

Public Citizens for Children and Youth
Performance Audit of the Ten Charters Seeking Renewal
March, 2014

The current charter renewal process exposes both weaknesses with the District's charter oversight and transparency problems with the State's new School Performance Profiles. Nevertheless, Public Citizens for Children and Youth finds that three charters seeking renewal appear to be performing so poorly that the SRC must carefully consider the benefits of their renewal. We also find that most of the charters seeking renewal have student bodies with a significantly lower share of vulnerable students than the district's average enrollment. As such in renewing these schools the SRC must consider if their academic achievement is high enough to warrant renewal. Further, where renewals are granted, the SRC should place conditions on renewal that require that these schools demonstrate on annual basis that they are enrolling a larger share of low income, special education, minority and ELL students. Finally, while this renewal cohort demonstrates a significant improvement in their application, admission, and enrollment processes six of the charters seeking renewal still exhibit application, enrollment or acceptance practices that we consider barriers to open enrollment.

The 2014 cohort of charters seeking renewal includes the ten operators that operate 13 schools and educate 7,500 students. Schools with an * have more than one campus this renewal cycle.

Ad Prima*
Esperanza Academy
Franklin Towne High School
Global Leadership Academy
Khepera*
Mariana Bracetti Academy
New Foundations*
New Media Technology
Philadelphia Montessori
Philadelphia Performing Arts

*The charter has multiple schools up for renewal

In the absence of a clear charter renewal policy, Public Citizens for Children and Youth urges the School Reform Commission to base its renewal decisions on objective data such as what is provided in this report. Going forward, the Office of Charter Schools' recent release of phase one of the [Authorizing Quality Initiative \(AQI\)](#) represent a strong step forward to better transparency, accountability, and clarity for students and stakeholders in Philadelphia. However, we believe that these proposed policies can be strengthened; therefore Public Citizens for Children and Youth has [submitted comments and recommendations](#) for consideration by the School Reform Commission and the Administration.

To assist the School Reform Commission in its decisions about the current cohort of schools seeking renewal, Public Citizens for Children and Youth examined two key factors that we believe should be key factors in the School Reform Commission's decision regarding the renewal of the ten charters and we recommend conditions that should be placed on renewal in some cases. The principles fall into two categories: Academic Performance and Equity of Access.

Academic Performance

In considering the academic performance of the schools, it's important to note that the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) changed how it releases student assessment data. The new reporting regime does not provide school level data for the FY 2012- 2013 academic year. The new format is less transparent than in the past. For instance, PDE's School Performance Profile does not disaggregate data by grade level. Instead, a composite score is given to a school to reflect the share of students who score "proficient" and "advanced" on the PSSA exam. As a result, the public no longer knows the share of students in the "below basic" vs. "basic" categories in these schools. In addition, PDE no longer provides academic data disaggregated for low-income, minority, or special education students. Instead, these subgroups have been put together into a composite group called "historically underperforming students." Thus it's not clear how each subgroup is performing. That change affects the analysis of this cohort of schools seeking renewal.

Ad Prima, Khepera, and New Foundations each have two school campuses up for renewal under the same charter. However due to the changes in the State's data reporting systems these schools are represented with a single number.

While any review of a school's academic performance should extend beyond the limits of standardized test scores, test data can provide insight into whether a school is delivering on their goal of providing a quality instructional program to all students. For our review, we worked from the premise that schools should be at risk of non-renewal if they were unable to ensure that at least 50% of all students were scoring proficient or higher on math or reading assessments. From the data available, three charters appear to be performing below this 50% mark, thus the SRC must carefully consider granting renewals of these charters.

While three of the schools seeking renewal are markedly under-performing, most of the other schools seeking renewal have student populations that are more advantaged than the district's typical student body. As such, rigorous data analysis against comparable populations may find that overall performance could be too low to warrant renewal. Where a school has a student body that is not reflective of the district's diverse student population, we urge the SRC to direct the Office of Charter Schools to prepare an analysis that compares academic performance with that of magnet schools with similar student populations.

In a later portion of this report we offer specific data and recommendations aimed at ensuring that all charter schools have student populations that are reflective of the district's student profile.

Equity of Access:

The intent of the Commonwealth's charter enrollment law was to create schools that would give vulnerable students access to innovative models of learning. While the expansion of charter schools has helped to increase the share of vulnerable students able to achieve academic success, data indicates that some schools have recruitment, enrollment, and acceptance practices that cause their study body to be significantly skewed with many fewer vulnerable students enrolled.

Based on data available for the ten charters seeking renewal for FY 2013 from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Education, Public Citizens for Children and Youth found that:

- Three of ten schools have fewer than 50% of students scoring proficient in reading or math
- Five of ten serve significantly smaller shares of low-income students compared to the District's average enrollment
- Six of ten serve significantly lower numbers of Special Education Students compared to the District's average enrollment
- Six of ten serve no English Language Learners (ELL)
- Six of ten exhibit barriers or questionable practices in application or entry requirements

