

Our Work in Public Charter Schools

FACT SHEET

WHAT WE BELIEVE

The work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in the U.S. and around the world, is driven by the belief that all lives have equal value. At home and abroad, we believe that every person should have the chance to live a healthy and productive life. In the United States, we focus on education as the key priority for investment to support mobility from poverty. We envision an education system that expands opportunity for all students – particularly for students in low-income communities and students of color.

Supporting teachers, schools, and communities

We have learned over the years – both from the field and from our own investments – about the challenges of improving student outcomes. We’ve seen that education driven by great teaching and strong school leadership creates opportunities for students. Students are most likely to succeed when schools have both. That is why our next chapter of investments in K-12 education focuses on this intersection. We are working to connect groups of schools that share a focus on data-driven, ongoing learning and to support them in applying approaches that both meet their specific needs and have demonstrated improvement in student achievement. We believe we have a role to play in catalyzing good ideas from educators and helping to scale those approaches, whether that’s innovative ways to teach students algebra or supporting charter schools in their efforts to effectively serve students with special needs. Additionally, we can support

the field by funding research and development to learn what’s working and help to drive innovation.

Research continues to demonstrate that high performing public charter schools accelerate achievement for Black, Latino and low-income students in large urban settings. These public charter schools – such as KIPP, Success Academy, Uncommon Schools, and Achievement First – are one important tool that can improve student learning – especially when we work to expand their most successful practices to reach even more students. These schools represent some of the best public schools in our country, and they have more freedom to be flexible and innovative in supporting students. While the vast majority of our investments in K-12 education work to support traditional public schools, we believe that continuing to support student success in high quality, not-for-profit, charter schools is a key element to success moving forward.

WHERE WE’RE GOING

Building on our previous work, the next phase of our investments within the charter sector will work to increase the number of high-quality seats, improve student outcomes and encourage collaboration between traditional public schools and public charter schools. We will focus our work in the charter sector on learning about effective models and approaches to serving students with disabilities, as well as continuing efforts to expand the number of high-quality, not-for-profit, charter schools. Specifically, we will:



Support students with disabilities in public charter middle and high schools

While high performing charter schools have a strong record of improving outcomes for Black, Latino, and low-income students, they have been long criticized for their shortcomings in serving and supporting students with disabilities. Research shows only 65 percent of students with disabilities graduate on time with their peers, and far fewer persist through college. Students with disabilities are also more frequently disciplined and more frequently absent. Our new work will focus on what is needed to support schools in improving outcomes for their students with disabilities.

All schools, including public charter schools, must serve all students in an equitable way. We believe that with more innovation and more flexibility with their resources, charter schools can and should see an uptake in implementing better practices to support and be held accountable for these students.

The first phase of this new strategy is about learning: we are looking to learn from the field about what works to support students with disabilities, understand how we can codify evidence around these models, and share what we learn with the field. We will invest to support a set of middle and high public charter schools as they develop approaches to help greater numbers of students with disabilities improve in the classroom and share these approaches with other charter schools and beyond.

Support and catalyze high quality, public charter school growth and improved collaboration among public schools

Research shows high quality charter schools have historically served all students well. According to data from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes, public charter school students gained 40 additional days of learning in math and 28 additional days in reading compared to their peers in traditional public school.

The next phase of our work is focused on an improved ability for states, districts, non-profit charter management organizations, and other non-profit organizations to work collaboratively to enable the creation of scalable, sustainable, high-quality public schools in communities with a high proportion of Black, Latino and low-income students. States, like Texas, have played an important role in facilitating environments conducive to collaboration by removing barriers and providing incentives to districts and charters to engage in this work.

This work builds on previous investments in District-Charter Collaboration Compacts and targeted support for school expansion within high performing public charters. As a foundation, we have supported District-Charter Collaboration Compact work since 2008, investing over \$27 million to support compacts in cities including Boston, Denver, Hartford, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, and Houston, Texas. Some of these compacts demonstrated promise for improving practices across sectors. Evidence suggests compacts can be effective when the right level of resources is invested in an area where communities are working together.

Our new efforts build on our learning about what is needed to reduce barriers to successful collaboration between public charter schools and districts.

For more information about our K12 strategy, visit: <http://k12education.gatesfoundation.org/>

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Sue Desmond-Hellmann under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

For additional information on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, please visit our website: www.gatesfoundation.org.

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