American public school system was in a state of crisis (O'Reilly & Bosetti, 2000).

Nationwide there are more than 1 million students enrolled in a total of 3,940 charter schools operating in the U.S. this year (Center for Education Reform, 2007). Indeed, both liberals and conservatives have founded charter schools. The largest numbers of charter schools are in the states of Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Texas, and Florida. Charter schools are a relatively new phenomenon in American public education that merit the attention of all parties interested in the education of the nation's youth (Braun & Tierre, 2006).

Review of the Literature

The review will briefly describe the characteristics of most charter schools. It will then segway into the problems faced by most charters. The review concludes with research studies

on the impact charters have had on academic achievement.

There is a common perception that charter schools operate freely without acknowledgement of state and federal regulations and laws. However, charter schools are generally not free from regulations relating to class size, graduation, laws relating to bilingual and special education, health, safety, and civil rights. Charters tend to average around 300 students. Teachers are involved in curricular and personnel decisions. Parents serve on school committees with genuine decision-making rights.

The charter which establishes each school is a performance contract between the school authorizer and organizer. The charter is a document explicating the school's vision, mission, goals, mandates, targeted student population, as well as ways to measure success. Authorization may be headed by a single agency, such as the local school board, the State Department of Education, community colleges, state colleges or universities. Most charters are granted for three to five years. Renewal is dependent upon their success. Nationally only 4 percent of charters granted have been revoked and rarely because of low student performance or failure to meet educational objectives.

Charters have been revoked for reasons such as accumulation of large budget deficits, financial mismanagement, embezzlement, declining attendance, violation of laws relating to open meetings, records, inaccurate attendance, and recordkeeping (Fusarelli, 2002). Charter schools may be described as public-private hybrids since they maintain the attributes of both public and private schools. They are public in that they must report to accountability systems and are open to all students. They are private because parents have influence in the schools and each school has its own unique charter and governing board (O'Reilly & Bosetti, 2000).

Charter schools are self-governing and free to design their own curricula, instructional approaches, hours of operation, and student grouping structures. State laws require charter school students to achieve the same standards adopted for all public schools, and they must be evaluated by the same state-specified standardized test (Brock, 2006).

Charter school governance represents authentic site-based decision-making rather than control by school district boards. Charter school governing boards range from 3 to 20 members who are not elected by the general public. Charter school boards must adhere to open-meeting laws. There are three key objectives that boards are expected to carry out on behalf of taxpayers: 1.) student learning 2.) effective management and accountability for school funds 3.) fair and lawful school policies that protect those involved with charters. A charter school board that successfully meets these objectives will certainly aid in increasing enrollment (Carpenter, National Charter Schools Institute, 2006).

Despite the rosy picture created, charters have faced opponents within the field of education, including teacher unions, school boards, and university teacher education programs wanting to maintain the status quo. Critics have reported that accountability and innovations are weak at best. Test scores are low and many facilities are deplorable. Other troubles include greedy people who poorly manage the schools. There are management companies that charge exorbitant fees. About 10 percent of charters were founded and operated by companies. Critics question whether charter schools have the ability to handle special needs students. The record on students with disabilities is mixed. Charter schools demand extraordinary personal commitment, planning, and organizing. Teachers and administrators working in charter schools suffer from burnout (Turner, 2002).

Some charter schools receive less than 100% of the per-pupil operating revenues. They typically do not receive funding for facilities comparable with districts. Several studies indicate that teacher certification rates, experience, and salaries in charter schools lag those of teachers in traditional schools. Since they serve large numbers of minority and low-income students, the differences in resources, may raise the question of racial equity. Charter school laws in 25 states and Washington, D.C. limit the supply of charter schools and include caps on the number of charter schools allowed in a state. There are limits on the number of charters that can be awarded each year. There is a cap on funds sent from school districts to charter schools (Vergari, 2007).

Segregation is one that school-choice advocates continuously ponder. The evidence suggests there is some cause for concern especially in the area of class-based segregation. The data on whether or not there is an increase in racial and ethnic segregation is mixed and not conclusive at this time, though U.S. public schools have experienced increasing segregation along racial and ethnic lines (Poetter & Knight-Abowitz, 2001).