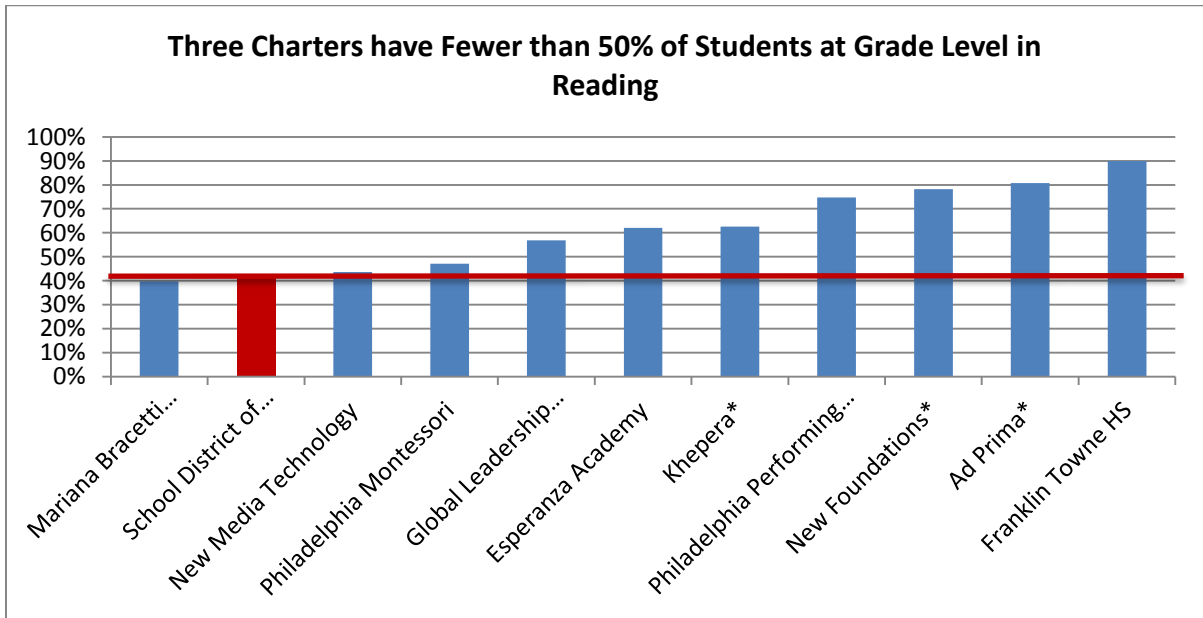
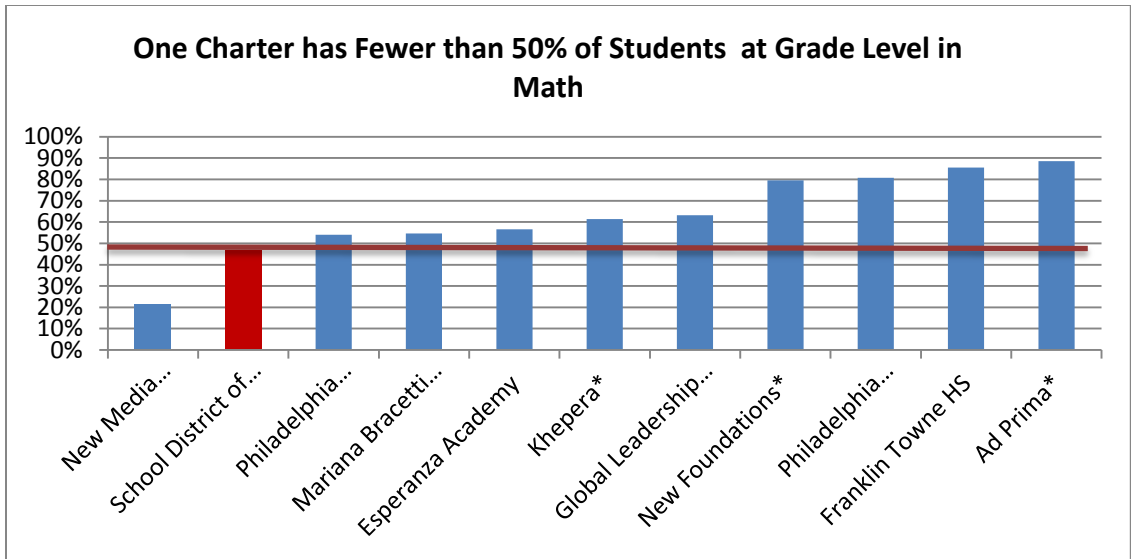
The data we present will give the SRC a guide to the schools where conditions for renewal must include corrective action plans that have annual requirements of enrolling students from more vulnerable populations.

Details of the Academic Performance of the Charters Seeking Renewal

Although PCCY supports academic evaluation that is more robust than standardized test scores alone, low test scores are one indicator that the school is failing to provide students with a solid instructional program. **At three of ten charters seeking renewal, fewer than 50% of students scored proficient or advanced in math or reading¹.** Less than a third of New Media and two thirds of Philadelphia Montessori students scored proficient on the **math** and New Media, Philadelphia Montessori, and Mariana Bracetti have fewer than 50% of students scoring proficient in **reading².**

