

Betsy DeVos

1. DeVos refused to agree with a Democrat that schools are no place for guns, citing one school that needs one to protect against grizzly bears.
2. DeVos seemed to have no understanding of the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**, known as IDEA, which requires public schools to provide free and appropriate education to all students with disabilities.
3. DeVos refused to agree with Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) that all schools that receive public federal funds — traditional public, public charter or private schools that receive voucher money — should be held to the same standards of accountability.
4. DeVos appeared to have no idea what Franken was talking about when he referred to the accountability debate about whether to use test scores to measure student proficiency or student growth.
5. DeVos did not answer Sen. Michael F. Bennet (D-Colo.) when he asked her what she had learned about the failures of the Detroit traditional public and public charter schools that would inform her decision-making as the secretary of education.

-from the **Washington Post**

Education

School choice

DeVos believes education in the United States should be opened up to for-profit charter schools, and she has stated that education is "a closed system, a closed industry, a closed market It's a monopoly, a dead end" DeVos believes that opening up the education market will offer parents increased "choice," a view that critics call a drive to privatize the American public education system

School vouchers

DeVos is known as a "a fierce proponent of school vouchers" that would allow students to attend private schools with public funding[52] According to The New York Times, it "is hard to find anyone more passionate about the idea of steering public dollars away from traditional public schools than Betsy DeVos"

DeVos served as chairwoman of the board of Alliance for School Choice She heads the All Children Matter PAC which she and her husband founded in 2003 to promote school vouchers, tax credits to businesses that give private school scholarships, and candidates who support these causes. Over the years, DeVos and her husband have provided millions in funding for the organization In 2008, All Children Matter was fined a total of \$52 million after the Ohio Elections Commission brought a case for campaign spending violations The fine was never paid.

Her other activities on behalf of public-school reform have included membership on the boards of directors of the Advocates for School Choice, the American Education Reform Council, and the Education Freedom Fund She has chaired the boards of Choices for Children, and Great Lakes Education Project (GLEP)

DeVos is Chair of the American Federation for Children (AFC), which describes itself as "a leading national advocacy organization promoting school choice, with a specific focus on advocating for school vouchers and scholarship tax credit programs" It is affiliated with the Alliance for School Choice

During the 1990s, she served on the boards of Children First America and the American Education Reform Council, which sought to expand school choice through vouchers and tax credits. She and her husband worked for the successful passage of Michigan's first charter-school bill in 1993, and for the unsuccessful effort in 2000 to amend Michigan's constitution to allow tax-credit scholarships or vouchers. In response to that defeat, DeVos started a PAC, the Great Lakes Education Project, which championed charter schools. DeVos's husband and John Walton then founded All Children Matter, a political organization, which she chaired.

Detroit charter school system

DeVos has been a defender of the Detroit charter school system. Douglas N. Harris, professor of Economics at Tulane University, wrote in a New York Times op-ed that DeVos was partly responsible for "what even charter advocates acknowledge is the biggest school reform disaster in the country." In the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Detroit had the lowest reading and mathematics scores "by far" over any city participating in the evaluation. She designed a system with no oversight, said Harris, and where schools that do poorly can still continue to enroll students.

On the other hand, a study by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes found that: "the typical student in Michigan charter schools gains more learning in a year than his TPS [traditional public schools] counterparts, amounting to about two months of additional gains in reading and math. These positive patterns are even more pronounced in Detroit, where historically student academic performance has been poor." Ramesh Ponnuru of National Review said that "some 47 percent of charter schools in Detroit significantly outperform[ed] traditional public schools in reading." Defending DeVos' record in Michigan, Jay P. Greene, professor of Education Policy at the University of Arkansas, argued Harris' New York Times article misled readers on the evidence and "falsely claimed that Detroit has failed to close failing charter schools", noting that Detroit has closed more charters than Louisiana, a state Harris cites as a model for charter school legislation.

Grading system

DeVos and Joel Klein said in a May 2013 op-ed that residents of Maine "are now given information on school performance using easy-to-understand report cards with the same A, B, C, D and F designations used in student grades." This system, they argued, "truly motivates parents and the community to get involved by simply taking information that education officials have had for years and presenting it in a way that is more easily understood."

