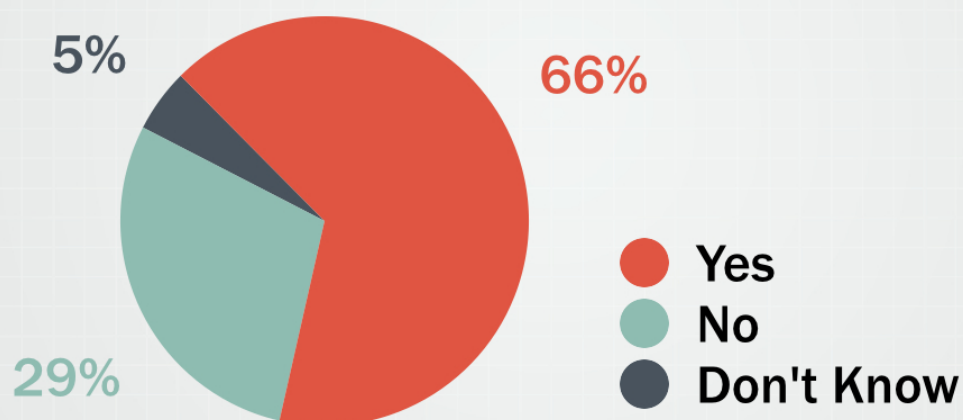


# “INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll  
for the week of 16 May 2014*

## INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

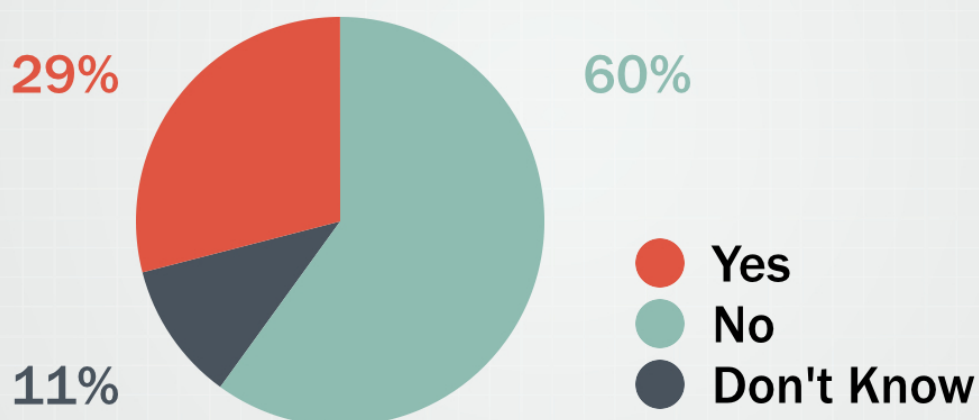
SHOULD TEACHERS BE ASSESSED  
ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?



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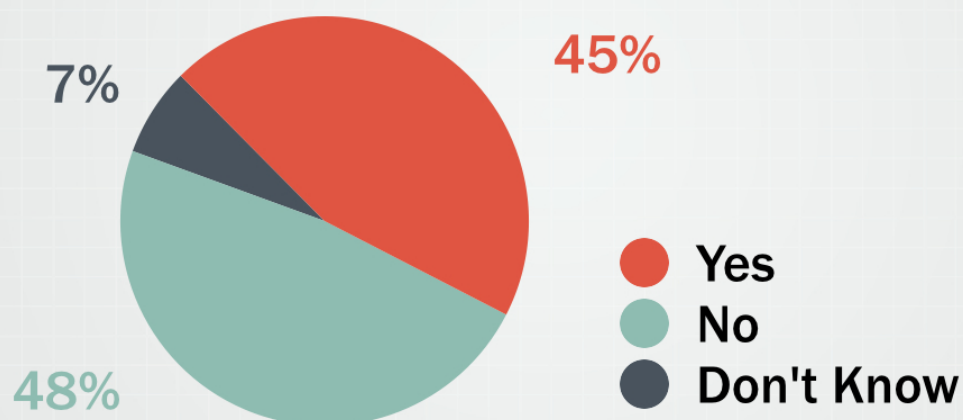
SHOULD CHARTER SCHOOLS BE ALLOWED  
TO USE PUBLIC BUILDINGS FOR FREE?