¹ <http://paschoolperformance.org>

² <http://paschoolperformance.org>

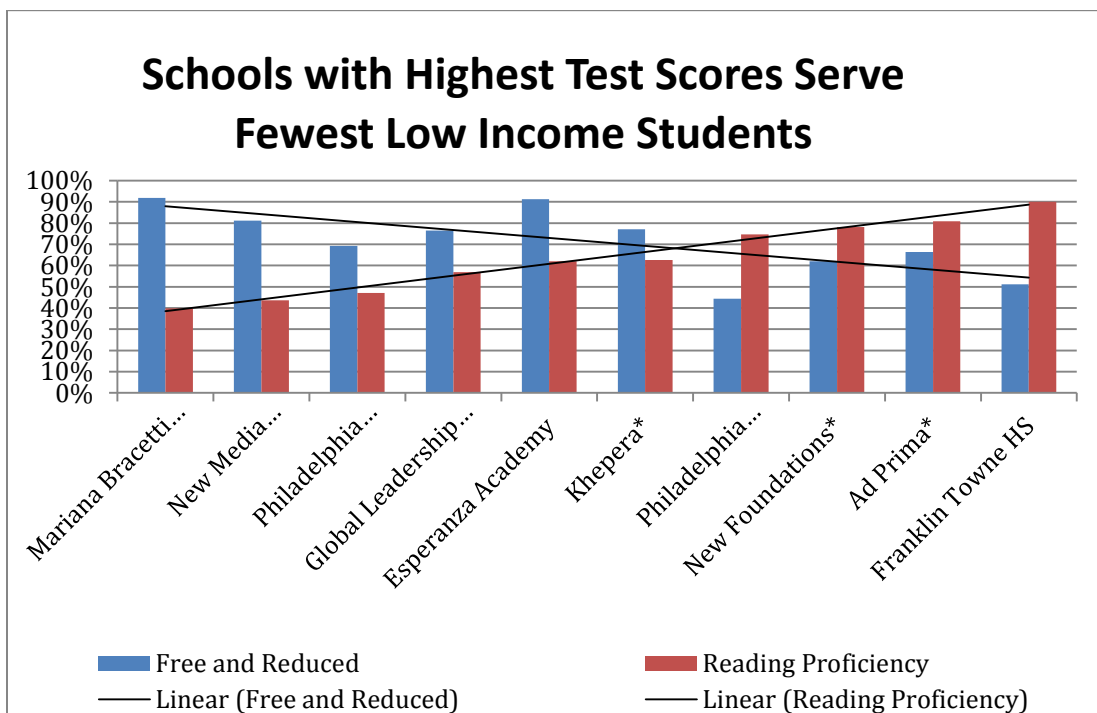


Considering the Relationship of Academic Performance and Student Access

PCCY found that the three schools where less than 50% of the students were proficient in reading or math also have student populations that most closely reflect that of district schools. For example, Mariana Bracetti and Esperanza Academy’s student populations most closely reflect the District’s average profile for low income, ELL, and special education students. New Media’s student body closely reflects the District’s average student profile with respect to the share of low income and special education students, but serves few ELL students. Philadelphia Montessori serves fewer low income and ELL students than the District’s average enrollment; however, its number of special education students is markedly higher than the District average.

Conversely, Franklin Towne, Ad Prima, New Foundations, and Philadelphia Performing Arts, the top performing schools in reading, each have the lowest share of low-income students enrolled.

In cases where student populations are more advantaged than the District’s average enrollment the SRC does not have sufficient data to determine the relative quality of each school’s academic performance. Their comparatively strong results may be far weaker than expected for schools with the profile of students enrolled in these schools.