Betsy and Dick DeVos Scholars for Free Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Scholarship
The DeVoses have also established an annual scholarship, called the Betsy and Dick DeVos Scholars for Free Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Scholarship, which is awarded to students earning a BBA or combined BBA/MBA at Northwood University.

Foundation for Excellence in Education

DeVos is a member of the board of the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd), a think tank founded by Jeb Bush whose stated goal is to "build an American education system that equips every child to achieve his or her God-given potential."

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Yep, this came from *Wikipedia*

The truth about charter schools

<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/charter-schools-2/>

Charter school is a loaded term. Prejudices abound and misconceptions reign. Here's what you need to know when considering a charter school for your child.

by: Psyche Pascual | March 9, 2016

So, what's the truth? Charter schools aren't one thing: they range from the smallest classroom — your child alone at your home computer — to multi-campus, nationwide organizations with dozens of schools. They include very strict schooling models with young scholars in uniforms sitting in rows to progressive places where barefoot kids learn academic subjects primarily through art projects, and everything in between.

What do charter schools all have in common? They are independent entities that have received a charter, which is a set of self-written rules (and promises) about how the school will be structured and run. Essentially, they are able to organize a school that's outside the control of the local school district but still funded by local, state, and federal tax money. This allows charter schools to create free public schools that don't have to follow the same regulations as district schools. Sometimes this results in a very high-performing school, sometimes not. This approach to education tends to produce a more diverse range of schools than might traditionally be found within school districts.

One thing's for certain: the charter movement is spreading like wildfire across America. New Orleans became the first major American city to transform most of its public schools into charter-run operations in 2005. Today, more than two million students attend about 5,700 charter schools nationwide, each with its own rules and education model. In the 2011-2012 school year alone, 518 new charter schools opened, boosting charter school enrollment by 10 percent in a single school year, according to the Center for Education Reform's June 2012 policy update.

Charter schools are like traditional public schools in important ways:

- They take the same state-mandated standardized tests.
- They don't charge tuition.
- They can't discriminate by race, sex, or disability in their enrollment.
- They're accountable to the city, state, county, or district that granted their charter.
- Charter schools differ from traditional public schools in many ways:
 - How a staff is organized may be unfamiliar. For instance, there may be an executive director in charge of leadership, fundraising, and bureaucratic compliance above the principal, who deals with the day-to-day functioning of the school.

- They can be run and operated by a nonprofit Charter Management Organization (CMO), such as Knowledge is Power Project (KIPP), which operates more than 120 elementary, middle, and high schools across the nation.
- They can be run by private, for-profit entities that also provide the school's curriculum. For instance, the company K12 operates virtual charter schools across the nation for more than 65,000 kids.
- They can have a founding educational philosophy — such as Waldorf or Montessori — which determines the curriculum and teacher training.
- They can hire teachers who are not part of a union or even credentialed, which is something to ask your local charter school about. Some charter schools hire teachers with credentials; in the state of California, all charter schools must hire credentialed teachers by law. And some CMOs hire unionized teachers — Green Dot Public Schools hires only unionized teachers for its four middle schools and 14 high schools.
- Charter school groups often describe their efforts as a movement, a reaction to poorly run public schools. Many were founded by groups of committed parents or community leaders who wanted a larger role in shaping the quality of their schools. Parental involvement is often more than encouraged, it's expected. Many charter schools begin each year by asking parents to sign an agreement to support the school and their child's learning, including a pledge to contribute a certain number of volunteer hours.

The myths about charter schools

But because every charter school is different, there are a lot of misconceptions about how they're run and what they offer students.

MYTH #1: Charter schools are private.

Charter schools are not private schools — all charter schools are public. It's confusing because some charter schools are operated by for-profit companies or groups called education management organizations (EMOs). Because these for-profits make money, some people think they're private but they're not; charter schools don't charge tuition.

MYTH #2: Charter schools are experimental schools with crazy classes.