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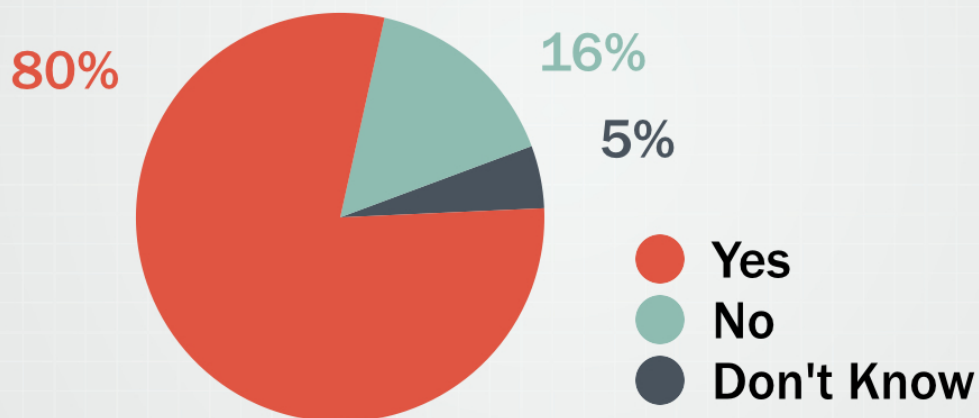
SHOULD CHARTER SCHOOLS GET THE SAME  
STATE FUNDING AS PUBLIC SCHOOLS?



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## INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

SHOULD STUDENTS BE ABLE TO CHOOSE  
WHICH SCHOOLS THEY ATTEND?



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## *Should assessments of public school teachers be based on student achievement?*

- "Growth in student achievement should be a factor."
- "Yes, but only if the teacher is given the adequate resources to effectively teach. There has to be some funding accountability placed on the legislature as well."
- "How we determine student achievement should not be tied exclusively to test scores. If a bunch of kids show up to 3rd grade unable to read and they all came from Mr. Jones' 2nd grade class, then Mr. Jones deserves an immediate and thorough audit."
- "Teacher performance should be based on outcomes like everyone else in the work forces. Showing up is not good enough. And one size fits all should be eliminated. All classrooms are not equal. An underperforming school that is brought from failing has achieved more than a school that improves their level of excellence. An F to a B is shows more grade improvement than from an A to an A+."
- "Yes! As opposed to student warm and fuzziness???"
- "Student performance should be one measure of teacher evaluations. The 20% recommended by TEA is probably a good metric. Multiple measures including principal assessment, classroom observation, peer review and professional contributions should also be a part of teacher appraisal."
- "That would lead to overly teaching to the standard test and not the students."
- "Yes, in part, but benchmarking and assessing must be specific to the situation. Differences in resources, class composition, etc., can affect the outcome. Ideally, administrators are best able to make these decisions, perhaps with the aid of empirics but not based on them entirely."
- "Yes. It only makes sense to assess teachers on the success of their students. After all, the only reason schools exists is to teach kids."
- "This should be one element among several, but it can not be the sole measure. Too many other factors influence student achievement."
- "How else will you know what teachers are doing?"
- "A standardized test is not a fair way to assess anyone; the state should help school districts develop performance reviews, much like is done in the corporate environment (although those can be flawed, too)."
- "Yes, at least part of teacher assessment should be based on student achievement. And exceptions made for students with special needs."
- "Achievement, not standardized tests."
- "Define achievement. Is it the progress a student makes from Aug -

May/June or is it the end product in May/June? Also, how do you account for the 'achievements' of naturally bright kids? Should a teacher receive high marks because she happens to teach AP Chemistry whose students perform well, while a fourth grade teacher is stuck with slow learners? Achievement doesn't seem like a meritorious method of assessing teachers."

- "Just cut out the middle man and rank teachers on the family income of their students."

- "If by "student achievement" you mean state ordered tests, then the answer is no. There is very little correlation to teaching and preparing students for meaningless tests."

- "Administrators should be assessed on their evaluation and management of the instructors under their jurisdiction. If the teachers are not performing well based on their particular circumstances, which can vary widely and are known to the administrators they should be terminated."