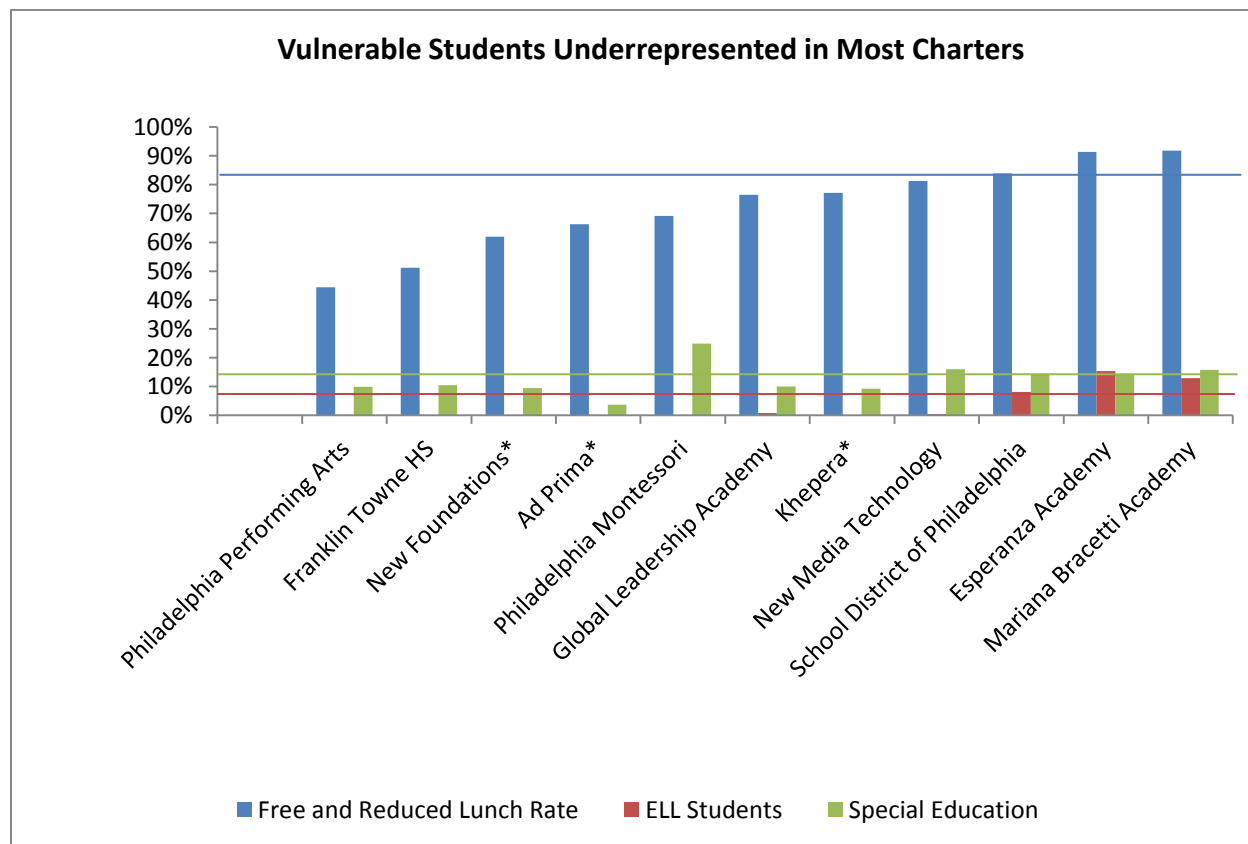


Details of Equity of Access for Charters Seeking Renewal

While academic performance of a charter should be the chief criterion for renewal, the renewal process must ensure equal access and treatment for students in charter schools.

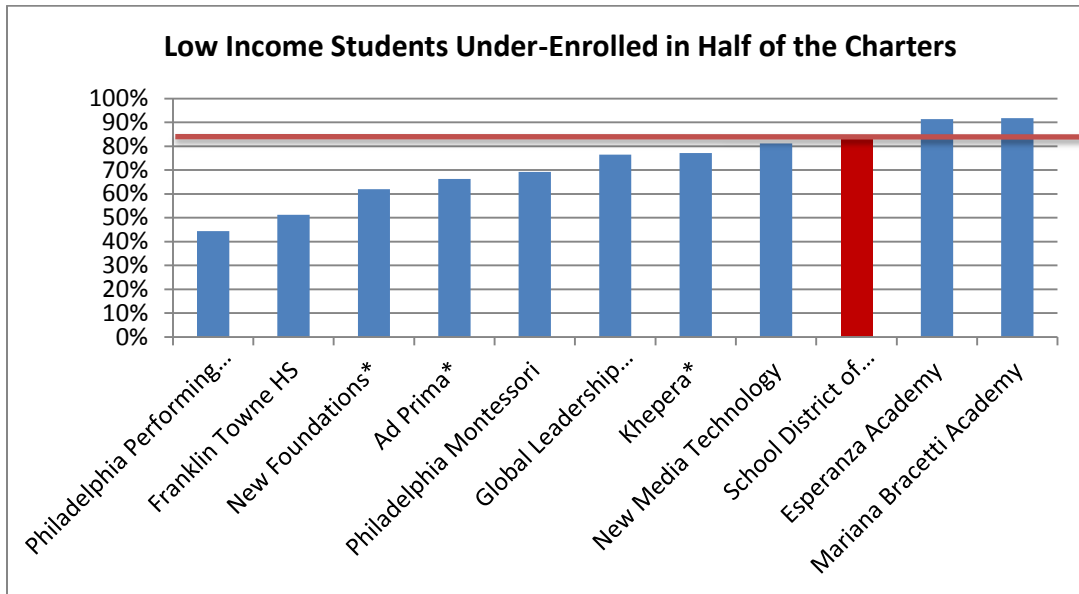
In large measure, when the Commonwealth enacted its charter school law it did so to create schools that would provide an alternative to students in persistently low performing schools who could not afford other non-public options. Since most charters operate city-wide, greater attention is needed to ensure that all students have an equal chance to apply, enroll, and attend these schools.

As stated, most of the charters up for renewal do not enroll low-income, special education or ELL students at rates consistent with the School District’s averages. **We recommend that the SRC conditionally renew schools that underserve vulnerable populations such as students of color, low-income, English language learners and special education students; set numerical targets for increasing diversity; and closely monitor each school’s performance in meeting those targets with the understanding that non-performance will result in pulling the charter.**



Low Income Under-Enrollment

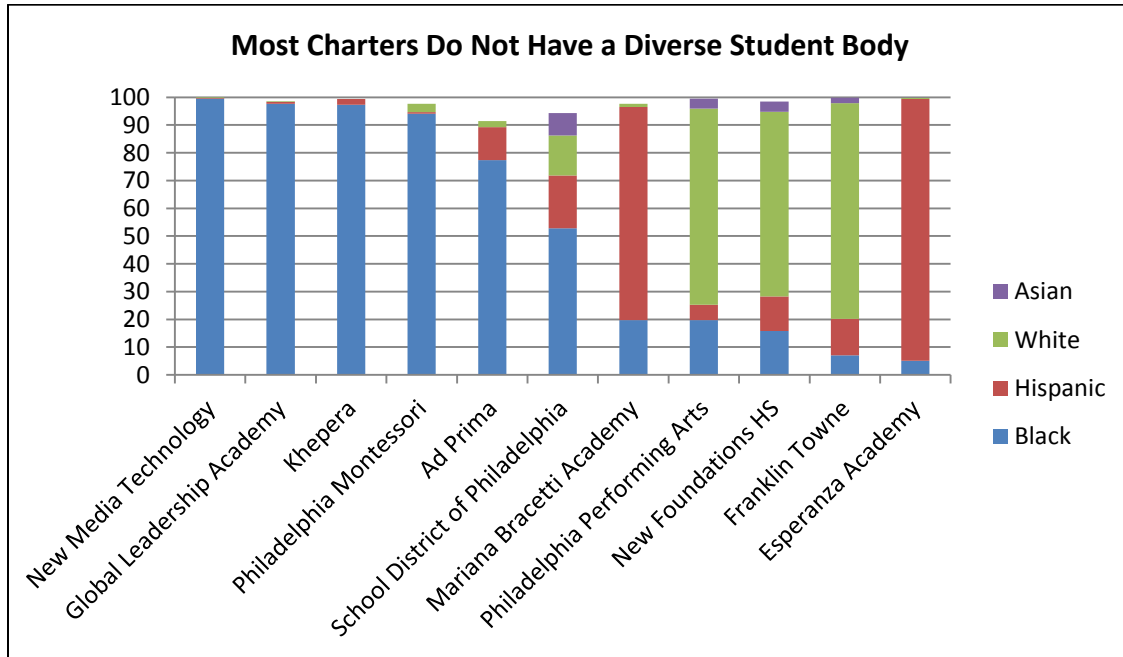
- Three of the ten charters seeking renewal, Mariana Bracetti, Esperanza Academy, and New Media, enroll low-income students at rates comparable to the District.
- Five of the ten charters seeking renewal have a free and reduced lunch rate that is markedly lower than the District's average.
- Two of the charters, Philadelphia Performing Arts and Franklin Towne have just over 60% of students from low income families, nearly 40 points below the district average