True, some are, but this is the exception, hardly the rule. All charter schools are guided by their own charter, which means they have the flexibility to develop nontraditional academic programs or curricula that's innovative or fits special needs. Some charters offer education with an emphasis on the arts, STEM, foreign languages, or music. Others have an old-fashioned back-to-basics approach, while others have highly experimental approaches. There's no way to know until you visit.

MYTH #3: Charter schools have the highest academic standards.

Reports are mixed when it comes to student performance. On average, studies have found that student performance at charter schools is quite similar to performance at comparable public schools — if not a little worse. A 2003 national study showed charter school students were no better than public schools at educating kids. Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2010-2011 show that overall, fourth and eighth grade students in charter schools did not do as well in math and reading as their counterparts in traditional public schools.

But this “on average” comparison can be deceptive. A 2012 study by the California Charter Schools Association found that charter schools are more likely to be both higher performing and lower performing than traditional public schools. How can this be? Part of it is that charter schools tend to fall on two ends of the spectrum — high-performing or low-performing — rather than somewhere in the middle. The study shows positive effects are strongest at charter schools serving primarily low-income students: there are more excellent charter schools serving low-income students than there are high-performing traditional public schools serving low-income students.

A 2009 Stanford University study found that charter school performance varies from state to state. Students in Arkansas, Colorado (Denver), Illinois (Chicago), Louisiana, and Missouri, for example, made larger gains on standardized tests than would have occurred at traditional public schools. Meanwhile, charter school performance in Arizona, Florida, Minnesota, New Mexico, Ohio, and Texas lagged behind the average student growth at traditional public schools.

The moral for parents? Generalizations about charter schools — negative or positive — won’t help you figure out which school is right for your child.

MYTH #4: Charter schools are a hotbed of corruption — it’s just a way for corporations to make money off the government.

Aside from some headline-grabbing charges alleging fraud in Philly, a big embezzlement bust in Ohio, and other similar scandals across the country, charter schools by definition aren’t doing anything illegal.

Charter schools run on public funds — and it’s money that would otherwise be used in traditional public schools, which is a key argument against charter schools. The oft-heard argument that “charters are stealing from public schools” is political, not evidence of corruption. As these schools mature, many face the process of renewing their charters. Some schools have closed when it’s time for review because of financial problems, poor test scores, or low enrollment. About 15 percent of charters have closed since 1992. One common

problem is that charter schools, on average, receive less money to operate their facilities than public schools. The result? Facilities become rundown faster, and the schools have to close.

MYTH #5: Charter schools are impossible to get into.

Although by law they can't discriminate by disability, gender, race, or religion, popular charter schools can be difficult to get into — but it's certainly not impossible. To enroll your child in a charter school, you may need to submit a separate application for each charter school in addition to the district application — and sometimes they have different due dates. If there are more applicants than open spots, charter schools may use a lottery system to fill the vacancies: some of the lotteries are public events where winning numbers or names are drawn and called out, while others are computer-run with notifications sent by mail.

The good news is that many charter schools don't limit enrollment by where you live, so parents can look outside their neighborhood to find the best charter school. The bad news? Charters can be so popular that you may find yet another lottery and waiting list when you get there. Across the country, there are about 610,000 students waiting on lists to get in.

The bottom line: look into the charter schools in your area as yet another school option. It's impossible to know if there's a charter school that's right for your child until you go inside and see the school for yourself.

Pros and Cons of Teaching at a Charter School

<http://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/educator-tips/pros-and-cons-of-teaching-at-a-charter-school/>

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Teachers exploring their employment options may find themselves deciding between a charter school or a more traditional public school. While weighing their options, they might wonder which type of school offers a better combination of environment and opportunity.

In the end, the answer depends on what the individual teacher expects, requires and feels comfortable with for his or her working environment. Would-be educators should examine the following pros and cons of a charter school position when making their decision.

Pro: An empowering environment

The typical charter school endows its teaching staff with more say in the school's goings-on than a traditional public school. The more intimate environment can help establish a "family" atmosphere among teachers and administrators, and teachers may experience more leeway regarding their curriculum and teaching style while feeling empowered to give input on aspects of school operation. This sense of ownership and involvement extends to the relationships teachers can form with their students, allowing them to pay closer attention to each student's success.