- "But they must be done correctly - longitudinally and compare the same student over time, taking into account Limited English Proficiency, disabilities, home stability, and other factors."

- "Student achievement should be a factor, but there are many, many factors that must be considered. A simplistic, salary-based-on-STAAR-results approach is wrong-headed and will have counter-productive results."

- "On incremental gains."

- "What else could we possibly base their assessments on? It is a sad commentary on teachers that they don't want to be held accountable for their work. As a result, of course, we have mediocre schools in Texas and nationwide led by a cadre of teachers who care more about job security than they do about educating kids."

- "A teacher is supposed to take a child who doesn't know "something" and teach them that "something". If one can't assess the teacher on how successful they are at transferring essential knowledge and skills, then why measure them at all?"

- "But only in part. If teachers are allowed to actually TEACH the core subjects - reading, math, science, WRITING - then yes - test for achievement in those areas. But DO NOT force teachers to teach for a test or what will be covered on a test. Why is it that we no longer teach HANDWRITING?"

- "It's what the Obama administration is pushing. I thought teacher unions always got what they want from the party they always fund/support?"

- "It should not be the only factor but it should be considered."

- "In part; but student achievement should not be the only benchmark"

- "At least partially."

- "But assessments should only be a small portion of a teacher's evaluation to ensure they do not spend all of their time teaching to the test."

- "That should be a factor, but not the only factor. Characteristics of the

student population should be considered as well."

- "Yes, but not exclusively."
- "There is no scientific basis to think this is a valid measure of teachers. The governing body of statisticians recently condemned the practice. But sure, why not?"
- "The tests are designed to measure growth. So even if a student doesn't pass the test it can be determined if the teacher has advanced the student significantly."
- "Duh, what if you get all of the dummies!"
- "What else should they be based on? We evaluate coaches on wins. We evaluate lawyers on results. We evaluate stockbrokers on successful investments. We evaluate real estate agents on results. We evaluate our elected representatives on results. I obviously could go on and on. This is not to say that we shouldn't take a lot of things into account, such as effort and growth, but results are what matters for our kids, so results should matter in evaluation."
- "So much focus on achievement has caused the loss of the art of teaching. It also kills those good-hearted teachers that work with at-risk kids. Why would anyone ever want to teach in an urban school with these

rules? Flock to the suburbs where the parents are engaged and the homework gets done. Thus, we create ever bigger problems with our lack of an educated workforce."

- "Student achievement is based as much on student's socio-economic background, parental support and community circumstances as anything a teacher can do. Further as long as Public school are cheated on funding by the legislature it is grossly unfair to judge teachers in under funded public schools"
- "It needn't be the only factor used in such an assessment, but achievement should be considered."
- "There is still only one valid assessment of an education system: "Is our children learning?" You can measure that in different ways, but the buck should still stop with the teacher."
- "At least partially"
- "Sure. But you can't compare apples to oranges, so socio-economic differences between schools and districts must be taken into account."
- "Adjusted for student qualities, yes."
- "In theory, of course they should. In practice, it is very complex as teachers get very different mixes of students in their classes."

## *Should charter schools be allowed to use public buildings for free?*

- "Same as any other public entity."
- "Yes, but only if they follow the same state imposed rules that public schools need to follow."
- "If a public building is empty then filling it with students is one of several worthwhile ways to keep it maintained."
- "Charter school should have the same privileges as any other publicly funded entity"
- "No, taxpayers should want their investments used well, but paid for fairly."
- "I think it depends. I'd favor charters using unused or under-used buildings but absolutely dead-set opposed to building new buildings at taxpayer expense and turning them over."
- "No - because they are "for profit" organizations."
- "Charters should have access to unused public school campuses and buildings, and/or be given a facility allotment so they no longer divert dollars meant for instruction to pay rent."
- "They are public schools and when not in use buildings should be made available."
- "Are public buildings free?"
- "If they want to be free of public rules they should want to be free of public spaces. Use our spaces, play by our rules."
- "Does the Charter School receive public dollars? If so, it should be able to use public buildings, like a gym, library, or lab, if needed."
- "I realize the line between charter and public schools is becoming blurry but tax money should be for public education, not specialty schools."
- "As a general rule, I think one should be very careful about granting blanket exemptions from usage fees. Other governmental entities and non-profits still often have to pay fees to use public buildings, so it's unclear why charters should be treated differently."
- "There is always a cost in using a building, even if it is just in the maintenance. Those costs that result from the building's use by the charter school should be borne by the charter school. At the same time, profit by the lending entity should be avoided."
- "Charter schools are public schools. They should have access to public buildings."
- "No. What makes a charter school more deserving of free use of public buildings than an animal shelter, a clinic serving low-income families, childcare center, or any other social service that a community might want? Let's not forget that even if the rent is free the taxpayer is on the hook for maintenance, insurance, bond payments, and other costs. The most fair thing to do to a taxpayer if the building is not to be used as intended is to allow the "owning" governmental unit to seek market rents for the space to reduce the taxpayer's burden."