The Hudson Institute Study (Finn, Mano & Bierlein, 1996) is supportive of charters for managing resources, infusing new ideas, and improving student achievement. Good & Braden (2000) reviewed the literature and concluded there is no evidence that charters achieve diversity or any academic progress. A Brooking Institution National Report (2003) reports that test scores at charter schools are rising sharply and out-gaining traditional schools.

Barr, Sadovik & Visconti (2006) did a comparison between student achievement of fourth graders in charter schools and district public schools in Newark, New Jersey. They found that some charter schools are able to achieve performance above predicted, given their school and student characteristics, while others students do worse than predicted. Palmer, Terrell, Hassel & Svahn (2006) reviewed the data on how the charter schools were working in Ohio.

They assessed that only four in 10 charter schools in Ohio eight districts are proficient in math. Just more than half meet state standards in reading.

Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (Bracey, 2005) did a study of Texas data that found students in charter schools showed smaller gains in achievement than students in public schools. Helen Ladd of Duke University and Robert Bifulco of the University of Connecticut (Bracey, 2005) published a study that students in North Carolina charters exhibited gains smaller in reading and math, on the average, than the gains those same students had when they were enrolled in traditional public schools.

Caroline Hoxby and John Rockoff (2005) did research on three Chicago charter schools and found that because these charters had the lottery for selecting students, the research team could compare the achievement of students who were admitted with similar students who remained in a traditional public school. The researchers found strong, positive effects of the charter school experience for younger children. Data collected by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2003 for the U.S. Department of Education showed that the longer a charter school was open, the lower it scored. Only the scores of schools opened for one year or less were above the national average, which was 234 in math and 217 in reading. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) found the charter school data on the NAEP website in 2003 and did their own analysis in 2004. AFT reported that charter schools did not come off well when compared with regular public schools even when controlled for family income and location. The gap in achievement between minorities and whites was as large as it was in the public schools.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) in 2003 was asked to conduct a pilot study as part of the 2003 national assessment of fourth graders in reading and mathematics.

Charter school students took the same reading and mathematics assessments at the same time as students in all other schools. After adjusting for student characteristics, charter school mean scores in reading and mathematics were lower on the average, than those for public noncharter schools. SRI International (Bracey, 2005) conducted a study and found charter schools performing below regular public schools. A Harvard University Study (2004) reported that charter school students are likely to be more proficient in reading and mathematics than students in nearby traditional schools. Charter schools opened for more than 5 years tend to outpace traditional schools up to 15 percent.

Overall, the research on whether students achieve at a higher level than comparable students in regular public schools is not conclusive. Although some gains in achievement have been made at some schools these were generally small and inconclusive (Brouillette, 2001).

Method

The purpose of this investigation was to determine what teachers perceived as major differences between a charter middle school and a traditional public middle school. This study was designed to answer two qualitative research questions on what makes a charter middle school different from the traditional middle schools in the district. Furthermore, the examiner wanted to know if there would be instructional or administrative strategies that traditional public schools could model. Generally, the investigation was driven by two major questions for querying:

1.) How does the day-to-day operations of a charter middle school compare to a traditional middle school? 2.) How does the charter classroom operate in comparison to the traditional middle school classroom?

Participants

In the spring of 2007, 23 charter middle school teachers responded to the survey. This charter school is part of a public urban system of 33,400 students in southeast Georgia. Over one-half of the schools in the district are Title I schools. Overall, 57.5% of the student population is eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. The charter middle school enrolls 47% African-Americans, 44% white, 2% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 1% American Indian, and 2% multi-racial. The charter school enrolls 386 students. The sample consisted of 6 (26.0%) males and 17 (73.9%) female teachers. Racially, there were 3 (13%) African American teachers and 20 (86.9%) Caucasian teachers. Approximately 21.7 percent of the sample had taught between 1-3 years, 17.3 percent between 4-6 years, 13.0 percent between 7-10 years, 13.0 percent between 11-15 years, and 34.7 percent between 16-35 years. The participants taught sixth grade (21.7%), seventh grade (26.0%), eighth grade (26.0%), and all grades (26.0%). There were 6 (26.0%) math teachers, 2 (8.6%) language arts teachers, 3 (13.0%) science teachers, 3 (13.0%) social studies teachers, and 2 (8.6%) reading teachers. Other subjects represented were music 1 (4.3%), art 1 (4.3%), computers 1 (4.3%), physical education 3 (13.0%), and special education 1 (4.3%).

