



Global Learning Charter Public School

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TO: Letters to the Editor

For the past several weeks I have read editorial comments and letters on the subject of charter schools. I admire the interest that has been stirred on this subject by the most recent education reform law. A major part of that legislation addresses the development of additional charter schools, the funding mechanism to support these schools, the enrollment regulations and restrictions as well as additional financial support that will be extended to the school district(s) sending students to a charter school.

As the Interim Executive Director of the Global Learning Charter Public School in New Bedford, I am concerned by the amount of misinformation that many folks have regarding what a charter school is and how it operates. Let me be the first to say that as a former superintendent of schools, I regrettably did not fully understand the educational and financial mechanisms required to operate a charter school. Over the past seven months, since taking on the director's position at GLCPS, I have learned so much that I wanted now to write this letter in the hope that I could address the misconceptions and/or misinformation.

The most misinformed statement that continues to surface is that charter schools hand pick the "best and the brightest" and can openly reject students that don't "fit". At GLCPS, parents submit enrollment forms for the 84 openings that we have each year in grade five. Once the enrollment deadline is passed, a lottery takes place where *literally* student names are picked out of a hat. There is no "pre-screening", no "secret selection process", no "buying your way in". The lottery is public and transparent – anyone may attend. If there are openings in any of the other grades the process is the same.

GLCPS is a public school and, under the auspices of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), we are a separate school district. Our challenges are the same as any other public school. We must adhere to all federal and state regulations and our educational programs are annually scrutinized with visits from DESE and federal education personnel. We must educate all of our students regardless of need. Our community of learners is diverse and includes special education students, students with 504 accommodation plans and English Language Learners. GLCPS students have outperformed other urban districts in MCAS and exceed the state average. We must provide the quality that our parents and students require and deserve.

Our charter is granted by the state for just five years, and this year we must begin the reapplication process. This process is comprehensive and often equated to a “forensic autopsy” with the staff and community examining all programs, their delivery, the qualifications of our staff and, most importantly, whether or not we adhered to our charter. If we fail, the charter will not be reissued. Talk about accountability.

Some people have said that by working in a charter school I have “crossed over to the dark side”. No, I have simply changed my venue. My job is still to ensure that students learn and that they have the human and material resources to do so. If the mission remains the same that educators do what’s best for kids then regardless of where or how, let’s get the facts straight. I invite you to visit GLCPS and experience what we are all about – teaching kids to become successful adults and survive in an ever changing world. Isn’t that what all schools do?

Stephen J. Furtado
Interim Executive Director