- "They are FOR PROFIT and should pay rent"
- "The parents of those charter school students are paying property taxes just like everyone else is."
- "I think it depends on the public building and the situation surrounding it. If allowing a charter school to use a public facility is the highest and best use for that building then they should be allowed to use it."
- "If the charter is privately owned, they should pay rent. If it's a public charter, why not?"
- "Why? Our tax dollars paid for the schools and most public buildings. The owners of the buildings should get some remuneration or they will be back asking for additional tax dollars to build something new or to restore the building after use by the charter. Buildings are an asset and should be utilized, rented or sold to pay for other expenses geared toward a public purpose."
- "I don't know about for free, but schools built with taxpayer dollars should be used for the purpose intended. If districts no longer need the space, the best use may be for a public charter school. Districts shouldn't withhold taxpayer funded buildings from their optimal use out of sense, or fear, of competition."
- "If the charter schools are public schools answerable to some governmental body, why not?"
- "This is a maybe. It depends on the charter schools, their missions and their focus. They are not all equal."
- "They charge the kids and make a profit let them pay rent"
- "If building is available and needed, why not?"
- "Nobody should use public buildings for free. Unless you count lobbyists, because we get to work anywhere (though we do pay a registration fee, so there's that)."
- "Same as any other public school."

### *Should the state give charter schools the same per-pupil funding public schools receive?*

- "Different factors should determine charter funding formulas."
- "They are educating the same Texan that would otherwise be going to a public school. That child's education is just as important."
- "Pursuing innovative methods of educating Texas children while alleviating the burden on outdated school systems is something worth funding. If the experiment doesn't live up to the promise, then cut the funding."
- "Charter schools are working. Don't screw up something that is working."
- "Only if the Charter agrees to meet all the public school bureaucracy."
- "Despite the fact that there are some great charter schools, it must be



remembered that they can admit or withdraw from their schools whoever they may choose. Such is not the case with public schools."

- "When charters share their private dollars with public schools, public schools should return the favor. Not holding my breath."
- "All this does is incorporate charter schools into the system leading to no difference. Once the state funds them, they control them."
- "Part of their appeal is that they can do the same job for less money. So, let them. If the reformers are right, they can produce better results at less cost. Put up or shut up."
- "Substantially yes, and the Supreme Court ought to say so."
- "They are public schools"
- "Taking money away from one group to fund another is typically a poor strategy."
- "And lower the overall amount across the board."
- "Their premise is that they can do a better job outside of regulations. Fewer regulations mean fewer costs incurred to meet the regulations."
- "If the community wants the charter school to succeed, then the community--including local businesses--should step up to the plate to fill the void."
- "But only if there is much more accountability for the charters. Schools like KIPP are awesome but there are some bad actors too."

- "No. Funding should be based on a cost-based funding system where the funding levels are equivalent regardless of which public school a child attends, but that does not translate to the same per-pupil funding. Even among charter schools, there are different costs incurred, as, for example, between a charter that focuses on special education students versus another charter school that takes general population exclusive of these higher-cost-to-educate children. However, a child's charter school attendance should not be an excuse to under- (or over-) fund, if that's the point of your question."

- "The better question is why shouldn't public charter schools receive the same per-pupil funding as public schools receive."