Racial Isolation:

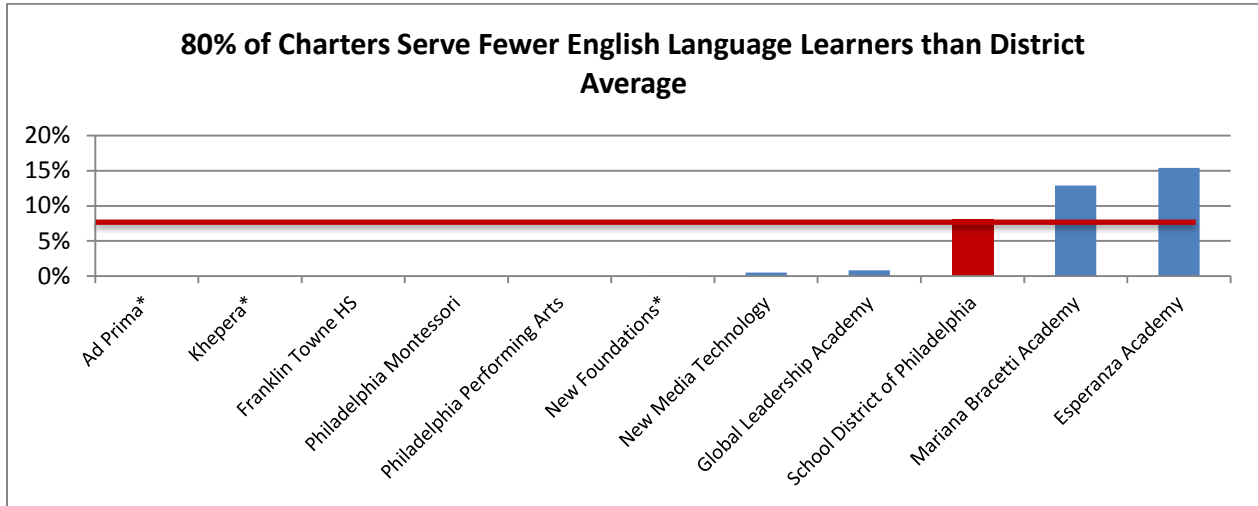
Cultural diversity should be a goal for all schools. While some schools seeking renewal reflect the overall diversity of the communities in which they are located, others neither reflect their community nor the overall district. As part of the renewal process, the SRC should require that schools develop plans to ensure that they are serving a diverse group of students, with a particular focus on historically underserved populations.

- Hispanic students are underrepresented in eight out of ten renewal schools
- Asian students are underrepresented in all charters seeking renewal
- Black students are underrepresented in half of schools and over represented in half of renewal schools
- White students are over represented in four of ten schools



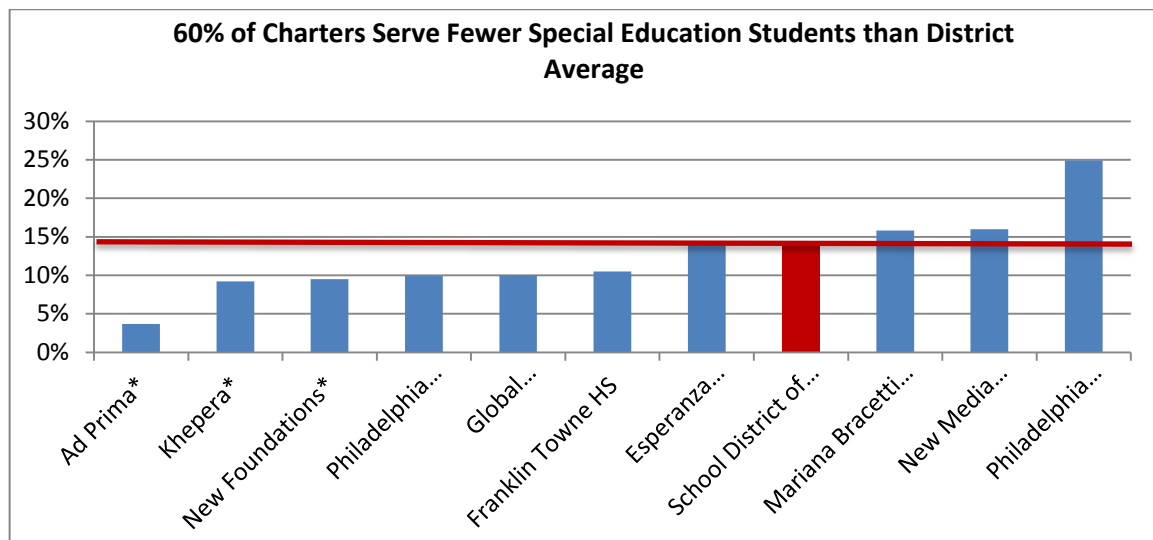
English Language Learners Underrepresented:

