Special Education: Supporting Students with Disabilities in Charter Schools
Welcome and Introductions

Context

Equity at Scale

Understanding the Entry Gap for Charter Schools Students with Special Needs

Q&A
Introducing our Presenters

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About the National Charter School Resource Center

www.charterschoolcenter.org

- Funded through the U.S. Department of Education
- Makes accessible high-quality resources to support the charter school sector
Toolkit: District-Charter Collaboration

A user's guide on what makes a collaboration successful. Both parties have a lot to gain by partnering up to meet common goals.
Webinar Logistics

• Please use the chat feature to post questions
• Questions will be answered during Q&A
• Use chat for help with technical issues
• Webinar recordings will be available on the NCSRC website later today (www.charterschoolcenter.org)
• We will ask you to fill out a survey on the webinar during Q&A
Welcome and Introductions

- **Context**
- Equity at Scale
- Understanding the Entry Gap for Charter Schools Students with Special Needs
- **Q&A**
• **43 states, plus the District of Columbia**, have charter schools in operation.

• Approximately **6.4 million students** – **13.1%** of the student population between the ages of six and 21 – receive special education and related services in public schools every year.

• **95%** of these students are enrolled in neighborhood schools.

• From school year 1999–2000 to 2011–2012, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools increased from **0.3 million to 2.1 million** students.

• Approximately **10.5%** of the students enrolled in charter schools have a disability that qualifies them for special education and related services.
Charter schools are public schools and as such have the opportunity and obligation to serve all students – including those with disabilities.

State laws allocate authority over special education and other areas.
- Some charter schools are Local Education Agencies (LEAs).
- Some are schools within a district LEA.
- State chartering boards or other independent Authorizers may be LEAs.

The LEA is primarily responsible for ensuring that special education is provided.

The LEA must provide a full spectrum of placement options for students.

Many state laws provide flexibilities to charter schools – more autonomy in exchange for more accountability – but federal laws still apply.
Layers of Authority

1. Federal Education Law
2. State Charter School & Special Education Law
3. District Requirements (where applicable)
4. Authorizer Rules
5. Charter Contract Requirements
Federal Authorities

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq.
- IDEA Regulations: 34 C.F.R. 300 et seq.
- Americans with Disabilities Education Act: 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq.
- 504 & ADA Regulations: 34 C.F.R. 104
• It is challenging to generalize about how special education factors play out in charter schools – they are defined by variety.

• Special education is more of a spectrum than a singular application; so are charter schools.

• But we can see commonalities, trends, shared concerns and opportunities for serving students with disabilities in charter schools.

• The NCSRC is focused on this work.

• With recent research in this area, we have identified key factors and opportunities to issues impacting students with disabilities in charter schools.
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  Students with Special Needs
- Q&A
• In the early days of chartering, most schools were small and independent.

• Now, many schools are part of larger networks, united by a common program and often by a partnership with a management organization.
  • Charter Management Organization = CMO (non-profit)
  • Education Management Organization = EMO (for-profit)
  • Education Service Provider = ESP (generic term for either)

• Networks have scale, expertise, and resources to impact quality and options for special education in charter schools.

• State laws are generally silent on the role such organizations can play; some ESPs have begun exploring the possibility of network collaboration.
NCSECS - Equity at Scale

• Modest Offerings
  • Shared resources
  • Academic model
  • Professional development offerings

• More Innovative Offerings
  • Satellite classrooms (serving students in multiple schools within network)
  • Mega-networking (linked networks sharing practices)
  • Services beyond network (to district; other networks)
  • Network LEA
Final Thoughts

• This is a challenging area and will continue to be so – equity and choice are values that do not always easily align.

• Many signs of recent progress
  • Increased national focus on these issues.
  • National Alliance for Public Charter Schools model charter school law Version 2 to include much richer language around special education.
  • Many schools searching for ways to serve more students with moderate to severe disabilities.
  • Networks stretching to use their scale to offer stronger special education options.
Agenda

✔ Welcome and Introductions
✔ Context
✔ Equity at Scale
  • Understanding the Entry Gap for Charter Schools Students with Special Needs
  • Q&A
Understanding the Entry Gap for Charter Schools Students with Special Needs
(slide 1 of 4..)

An Enrollment Gap from Day One
Special Education Enrollment by Grade in Denver Schools

[Graph showing special education enrollment by grade for Traditional Public and Charter Public schools]
Understanding the Entry Gap for Charter Schools
Students with Special Needs
(slides 1 of 4..)

An Enrollment Gap from Day One
Special Education Enrollment by Grade in Denver Schools
Students with Special Needs are Less Likely to Apply to Charter Schools

Of Denver students who apply to a charter school, 5.6% have an IEP.

Of Denver students who apply to no charter school, 7.8% have an IEP.
Barriers to Choosing?
Parents Reported Difficulty in Choosing

- Getting needed information to choose: 29.6% Enrolling a child with an IEP, 22% Enrolling a child for general education only
- Finding a good fit for child: 48.6% Enrolling a child with an IEP, 39.2% Enrolling a child for general education only
- Understanding eligibility: 37.8% Enrolling a child with an IEP, 28.9% Enrolling a child for general education only
Strategies to Improve Access

• Information tools
  • Overall approach to special education
  • Available services and accommodations
  • Outcomes for students with special needs

• Opportunities to meet with teachers prior to applying

• More personalized support in identifying and choosing among options
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• Q&A
Questions & Answers

Please submit any questions in the chat box.
Discussion

Do national trends and local examples resonate with your experiences? (Provide examples in chat box)

What factors do you see influencing special education in charter schools? (Answers in chat box)

What issues would you like to see future research efforts examine? (Answers in chat box)
Links to Presenter Resources

NCSECS

www.ncseecs.org

Educating Students with Disabilities

Equity at Scale

CRPE

www.crpe.org

Understanding the Charter School Special Education Gap: Evidence from Denver, Colorado

Special Education in Charter Schools: What We've Learned and What We Still Need to Know
Links to Additional Resources

The U.S. Department of Education (Charter School Program)
www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/index.html

The National Charter School Research Center
www.charterschoolcenter.org

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
www.publiccharters.org
# Links to NCSRC White Papers, Reports, and Newsletters

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*Reports & White Papers* | *Newsletters*
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## Links to NCSRC Case Studies and Master Classes

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