- "As a matter of fact they already do. Like traditional schools, they are funded on average daily attendance. Unlike traditional schools, they do not have to have an election to receive enrichment funds. They are automatically entitled to enrichment based on the statewide average. Theoretically, a charter school can be located in a district where it receives more funding than public schools if the statewide enrichment rate exceeds the home district rate."

- "No!"

- "They already do."

- "Only if the charter school is proven effective and ranked highly according to state accreditation standards."

- "Virtual schools should not receive the same per-pupil funding that brick & mortar schools get."

- "Yes, parents shouldn't have to accept lower funds for their student because they make a choice, provided by the state, that is a better educational option for students."

- "Shouldn't the students in all public schools be treated equally?"

- "Sure, but they better be able to educate the kids for less."

- "Only if the stop charging students pay teachers what public schools do

and take every student that applies like public schools"

- "It shouldn't be required"

- "I think the state should allow mobility of students to any school they choose. It's ridiculous that the state helps pay for education, in part, by assuming that many students will go to private school, thus freeing up more money for those who go to public schools."

### *Should students be allowed to choose — based on availability — which public schools they want to attend?*

- "Absolutely"

- "It's time the for the state to give minority students the opportunity to succeed."

- "How about actually fixing the schools so that there isn't such a huge difference among the schools within a school district? Let's solve the problem so down the road the only real choices will be about magnet programs-- music, sports, etc."

- "Why not? Let the students determine winners and losers!"

- "Forcing kids to stay in failing schools solely because of the economics of where their family lives is a disservice to working families. Families deserve as many options as possible when it comes to something that is taxpayer supported and will significantly impact that student's future."

- "Competition improves everything."

- "See question #1 ... that's one way to grade teacher performance."

- "Competition makes everything better."

- "Begin the exercise WITHIN school districts."

- "Nice emphasis on large school districts with this question. I'm sure the kids in small town rural Texas would like to choose to attend "better" suburban schools."

- "It should be by neighborhood and zone."

- "It's about choice and empowerment of parents"

- "If the district doesn't provide transportation, then it's only an illusion of choice."

- "To a limited extent, but the way such choice is structured should not advantage any particular student. E.g., it should not be structured in a

way that students with more resources for transportation, etc., would be more likely to choose a school other than the one located closest to her."

- "The key part of the question is should STUDENTS be allowed to choose, so I agree--with the implied understanding that "availability" is not manipulated by the charter school to exclude difficult/expensive-to-educate children."

- "The question should be, should children be forced to attend a failing and/or dangerous school just because it is closest to their home or should they be free to attend a school that has a successful record in educating kids."

- "Nope. Students don't know jack, that's why they are in school. But their parents should certainly have some choices."

- "But we need to make ALL schools excellent places to learn and grow! If a neighborhood high school is losing population - figure out the problem and make the changes needed!"

- "Yes but availability can be difficult to define and may be affected by other internal transfer policies within individual districts."

- "Yes. Time to inject some free market capitalism into the system. Let the schools compete."

- "I am reluctant to end the tradition of neighborhood public schools."

- "Within a single School District."

- "Absolutely! Improving our educational outcome hinges on choice and accountability working in concert."

- "Absolutely. If the public schools don't allow for ever-increasing choices, parents will flee in even greater numbers in the future. With options provided by technology, independent schools, specialty schools, the public schools really need to start seeing parents and kids as customers, not just as cogs in the machine."

- "Rich people have a choice -- where to move for a good school district, or whether to put their kids into private schools. Why shouldn't less affluent have a choice as well?"

- "Absolutely. Let parents vote with their (kids') feet and you'll see a truer assessment of public schools than any test can provide."

- "Absolutely they should. And you should let coaches recruit students to make "super teams". Then somebody could finally compete against Lake Travis and Westlake."

- "Yes, as long as it's not in my neighborhood school."

***Our thanks to this week's participants:*** Gene Acuna, Cathie Adams, Jenny Aghamalian, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, Jay Arnold, Louis Bacarisse, Charles Bailey, Walt Baum, Eric Bearse, Dave Beckwith, Andrew Biar, Allen Blakemore, Chris Britton, David Cabrales, Lydia Camarillo, Thure Cannon, Snapper Carr, Janis Carter, William Chapman, Elna Christopher, Kevin Cooper,

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