Con: Potential for overwork

The openness to teacher input may translate into a voracious demand for teacher hours. In an article written for Scholastic.com, Caralee Adams cites the example of Boston's MATCH Charter Public School in which teachers commonly put in 60 to 80 hours of work each week. Charter schools in their first year of operation can prove particularly demanding in this respect. Young, ambitious teachers may respond to this grueling schedule with everything from exhilaration to burnout or resentment, and many may opt to leave the profession altogether.

Pro: 'At-will' employment

Although the NYSED (New York State Education Department) Charter School Office states that a charter school members may accept union membership, charter schools themselves are under no requirement to unionize, meaning that most of them offer "at will"

employment. While this condition gives the school administration the power to dismiss a teacher without advance notice for any reason, it also gives the teacher flexibility to resign a position without penalty or legal repercussions. Young teachers still looking for their long-term career or geographic "home" may find this consideration attractive. Teachers who opt not to belong to a union will also retain more money in their paychecks by not having to pay union dues.

Con: A smaller paycheck

The savings on union fees, if they apply, may not offset the fact that most charter schools offer lower salaries than their traditional public-school counterparts. Adams notes that charter school teachers tend to earn 10 to 15 percent less than they might get elsewhere, regardless of their experience level. Many charter schools lack the financial resources to compensate for this inequity with a strong benefits package. They may not take part in a teacher retirement program or offer full health insurance coverage for entire families. This shortfall may seem particularly harsh in light of the longer hours charter schools tend to require from their teachers.

Pro: Plenty of opportunities

Demand for qualified teachers remains high, and charter schools are searching for the best. According to Adams, 300 to 400 new schools launch each year, for a current estimated total of 4,300 nationwide. Beth Fertig, writing for WYNC Schoolbook, reports that more than 133,000 applicants battled for 14,600 seats in New York City's charter schools in 2012. This boom in popularity makes charter schools a safe bet for young teachers entering the job market. As the popularity continues to spread across the U.S., teachers may find themselves with plenty of location and relocation options as well.

Con: Management and quality uncertainties

Unfortunately, the same relative autonomy that gives charter schools such flexibility, and that provides teachers with so many opportunities for direct student involvement, also means that quality of management can vary wildly from school to school. A mismanaged school under an incompetent board of directors can lead to a substandard curriculum, inadequate teaching materials and a high level of both parent and teacher dissatisfaction. This lack of quality control, coupled with the aforementioned compensation issues, can lead to a high turnover rate among the teaching staff.

Betsy DeVos Is Public Enemy No. 1 With Teachers' Unions

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/maureensullivan/2017/01/17/betsy-devos-is-public-enemy-number-1-with-teachers-unions/print/>

The forces in and around the teachers' unions of America are engaging in a massive assault against Betsy DeVos, President-elect Donald Trump's pick for Education Secretary. From her wealthy family to her Christian faith and support of school vouchers, DeVos ticks off the education establishment, which sees her selection as a direct shot at the grand tradition of public schools.

"DeVos' anti-public education positions and her lack of any experience or qualifications show she would be a disaster for public education," the horrified NJEA, the New Jersey affiliate of the National Education Association, told its members, providing them with numbers to call (and call again!) for Democratic Senators Cory Booker and Robert Menendez.

"Her efforts have been laser-focused on undermining our public schools and, in doing so, have harmed students," wrote an equally terrified Steven Cook, president of the Michigan Education Association in an op-ed last month for the Lansing State Journal.

DeVos' confirmation hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee will be held Tuesday at 5 p.m. and the vote is scheduled for Jan. 24...and it's expected to go in her favor. She will face a friendly Republican majority, including Tim Scott (S.C.) and Rand Paul (KY), who support school choice. The Democrats, however, are ready to pounce: Elizabeth Warren (MA) and Al Franken (MN) come to mind as well as the Independent from Vermont, Bernie Sanders, who was in New York earlier this month stumping for "free" college with Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Republican Lamar Alexander (TN), the chairman of the committee, met with DeVos last week and said he she will make an "excellent" Secretary of Education. "I'm looking forward to her hearing because I know she will impress the Senate with her passionate support for improving education for all children," said Alexander, who served as Education Secretary from 1991-1993. "I am fully confident that she will be swiftly confirmed by the full Senate."