Instrument

The survey was entitled We Can Learn from the Charter Middle School Model: Teachers Talk (2007). The survey required teachers to check demographics: years of experience, gender, grades taught, and subjects taught. Teachers were asked to respond to two respective questions in short phrases or sentences: 1.) How does the charter middle school differ from the traditional public middle school? 2.) How does the charter middle school classroom differ from the traditional public middle school classroom? The examiner met with respondents 20 minutes before a scheduled faculty meeting to administer the survey. See appendix A and B.

Analysis & Results

The examiner analyzed question #1 on how does the charter middle school differ from the traditional public middle school by listing all qualitative responses in a frequency table. Similar responses were then labeled (color-coded) by key words contained in them (e.g. small classes, ability to experiment, fewer behavior problems). After similar responses were labeled, categories were chosen. The categories chosen to represent the responses were as follows: curricular decisions, self-governing administration, high expectations for students, high expectations for teachers, parental involvement, student behavior, and class size. All labeled responses were then placed in new tables by categories. The frequency of responses (per table) was totaled and percentages were computed for each based on the number of respondents in sample.

Respondents rated the category of curricular decisions as the number one difference between the charter school and the traditional middle school. There were 18 (78.2%) respondents who included phrases such as “less textbooks”, “more flexible”, “ability to experiment”, and “more latitude to develop ideas” in this category.

The second highest rating was under the category of self-governing administration. There were 17 (73.9%) respondents who gave comments about this category. The respondents used phrases such as “more meetings”, “can hire and release teachers”, “more mandated parental involvement”, and “able to make and follow own rules”.

The third highest rating represented two categories, parental involvement and higher expectations for teachers. Seven respondents (30.4%) wrote comments on each of these categories. There were comments such as “more involved parents”, “parents communications higher”, “expectations for faculty higher”, and “teachers work three times harder”.

The fourth highest rating was category four, student behavior. Four respondents (17.3%) wrote such comments as “fewer behavior problems”, “student behavior more positive”, “students more cooperative”.

The fifth highest response dealt with high expectations for students. There were 3 respondents (13.0%) who wrote comments such as “the expectations for students higher than traditional middle schools”. The number sixth and last category was class size. Two respondents (8.6%) mentioned “small” classes. See appendix D and C.

In analyzing question #2 on how does the charter middle school classroom differ from the traditional public middle school classroom, a frequency table was similarly created as explained in analyzing question #1. However, there were eight categories chosen to represent the qualitative responses from this question. The select categories for question #2 were these: student behavior, instruction, higher expectations for students, class size, self-governing administration, high expectations for teachers, core knowledge, and parental involvement.

Student behavior ranked as the number one difference between the charter middle school classroom and the traditional middle school classroom. The responses contained phrases such as “few behavior issues”, “do not stop for behavior problems so often”, “can focus on teaching rather than management”. There were 10 (43.4%) respondents who made comments pertaining to this category.

The second category for 9 (39.1%) respondents was instruction. The respondents listed phrases such as “can be very creative”, “more diversity in teaching methods”, “high innovations when planning instruction”, and “activities more cognitive and more hands-on”.

The third category was higher expectations for students. There were 8 (34.7%) respondents who indicated this as a major difference between the schools. Respondents wrote

"higher expectation levels of effort from students" and "greater expectations for student participation".

