Charter School Center Webinar Focuses on Linking High-Quality Charters to Areas of Need

A Charter School Center webinar on Aug. 18 highlighted a community development financial institution's method of mapping the distribution of quality education and included National Association of Charter School Authorizers President and CEO Greg Richmond's views about the value of the tool.

Jose Cerda III, vice president of public policy and communications at IFF, presented recent IFF analyses that use school performance data and local demographics to show the number of seats in performing schools in specific neighborhoods and the estimated number of students in the area who lack access.

For example, an analysis of St. Louis data released in 2009 shows that only four of 105 schools met state standards, serving 3.5 percent of students. The analysis shows that 52 percent of the need was concentrated in six zip codes, and that four of those areas had no performing schools. The analysis also locates areas of excess capacity.

Cerda said the research only provides a snapshot, but that it is a rich look at what's happening on the ground.

Richmond said the disaggregation of data, and the ability to take repeated snapshots over time, has the potential to improve education policy and the graphic representations provide tools to engage communities and better allocate and develop critical resources such as facilities.

Richmond also commented on how such maps might influence the role geography plays in decisions about granting charters.
More than 50 people attended the hour-long "Linking High-Quality Charter Schools to Areas of Need" webinar, which included extensive slides detailing findings and the method behind the IFF research.