- All but two renewal schools, Esperanza Academy and Mariana Bracetti, serve fewer English Language Learners than the district’s average enrollment
- Five of ten charters, Ad Prima, Khepera, Franklin Towne, Philadelphia Performing Arts, and Philadelphia Montessori serve no English Language Learners



Special Education Students Have Limited Access in all but three charters:

- New Media, Philadelphia Montessori, and Mariana Bracetti serve a higher rate of special education students than the District average
- Esperanza Academy serves special education students at a rate that is reflective of the District
- Khepera, New Foundations, Philadelphia Performing Arts, Global Leadership Academy, and Franklin Towne serve significantly fewer special education students than the District average
- Ad Prima serves fewer than 4% special education students



Barriers to Enrollment:

Charter schools are public schools and must follow laws that protect the rights of public school students. These schools cannot refuse to admit or consider children because of their disability, level of English language proficiency, academic record, status as immigrants, status as a child in foster care, or as a child experiencing homelessness.

This year's charter renewal cohort has fewer barriers to enrollment than previous cohorts and several schools have adopted the common application. Fewer barriers and a common application are a step forward for children in Philadelphia.

However, some charters still exhibit barriers such as: requiring students to re-enroll from year-to-year, meet deadlines or face seat forfeiture, and/or require a parent interview. **We recommend that the SRC not renew any charter that does not agree to remove all barriers we've identified.**

- Ad Prima, New Media Technology, Nueva Esperanza, and Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter exhibit no barriers.
- Khepera requires that students re-enroll each year.
- Khepera, and Global Leadership, Mariana Bracetti require enrollment packets by specific deadline or the seat is forfeited.
- New Foundations requires that applications be hand-delivered.
- Philadelphia Montessori will not enter students into lottery without completed "paperwork" and requires an interview with an administrator.

For guidance on what schools can and cannot require please see appendix "*What Can Charter Schools Require Prior to Enrollment?*"

Summary of Charters Seeking Renewal Enrollment and Application Requirements In Bold: Barriers or Questionable Practices

School	Admissions Requirement
<p>Ad Prima Charter School</p> <p>5901 Woodbine Ave 19131 (K-8) 3556 Frankford Avenue 19143 (K-5)</p>	<p>One page application available in English with Spanish translation. Applications can be dropped off at any of our buildings or faxed to (610) 660-8416.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(As of 1/10/14)</p>
<p>Franklin Towne Charter High School (K-12)</p> <p>4259 Richmond Street (Elementary) Philadelphia, PA 19137</p> <p>5301 Tacony Street Philadelphia, PA 19137 (High School)</p>	<p>Application materials cannot be mailed. Upon acceptance parents will need to provide the following information to the school in order to complete enrollment procedures. Registration materials for new students are available from the office administrative staff or can be downloaded.</p> <p>Completed Admissions Profile (with name, address, emergency contact) Birth Certificate and copy for office to retain Copy of Immunization Records Proof of Residency (Utility Bill, Tax Record, Lease) Most recent report card IEP (If applicable) 504 plan (if applicable) Physical Request for Student Records Evidence of Enrollment Free and Reduced Lunch Application</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(As of 1/10/14)</p>
<p>Global Leadership Academy Charter School (K-8)</p> <p>4601 Girard Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19131</p>	<p>Intent to enroll form link not functional Accepted students will be notified in writing at the end of this period. If your child's name has been pulled, you will be notified to complete the following documents: GLA enrollment application (within two weeks of lottery notification), Birth Certificate, Two Proofs of Residency, (Lease or Mortgage and one utility bill or two utility bills) (gas, water and/or electric bills accepted). If Lease, mortgage, or bills are not in the applying parents name(s) please submit a notarized letter from the person you reside with stating your residency and that the potential student resides and one of the owners utility bill, Photo I.D. for parent guardian, Custody Papers (if applicable). These documents need to be submitted for application completion and confirmation of your child's enrollment.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(As of 1/10/14)</p>
<p>Khepera Charter School</p> <p>6611 Anderson Street (K-5) Philadelphia, PA 19119</p> <p>144 W. Carpenter Lane (6-8) Philadelphia, PA 19119</p>	<p>Intent to enroll form has no barriers and is available in English and Spanish. Students are required to re-enroll each year.</p> <p>All complete Intent to Enroll forms are entered into the lottery or waiting list if applicable. Once the lottery is complete, students who are not drawn are placed on the waiting list in the order their Intent to Enroll form was received. Parents are notified via postcard. When there are multiple family members applying, Intent to Enroll form must be submitted for each student applying to the school.</p> <p>All documents (including the Intent to Enroll) can be mailed, faxed, emailed or hand-delivered to the school. All applicants received by October are invited to the Open House. Siblings of current students are also required to complete Intent to Enroll forms.</p> <p>Students who are offered admission are notified by a letter (sent via US mail), and must confirm acceptance of offer. If parents accept the offer for admission, they must submit the documents in the admission packet. If parents do not confirm acceptance by the deadline given, they lose the slot and it goes to the next person on the waiting list. After students have been offered admission, parents are invited to an information session, regarding the school's culture, academics, health/wellness, discipline, and application process. Additionally parents receive a tour of the building.</p> <p>Once a student is enrolled, the parent must produce the following documents (prior to the student's start date) proof of age, proof of address, proof of Immunization, home</p>