The fourth highest response represented three categories: class size, self-governing administration, and high expectations for teachers. Four respondents (17.3%) in each of these categories listed a few of these as differences: "class size much smaller", "size of classes smaller", "more support for teachers when dealing with parents", "students not rotating from other schools once school starts", "more accountability for teachers", and "more duties and supervision for teachers".

The fifth response pertained to core knowledge. There were 3 (13.0%) who listed this as a key difference for the classroom. The respondents wrote "use core knowledge" and "classroom focus on core knowledge plus state standards".

The final response mentioned was parental involvement as key. Two respondents (8.6%) included this as a difference. The comments were "more accountability in our parents" and "parents support of student progress". See appendix D, C, and E.

Discussion

After reflecting on the findings, it seems evident that teachers want to be active participants in their school. Middle school teachers want to use their own procedures and strategies to authenticate a curriculum that matches the characteristics of middle school learners. Middle school learners are curious, sociable, egocentric, and need exploratory experiences as well as physical movement (National Middle School Association, *This We Believe*, 2003). Teachers value the right to design instruction that they know will work from years of practical experiences. Yet they know firsthand from Rosenshine and Furst (1971) that instructing must begin in a series of small steps and that prompts work in explaining procedures. They are already

knowledgeable about the research and know the efficacy of Marzano's teaching strategies such as summarizing, notetaking, identifying similarities and differences, and cooperative learning. Regardless of the curriculum selected in a school (e.g. Core Knowledge) it seems that teachers want to be active participants.

Teachers want to reside in a school where administrators and parents have real power. It seems the ability to reside in a school that is self-governing is appealing to teachers. They want principals who will give them a clear voice in decisions and maintain high visibility at school (Marzano, *What Works in Schools*, 2003). They want to know that their school is the epitome of site-based management with true decision-making power resting with administrators. They want to know where final decisions begin, end, and reside. At the same time, they want involved parents who have bought into the school's mission, purpose, and philosophy. They want parents involved in their children's education. Teachers know that researchers like Garvin (1984) have found that parental involvement is crucial to school effectiveness for a child's education.

Teachers understand that they must be held to a higher standard because they mold the lives of our middle school youngsters. They understand that they are role-models that are being imitated (Bandura, 1986). Teachers know that they must be professionals who are consistent, and fair. David Hansen (*The Call to Teach*, 1995) explains it best when he says that these teachers understand that teaching is a vocation that is about service to others; it is about being an architect with the skills and the imagination to do the work.

Teachers value working with students who are well-behaved and will rise to their expectations. Teachers know that they can go about the business of teaching when there are no interruptions. They understand that learning occurs in an orderly environment. At the same time, teachers understand that students will rise to their expectations and will reach extraordinary

heights if they give their students clear goals, instructions, and the tools they will need to carry out their assignments. Also, with small classes, teachers are more apt to correct misbehavior before it occurs. Jabob Kounin (1970) a known researcher in classroom management, call this "withitness," when a teacher notices all parts of the classroom at all times and responds to misbehavior in an appropriate and prompt manner. Finally, according to a *Phi Delta Kappa* poll (1996) teachers cited discipline as one of the major problems that public school teachers face today. Discipline was also ranked first among reasons why teachers leave the profession.

Conclusion

The charter school concept does hold promise, but schools will need time, money, the facilitative resources, as well as, dedicated workers to continue the struggle. Charter schools must continue to document academic achievement. Charter schools are not going away.

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Appendix A
Survey: We Can Learn from the Charter Middle School Model: Teachers Talk (2007)

Part I. Demographics

Please check the appropriate data below.

Race: Caucasian 20 (89.9%) African American 3 (13%) Asian ___ Hispanic ___ American Indian ___

Years of Experience: 1-3 21.7%
4-6 17.3%
7-10 13%
11-15 13%
16-35 34.7%

Sex: Male 6 (26.0%) Female 17 (73.9%) = 23 Total Respondents

Grade Level: 6 21.7% 7 26% 8 26.0% 6-8 26.0%

Subject(s) Presently Teaching:
Math 6 (26.0%)
Language Arts 2 (8.6%)
Science 3 (13.0%)
Social Studies 3 (13.0%)
Reading 2 (8.6%)
Music 1 (4.3%)
Art 1 (4.3%)
Computers 1 (4.3)
Physical Ed 3 (13.0%)
Special Education 1 (4.3%)

Part II. Questions

Please respond with short phrases or sentences.

