

Overall Education Points

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Charter School Facilities Funding

Overview of Charter School Facilities Funding

The equity and adequacy of facilities for open-enrollment charter schools is an important issue in Arkansas, where public open-enrollment charter schools have less access to public funds for school facilities than traditional public school (TPS) districts. While TPS districts are able to finance buildings through local property tax millage and specific state facilities funds, open-enrollment charter schools in Arkansas do not have access to this source of funding. Some argue that open-enrollment charter schools should be put on an even playing field in terms of facilities funding, since they are free for any student and prohibited from charging tuition.

Possible Funding Solutions

- Allow charter schools to levy local tax millage (four states currently allow this)
- Provide more incentives and opportunities such as federal and state grants, loans, bonds, credit enhancement programs, or support from private or non-profit organizations
- Provide all charters “right of first refusal” access to TPS district buildings
- Provide per-pupil facilities funding for charter schools (13 states offer this)

Conclusion

Whether or not the state of Arkansas is obligated to help fund charter school facilities hinges in part on whether these entities are treated like TPS districts in terms of adequacy requirements. Some argue that since charter schools are able to waive certain legal requirements, the state does not have the same legal obligation to fund charter schools adequately as it does for TPS districts). Others argue that removing the financial burdens that charter schools face may be an important issue for ensuring adequacy for all Arkansas public school students.

For more information on this topic: see the following OEP publications:

Oct 2014: <http://www.officeforeducationpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/Charter-School-Facilities-Funding.pdf>

Jan 2014: <http://www.officeforeducationpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/TPS-Charter-Funding-Updated.pdf>

May 2012: <http://www.officeforeducationpolicy.org/downloads/2012/05/traditional-and-charter-school-funding-in-arkansas.pdf>

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