	<p>language survey, and parent registration statement. If the paperwork is not completed by the deadline, the student will lose his slot.</p> <p>Re-enrollment Process - All parents submit the Re-Enrollment form for the upcoming school year by the deadline. Re-enrollment forms for the 2014-2015 are due February 3, 2014. The re-enrollment forms can be submitted either through mail, fax, email or hand-delivery. The lottery for the 2014-2015 school year will be held on March 6, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. at 6610 Anderson Street. If parents do not submit re-enrollment forms, their child's slot will be made available in the lottery.</p> <p>(As of 1/10/14)</p>
<p>Mariana Bracetti Academy Charter School (6-12) 1840 Torresdale Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19124</p>	<p>Application form is available for online submission with no barriers. Applications that are received by March 4, 2014 will be entered into our lottery. Any application received after the March 4, 2014 deadline, or that is not drawn during the lottery, will be placed on our waiting list.</p> <p>The 2014-2015 Lottery will be held at MBA on March 11, 2014 at 4:00 pm. If your child's application is drawn during the lottery, you will be required to submit an enrollment packet and supporting documents to MBA by April 4, 2014 to secure your child's place. The complete enrollment packet and list of supporting documents will be sent to all students once they have been accepted.</p> <p>(As of 1/13/14)</p>
<p>New Foundations Charter School 8001 Torresdale Avenue (K-8) Philadelphia, PA 19136</p> <p>6701 Calvert Street (9 – 11) Philadelphia, PA 19149</p>	<p>One page application has no barriers. Applications are available April 1 through January 15th each year. All new applications (K-12) to Rhawn and Torresdale Building. must be hand delivered. Receptionist stated that application can be hand delivered only, and applications are accepted from 7am-2pm week of (Jan 13-17).</p> <p>(As of 1/13/14)</p>
<p>New Media Technology Charter School (6-12) 8034 Thouron Avenue Philadelphia PA 19150</p>	<p>Application available online for download and with form and has no barriers. Available in English and Spanish.</p> <p>(As of 1/13/14)</p>
<p>Nueva Esperanza Academy Charter High School 301 W Hunting Park Ave (9-12) Philadelphia, PA 19140</p>	<p>Application is available online and has no barriers. Available in English and Spanish.</p> <p>(As of 1/13/14)</p>
<p>Philadelphia Montessori Charter School 2227 Island Ave (K-6) Philadelphia, PA 19142</p>	<p>All materials in English</p> <p>Applications will only be entered into lottery when all paperwork is complete and submitted and an interview with administration on site has occurred (child encouraged to attend)</p> <p>(As of 1/13/14)</p>
<p>Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter School 2600 S Broad Street (K-8) Philadelphia, PA 19145</p>	<p>Form is available for online submission and has no barriers. Paper applications and a kiosk will be available in the lobby at 2600 S Broad Street and at 16th and Vine Streets for anyone without internet access. Instructions for High School Only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEP ONE: Apply online or hand in your 9th or 10th grade paper application to 16th and Vine Streets by December 6, 2013. • STEP TWO: Wait for lottery results. High School lottery results will be mailed by December 13, 2013. • STEP THREE: If selected through the lottery process, complete and return High School Enrollment Packet. High School Packets must be postmarked by January 17, 2014. • STEP FOUR: Attend counseling session to discuss Majors for the High School. • STEP FIVE: Student is enrolled in String Theory High School for the 2014-2015 School Year. <p>(As of January 13, 2014)</p>

Appendix

What can charter schools require prior to enrollment?

Four in the Door! Charter schools, like all public schools, can only require four things as a *condition of enrollment*:

1. Proof of residency.
2. Proof of required immunizations.
3. Proof of age.
4. A signed "Act 26" statement.

As reflected in guidance issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, multiple forms of proof are acceptable to show age and residency. A birth certificate is an acceptable form of proof, but it cannot be required as the only form of proof of a child's age.

A charter school can stop enrolling students when it is "full" — as determined by its charter. A charter school is permitted to give enrollment preference to the siblings of current students and to the students of parents who "actively participated in the development of the charter school." A charter school is not permitted to discriminate on any basis that is illegal for a traditional public school, including on the basis of race, religion, and language, country of origin, disability, gender, or measures of achievement or aptitude. All public schools, charter and traditional, are prohibited from requesting that parents provide social security numbers and schools cannot inquire into the immigration status of a student.

In addition, all public schools are entitled to receive the educational records of incoming students. However, schools must request those records from the previous school and are not permitted to require incoming student to provide these records — report cards, PSSA scores, IEPs, etc. — as a condition of enrollment.

