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Written by **Walter E. Williams** on November 11, 2020

Should Blacks Support Destruction of Charter Schools?

The academic achievement gap between black and white students has proven resistant to most educational policy changes. Some say that educational expenditures explain the gap, but is that true? Look at educational per pupil expenditures: Baltimore city ranks fifth in the U.S. for per pupil spending at $15,793. The Detroit Public Schools Community District spends more per student than all but eight of the nation's 100 largest school districts, or $14,259. New York City spends $26,588 per pupil, and Washington, D.C., spends $21,974. There appears to be little relationship between educational expenditures and academic achievement.

The Nation's Report Card for 2017 showed the following reading scores for fourth-graders in New York state's public schools: Thirty-two percent scored below basic, with 32% scoring basic, 27% scoring proficient and 9% scoring advanced. When it came to black fourth-graders in the state, 19% scored proficient, and 3% scored advanced.

But what about the performance of students in charter schools? In his recent book, "Charter Schools and Their Enemies," Dr. Thomas Sowell compared 2016-17 scores on the New York state ELA test. Thirty percent of Brooklyn's William Floyd public elementary school third-graders scored well below proficient in English and language arts, but at a Success Academy charter school in the same building, only one did. At William Floyd, 36% of students were below proficient, with 24% being proficient and none being above proficient. By contrast, at Success Academy, only 17% of third-graders were below proficient, with 70% being proficient and 11% being above proficient. Among Success Academy's fourth-graders, 51% and 43%, respectively, scored proficient and above proficient, while their William Floyd counterparts scored 23% and 6%, respectively. It's worthwhile stressing that William Floyd and this Success Academy location have the same address.

Similar high performance can be found in the Manhattan charter school KIPP Infinity Middle School among its sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders when compared with that of students at New Design Middle School, a public school at the same location. Liberals believe integration is a necessary condition for black academic excellence. Public charter schools such as those mentioned above belie that vision. Sowell points out that only 39% of students in all New York state schools who were recently tested scored at the "proficient" level in math, but 100% of the students at the Crown Heights Success Academy tested proficient. Blacks and Hispanics constitute 90% of the students in that Success Academy.

In April 2019, The Wall Street Journal reported that 57% of black and 54% of Hispanic charter school students passed the statewide ELA compared to 52% of white students statewide. On the state math test, 59% of black students and 57% of Hispanics at city charter schools passed as opposed to 54% of

white students statewide.

There's little question that many charter schools provide superior educational opportunities for black youngsters. Here is my question: Why do black people, as a group, accept the attack on charter schools?

John Liu, a Democratic state senator from Queens, said New York City should "get rid of" large charter school networks. State Sen. Julia Salazar, D-Brooklyn, said, "I'm not interested in privatizing our public schools." New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio explicitly campaigned against charter schools saying: "I am angry about the privatizers. I am sick and tired of these efforts to privatize a precious thing we need — public education." The New York Times article went on to say, "Over 100,000 students in hundreds of the city's charter schools are doing well on state tests, and tens of thousands of children are on waiting lists for spots."

One would think that black politicians and civil rights organizations would support charter schools. The success of many charter schools is unwelcome news to traditional public school officials and teachers' unions. To the contrary, they want to saddle charter schools with the same procedures that make so many public schools a failure. For example, the NAACP demands that charter schools "cease expelling students that public schools have a duty to educate." It wants charter schools to "cease to perpetuate de facto segregation of the highest performing children from those whose aspirations may be high but whose talents are not yet as obvious." Most importantly, it wants charter schools to come under the control of teachers' unions.

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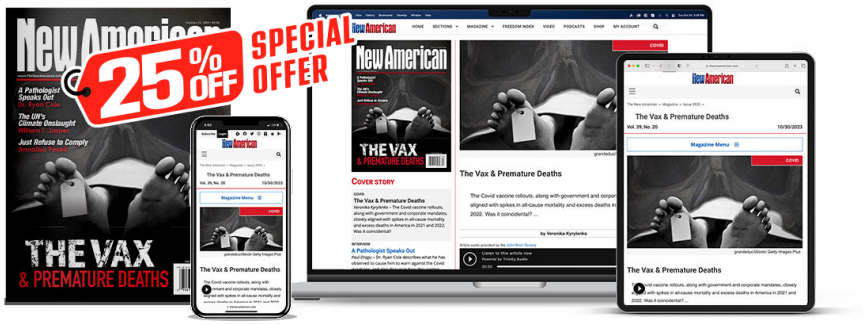

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