Not so fast, says Warren. Last week, the former law professor sent DeVos a 16-page letter with 66 footnotes

and 21 questions that snarks at what she sees as the nominee's lack of experience at everything from running a trillion-dollar student loan program to "developing regulations."

DeVos, 59, does not appear to be cowed by politicians. She chaired the Michigan Republican Party two different times and sat on the Republican National Committee. Her husband, Dick DeVos, ran an unsuccessful campaign for governor of Michigan, their home state, in 2006. That political race and their campaign locally and nationally for school-choice initiatives were funded in large part by their family wealth – his father co-founded Amway, and FORBES estimates the family fortune at \$5.1 billion. Her father, Edgar Prince, operated a successful auto parts manufacturing company.

DeVos' opponents are convinced she can't serve as head of the Department of Education because a) she didn't attend public schools, b) her four children didn't attend public schools, c) she supports school choice, d) she's a devout, Bible-quoting Christian and e) she's rich. The Dick and Betsy DeVos Foundation had \$15.1 million in income in 2014, wrote Crain's Detroit Business in June.

"She has used her money, power and influence to destroy public education in Michigan, and advance her religious beliefs," says Marie Corfield, a teacher and "education activist" who rose to prominence when Gov. Chris Christie reamed her out at a 2010 town hall meeting for "put(ing) on a show" and giggling when he started to answer her question about budget cuts.

As an editorial in The Wall Street Journal put it, DeVos "has committed the unpardonable sin of devoting much of her fortune to helping poor kids escape failing public schools."

DeVos was not an early Trump supporter. Nevertheless, her long-standing support of alternatives to traditional public schools dovetails with Trump's vow to move \$20 billion in federal education money into school choice initiatives. Her early philanthropic work with education included aiding the introduction of a charter-school law in Michigan back in 1993. Her husband, a pilot, in 2010 started the West Michigan Aviation Academy, a charter school that teaches flying to about 600 students in Grand Rapids.

Her rise to a position in the Cabinet is galling to teachers' unions and activists such as the Badass Teachers

Association (BATs), who see an end to the government monopoly on K-12 education. The number of charter schools has been growing: there are now about 6,800 charters out of the nearly 100,000 public schools in the country. Voucher programs remain a small segment of the education system, with about 100,000 students getting vouchers to attend private school and another 190,000 getting tax-credit-funded scholarships to private schools, according to the Center for Education Reform. It's still a tiny number, thanks in large part to lobbying by the unions. This year, the government says nearly 50 million students are attending K-12 public schools in the U.S. Another 5.2 million attend private schools.

To block her nomination, Twitter is chock-a-block with #Dump DeVos and #NotMySOE hashtags. There's also #PublicSchoolSuccess pointing out that successful Americans, including Alexander, Warren and Sanders, are all public school graduates. Like Trump and President Obama, DeVos did not attend public schools. She graduated in 1979 from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, a liberal arts school affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church.

DeVos is a “radical extremist,” says school-choice denier Diane Ravitch, who switched sides after serving as Assistant Secretary of Education under Alexander in the early 1990s. To hear her opponents tell it, DeVos is the boogie lady who destroyed the ailing Detroit schools by bolstering the charter schools there. Her foes claim she wants to eliminate traditional public schools through privatization and plow under the sacrosanct church-school divide. And they claim she wants to turn back the clock to the days of George Wallace-style southern racial segregation of schools.

DeVos in turn sees school-choice foes as Luddites, clinging to a Model T style of education in the era of Tesla. She has attacked Obama for trying to eliminate the successful federally funded D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program that allows low-income students in Washington, D.C., to attend private and parochial schools while sending his own daughters to the \$40,000 a year Sidwell Friends School. “It's illogical, it's hypocritical, and frankly it's immoral,” she said in a 2015 speech.

In June she told Crain's Detroit Business: “Dick and I chose the best education for our children, realizing at the same time that there were many parents and children — there still are — who didn't have the same opportunity.

And I didn't think that was fair. I still don't think it's fair.”

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