Renewal Charters: School Profiles

School Name	Free and Reduced Lunch Rate (%)	ELL Students (%)	Special Education (%)	Math Proficiency (%) [†]	Reading Proficiency (%) [†]
School District of Philadelphia	83.9	8.1	14.4	46.9	42.0
Ad Prima@3556 Frankford Avenue*	66.3	0.0	3.7	88.5	80.8
Ad Prima@1922 N. 63rd Street*	66.3	0.0	3.7	88.5	80.8
Khepera 6-8*	77.1	0.0	9.2	61.4	62.6
Khepera K-5*	77.1	0.0	9.2	61.4	62.6
New Foundations HS*	62.0	0.09	9.5	79.6	78.2
New Foundations K-8*	62.0	0.09	9.5	79.6	78.2
Franklin Towne HS	51.2	0.0	10.5	85.6	90.0
Global Leadership Academy Charter School	76.5	0.85	10	63.2	56.8
New Media Technology Charter School	81.2	0.5	16	21.2	43.6
Esperanza Academy Charter High School	91.3	15.4	14.3	56.6	62.0
Philadelphia Montessori Charter School	69.2	0.0	24.9	54.0	47.1
Mariana Bracetti Academy Charter School	91.8	12.9	15.8	54.7	39.8
Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter School	44.4	0.0	9.9	80.8	74.7

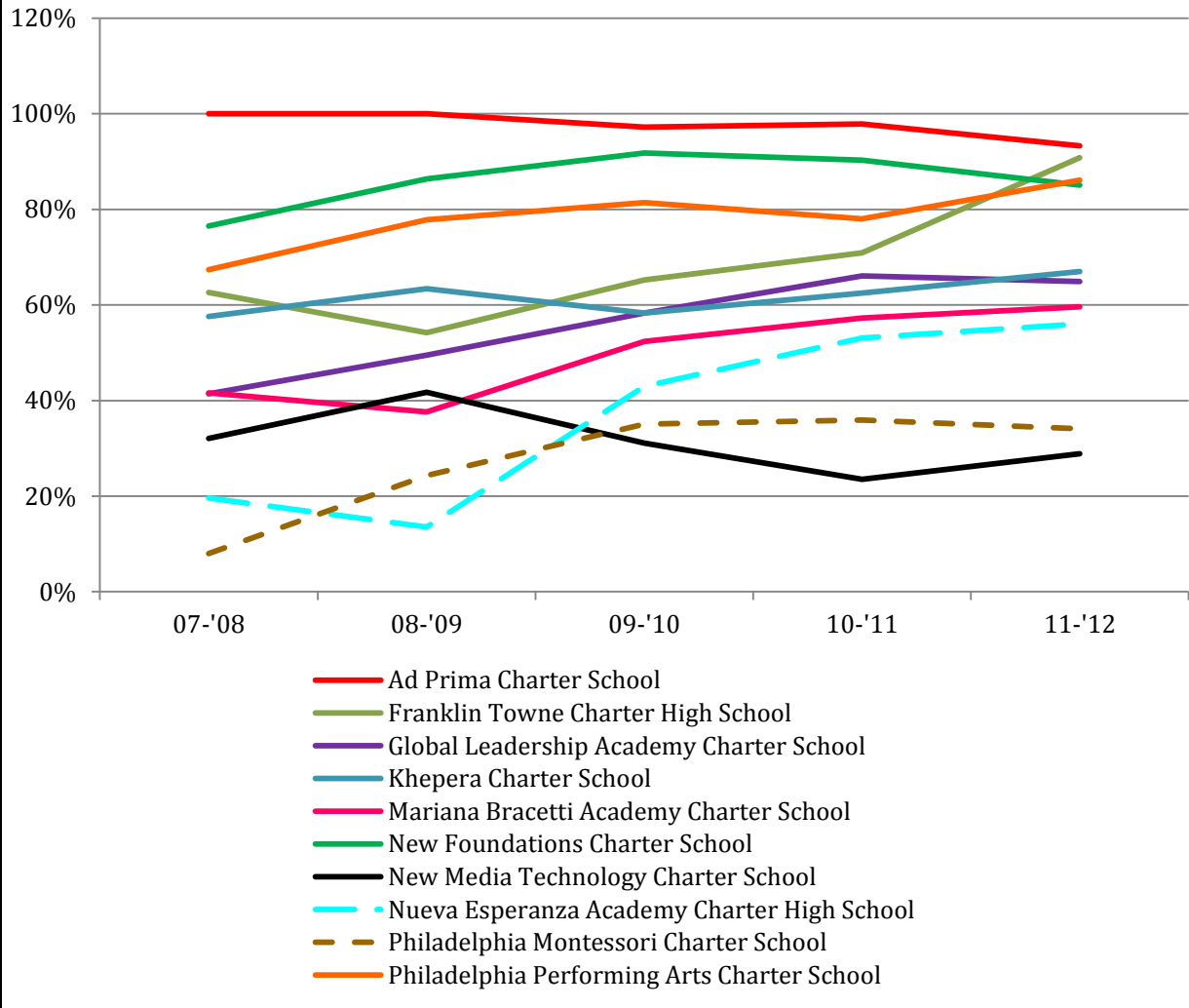
Sources:

SDP Office of Charter Schools: Enrollment/Attrition 2012-2013, ELL Rate 2012-2013, Special Education Rate 2012-2013

* These schools lack individualized data.

† Percent of all students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the Mathematics/Algebra I PSSA/Keystone Exam; includes all students who take the PSSA, PASA, or Keystone Exam and were enrolled for a full academic year.

Math Proficiency and Advanced Rates Over 5 Years



Reading Proficiency and Advanced Rates Over 5 years

