

OPINION: One New Bedford Charter School down, several to go

Charter schools are strangling the life out of the public school system. The theory behind charter schools initially made a lot of sense. Their original purpose was to provide a real-time testing place for new and emerging ideas within the educational community. The intended purpose was never to form permanent schools, but rather to try out new ways of doing things on a smaller test group of students. Then if the methods being tested proved successful integrate that ideology into the public system.

Instead, we have charter schools remaining open permanently with a curriculum that is all their own and not conforming to the standard of the public school system. Without a doubt, change provides the pathway to growth and growth should always be something we seek, especially in the education of our future generations. But at what cost?

The process behind selecting students for enrollment in charter schools only furthers the problem by exacerbating financial strains upon an already strained public school system. To best describe the dilemma, let's consider a hypothetical public system consisting of 10 classrooms – all with 10 students, 1 teacher, and 1 assistant. Say a new charter school opens and needs to enroll 10 students, they would pull one student from each of the 10 classrooms, leaving 10 classrooms with 9 students, 1 teacher and 1 assistant each. This will form a new charter class with 10 students and 1 teacher and 1 assistant. So the end result is that we have educated the same number of students, with more resources.

Where we were educating 100 students with 10 teachers, 10

assistants, and 1 building, now we are educating 100 students with 11 teachers, 11 assistants, and 2 buildings. Anyone who has worked for the school system, or has looked over our budget in New Bedford can easily see this is a step in the wrong direction, not only for the city but for the public school system as well.

Needless expenditures on facilities, maintenance and faculty are only forcing our class sizes to be larger and the salaries of our public school teachers and educational support personnel lower than they already are. Add to this the state's tendency to not make good on reimbursements for charter schools, once paid for by the city, and **soon the closure of the City on a Hill charter school** becomes an event worth celebrating.

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