1. How does the charter middle school differ from the traditional public middle school?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. How does the charter middle school classroom differ from the traditional public middle school classroom?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B
Survey: We Can Learn from the Charter Middle School Model: Teachers Talk (2010)

Part I. Demographics

Please check the appropriate data below.

Race: Caucasian 15 (71.4%) African American 6 (28.5%) Asian ___ Hispanic ___ American Indian ___

Years of Teaching Experience: 1-3 3 (14.2%)
4-6 4 (19%)
7-10 3 (14.2%)
11-15 6 (28.5%)
16-35 5 (23.8%)

Were you employed at this Oglethorpe Charter school in the spring of 2007? Yes 12 (57.1%) No 9 (42.8%)

Sex: Male 7 (33.3%) Female 14 (66.6%) = 21 Total Respondents

Grade Level: 6 5 (23.8%) 7 4 (19.0%) 8 6 (28.5%) 6-8 5 (23.8%)

Subject(s) Presently Teaching:
Math 5 (23.8%)
Language Arts 4 (19%)
Science 2 (9.5%)
Social Studies 3 (14.2%)
Reading 3 (14.2%)
Music 1 (4.7%)
Art 0
Computers 0
Physical Ed 0
Special Education 1 (4.7%)
Other 2 (9.5%)

Part II. Questions

Please respond with short phrases or sentences.

1. How does the charter middle school differ from the traditional public middle school?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. How does the charter middle school classroom differ from the traditional public middle school classroom?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

2010 Results

Question #1 How does the charter middle school differ from the traditional public middle school?

Ranking & Category	Total Responses/Percentages
#3 Curricular Decisions	9 (42.8%)
#2 Self-Governing Administration	15 (71.4%)
#1 Parental Involvement	16 (76.1%)
#0 High Expectations for Teachers	0 (0%)
#4 Student Behavior	5 (23.8%)
#0 High Expectations for Students	0 (0%)
#0 Class Size	0 (0%)

Question #2 How does the charter middle school classroom differ from the traditional public middle school classroom?

Ranking & Category	Total Responses/Percentages
#3 Student Behavior	6 (28.5%)
#1 Instruction	15 (71.4%)
#4 Higher Expectations for Students	5 (23.8%)
#2 Class Size	7 (33.3%)
#2 Self-Governing Administration	7 (33.3%)
#0 High Expectations for Teachers	0 (0%)
#6 Core Knowledge	1 (4.7%)
#5 Parental Involvement	2 (9.5%)

Appendix D

2007 Results

Question #1 How does the charter middle school differ from the traditional public middle school?

Ranking & Category	Total Responses/Percentages
#1 Curricular Decisions	18 (78.2%)
#2 Self-Governing Administration	17 (73.9%)
#3 Parental Involvement	7 (30.4%)
#3 High Expectations for Teachers	7 (30.4%)
#4 Student Behavior	4 (17.3%)
#5 High Expectations for Students	3 (13.0%)
#6 Class Size	2 (8.6%)

Question #2 How does the charter middle school classroom differ from the traditional public middle school classroom?

Ranking & Category	Total Responses/Percentages
#1 Student Behavior	10 (43.4%)
#2 Instruction	9 (39.1%)
#3 Higher Expectations for Students	8 (34.7%)
#4 Class Size	4 (17.3%)
#4 Self-Governing Administration	4 (17.3%)
#4 High Expectations for Teachers	4 (17.3%)
#5 Core Knowledge	3 (13.0%)
#6 Parental Involvement	2 (8.6%)

Appendix E

Raw Data for 2010

Question #1 How does the charter middle school differ from the traditional public middle school?

