



Charter Schools in Action: Renewing Public Education

Chester E. Finn, Bruno V. Manno, Gregg Vanourek

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Can charter schools save public education? This radical question has unleashed a flood of opinions from Americans struggling with the contentious challenges of education reform. There has been plenty of heat over charter schools and their implications, but, until now, not much light. This important new book supplies plenty of illumination.

Charter schools--independently operated public schools of choice--have existed in the United States only since 1992, yet there are already over 1,500 of them. How are they doing? Here prominent education analysts Chester Finn, Bruno Manno, and Gregg Vanourek offer the richest data available on the successes and failures of this exciting but controversial approach to education reform. After studying one hundred schools, interviewing hundreds of participants, surveying thousands more, and analyzing the most current data, they have compiled today's most authoritative, comprehensive explanation and appraisal of the charter phenomenon. Fact-filled, clear-eyed, and hard-hitting, this is the book for anyone concerned about public education and interested in the role of charter schools in its renewal.

Can charter schools boost student achievement, drive educational innovation, and develop a new model of accountability for public schools? Where did the idea of charter schools come from? What would the future hold if this phenomenon spreads? These are some of the questions that this book answers. It addresses pupil performance, enrollment patterns, school start-up problems, charges of inequity, and smoldering political battles. It features close-up looks at five real--and very different--charter schools and two school districts that have been deeply affected by the charter movement, including their setbacks and triumphs. After outlining a new model of education accountability and describing how charter schools often lead to community renewal, the authors take the reader on an imaginary tour of a charter-based school system.

Charter schools are the most vibrant force in education today. This book suggests that their legacy will consist not only of helping millions of families obtain a better education for their children but also in renewing American public education itself.

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