Parental Involvement
More parental support
Our parents attend our meetings and we get to know them.
Appropriate education partnering of parents
The student's parents are required to be more involved than traditional school.
We require partnering with our parents (volunteer hours).
We have more parental involvement which contributes to our success.
Close to parents
Parents have more responsibilities to meet the contract to continue.
More parent involvement
Parents are held accountable for not doing work.
Parents more involved and attend meetings and functions
Parents are required to complete hours for the school.
Parent involvement-more flexibility (scheduling)
Parental involvement was required did not see at previous three traditional schools
Support from parent/parent partnerships as outlined in charter
Parental accountability

Curricular Decisions
More autonomy to develop units and interventions
Freedom to teach
We are able to research and implement research-based teaching practices.
Charter schools allow more flexibility in curriculum.
Curriculum is more intense.
We have the capacity to employ innovative ideas, strategies for presenting the content and consistently striving to research new methods for reaching all types of students(sped, traditional, gifted)
Flexibility in teaching strategies and methods to enhance learning in the classroom

Core Knowledge
Core Knowledge Curriculum is enriching
We have complete second curriculum, core knowledge which includes critical concepts for our students-things that all kids should know

Self-Governing Administration
Our governing board; do not have restraints of traditional schools
Quarterly assessments
In control of our own test results
The rules here are expected to be adhered to.
The focus of the charter school is academic plus character focused.
Less requirement to do the same things the other schools in the district are doing
More flexibility with how to spend money, i.e., testing with ITBS
Don't have to follow same guidelines as the traditional public school.
We abide by the charter which founded our school/we the Governing Board
Charter schools have more freedom.
We have more liberty in making site-based decisions.
Charter schools set forth and uphold high standards for all students that attend at all ability levels.
Freedom from restrictions and policies
Enriching opportunities-not bound by all dates
We assume our students will be role models in the community and will go to college.

Student Behavior
Positive reinforcement for behavior modifications is implemented successfully.
Students are held accountable for all work and behavior.
Hold parents and students responsible for behavior with real consequences
Standards for behavior are higher.
Students held responsible for academics and actions

Question #2 How does the charter middle school classroom differ from the traditional public middle school classroom?

High Expectations for Students
Expectations are higher for students.
High expectations for all.
Students have strong desire to achieve and succeed vs. in other schools.
Want to learn more in a charter school
Respect is required and enforced.

Core Knowledge
We use core knowledge curriculum, the curriculum is more vigorous, more in depth.

Instruction
Flexibility is encouraged to meet student needs.
Like rotating schedule, we teach different students at different times
Can teach more slowly with math split
We are not teaching the same students each day at the same time.
Our instruction is more in depth because of time-frame in which we teach and because of additional support outside of the classroom (skills & gifted).
Teachers have more flexibility with delivery of content and teaching styles.
Technology implementation
Classroom teacher tends to have more autonomy over how material is taught.
Setting is instructive and engaged practice of content
The ability to be creative/innovative
Some autonomy for teachers, instructional style
Students get more attention from the teachers.
Our plans are individually tailored.
Bell to bell teaching
Community environment

Class Size
Charter school classroom tends to be much smaller than traditional public school classrooms.
Slightly smaller ratio of students to teachers-allow for more personal/intimate setting
Smaller classes-max of 25
Classroom sizes is smaller
Smaller class size
Class sizes are smaller
Smaller classes

Student Behavior
Less discipline problems
Zero tolerance for classroom disruption/disrespect
Students behave better.
Students are better in classroom.
Disciplinary interventions are kept to minimal in that students behave better than in traditional school
Students adhere to strict discipline code which allows teachers to teach.

Self-Governing Administration
Admin/teachers/parents/students partner together-we are a team
Teacher collaboration/resources not traditionally bound by certain district or state mandates
Schoolwide policies as determined by charter-homework policy, classroom policy
Every teacher per grade level teaches every child sibling preference
No new student after the first ten days
Not an option (parental involvement)
Is contractual (parent involvement)

Parental Involvement
Parental support not an option
Parental involvement is key and contractual in terms of support and achievement.

Other Responses
Excellent administrative support
Dept level decisions
Get supplies I need
Lot of pressure to keep higher scores