Best Practices in Charter School Collaboration

In the following report, Hanover Research presents best practices on public and charter school collaboration. In particular, we address partnerships to share resources or facilities, providing examples of existing collaborations. We also include information on broader concerns and practices for successful collaboration.
Introduction

In the following report, Hanover Research provides research related to public and charter school collaboration. In particular, we focus on the sharing of resources and campuses between public and charter schools. We provide examples and best practices for structuring policies and practices for sharing resources and address potential issues these collaborations often encounter. Additionally, we include research and trends in charter and public school collaboration. We present our findings in the following three sections.

- **Section One: Literature Review** An overview of the history and development of charter and public school collaboration and potential issues inhibiting successful collaboration
- **Section Two: Best Practices in Collaboration** Includes best practices advocated in the literature, including Massachusetts Public Charter School Association’s tips for collaboration and the main components of public charter school collaboration compacts
- **Section Three: Collaboration Examples** Includes examples of districts collaborating to share best practices or facilities and resources

Key Findings

- Our research suggests that the main obstacle preventing successful collaboration is the attitude stakeholders have towards one another. Since the establishment of charter schools, relations between the two entities have typically been strained or contentious. Successful collaboration begins with a mutual pledge to deliver the best education possible to all students in a community, regardless of the provider.

- The types of collaboration typically fall within three main categories. School districts and charters can agree to share facilities or include charter schools in purchasing plans with the district to secure discounts on food or supplies. Secondly, collaboration could involve a dedicated effort to share best practices and replicate on smaller or larger scales. Thirdly, districts and charters can pledge to seek grant funding collaboratively and shared funds.

- Among districts sharing facilities and resources, there are many types of collaboration possible. Some districts allow charters to rent underutilized facilities. Others allow them to take advantage of discounted pricing obtained in bulk orders with regional educational service agencies. In many states, districts are obligated to provide transportation to all students, including charter students, so transportation becomes a shared resource.
These collaborations can be successful if both parties enter discussions intending to seek the best possible outcome for facilities use.

- **Professional development programming can be shared successfully among charter and public teachers in the same subject area or grade level.** As with all collaborations, these experiences are successful when all parties approach the experience with a mutual desire to learn and share.

- New York City Schools have developed a detailed, wide-spread policy for sharing district facilities with charter schools. Principals and the Office of Space Planning determine classroom assignments based on number of students and student needs. **A clear plan for use of hallways, laboratories, playgrounds, and gymnasiums is laid out.** All principals sharing the building **meet at least monthly to discuss concerns** related to the shared facilities. Charters pay a nominal rent, and the district pays utilities and janitorial fees.

- The level of collaboration can be brief and targeted or comprehensive and encompassing. The Massachusetts Public Charter School Association reports on various brief projects, such as **one-year collaboration between a charter and public middle school to develop formative assessments in mathematics.** The Gates Foundations sponsors compacts between districts and charters that pledge long-term commitments to cooperate in nearly all aspects of school functions.
Section One: Literature Review

In this section, Hanover Research provides an overview of the history of charter and public school collaboration. We observe that earliest relationships were universally hostile and antagonistic, as explained below. However, we address the changes in outlook which lead to successful collaboration, discussed in Section Two. This section also addresses the potential challenges faced by districts and charter schools seeking to collaborate.

From the inception of charter schools, relationships between school districts and charters have been strained, at best, often bordering on outright hostility. The sources of tension are multiple: charter schools and school districts lobby for limited education funding and compete for students. School district supporters also accuse charter schools of selecting the most promising students. Additionally, charter schools are often viewed as a method of bypassing collective bargaining rights.

According to a paper published by the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, three issues commonly inhibit collaboration between districts and charter schools: scare resources, contentious attitudes, and a lack of investment in broader relationships. The director of education at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Vicki L. Phillips, explains the tense relationship between charters and school districts:

Too often, issues not tied to academic outcomes can make it difficult for schools and teachers to have the opportunity to learn from each other and build upon successful practices, whether those practices are found in district-run or charter-run schools.

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3 Ibid.
According to the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, the “overheated debate” between charter schools and districts fails to acknowledge one of the essential roles of the charter school: a “catalyst for innovation.”

Successful collaborations between districts and charter schools recognize the ability of the charter school to innovate educational solutions to meet the needs of populations frequently unsuccessful in the traditional classroom environment.

With the sponsorship of district-charter collaboration compacts, described in Section Two, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation initiated another major phase in district and charter collaboration. While scattered attempts at collaboration had been made before the development of the compacts, none of them was particularly comprehensive or enduring. A November, 2010 Education Week article declared that “so far, the [district-charter] cooperative efforts are not widespread nor are most of them very deep.”

By 2011, there were at least 24 portfolio school districts and 16 collaboration compacts. A portfolio district is one that has dedicated to provide public education through multiple means, including portfolio schools. In some cases, these portfolio districts are also collaboration compact districts. The Gates Foundation compacts are comprehensive documents, describing multi-faceted collaboration efforts, but their implementation is only in the earliest stages. We examine examples of these compact documents in Section Two.

**Potential Challenges**

Animosity towards charter schools may still linger among district leaders who have not embraced the broader goal of educating all students in the best manner possible. The Los Angeles Unified School District’s failures epitomize this type of hostility preventing best outcomes for students. The school board explicitly stated that it wanted students from its failing campuses to be served by the best possible provider, unless the provider is a charter school.

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8 Ibid.

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In Ohio, trust between districts and charters is described as “tenuous” by the vice president for Ohio Programs and Policy, Terry Ryan. According to him, the **competition for students and funding from the same pool limits the ability of each side to cooperate fully.** He characterizes the charter culture as “amazingly self-critical and self-examining” while the district culture lends itself to contentment, becoming “hyper-defensive when criticized.” These opposing viewpoints and antagonistic attitudes have inhibited meaningful collaboration.

Rana Khan, a director in the New York City Office of Space Planning shares experiences with “colocation” of charter and district schools in the same buildings. She advises that charter schools entering a district building be mindful of the fact that this represents a great change for the original school inhabiting the building. She warns that “large personalities” inhibit successful planning discussions, but **the collaboration can work once both parties adopt the outlook of “we need to make this building work.”** The details of New York City’s colocations are described further in Section Three.

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Section Two: Best Practices in Collaboration

In this section, Hanover Research presents the current research on best practices in charter and district collaboration. In some cases, we address collaboration specific to facility usage. However, we also include limited information on broader collaborative efforts.

Recommendations for Successful Collaboration

The Massachusetts Charter Public School Association has facilitated numerous collaborations between school districts and charter schools, ranging from shared use of facilities to joint applications for grant money. The MCPSA has developed a list of “Eight Tips for Building Collaborative Relations” featured in a 2005 publication and also replicated in a 2010 publication by the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools addressing “Best Cooperative Practices Charter and Traditional Public Schools.” These recommendations are reproduced in the figure below.

Figure 2.1: MCPSA Recommendations for Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eight Tips for Building Collaborative Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lead by example, modeling respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Put yourself in the other person’s shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pursue positive public relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Build bridges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Demonstrate commitment to public education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Consider all public educators as partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Support problem solving efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Focus on benefits for children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MCPSA

These eight recommendations are applicable to all fields of negotiation, emphasizing that all representatives must enter discussions without an adversarial tone. The first, second, third, and seventh points relate closely to one another. The MCPSA recommends that representatives enter discussions respectfully and professionally. All stakeholders should be mindful of the final recommendation in particular, that both groups share a common goal of educating children. When discussion specific collaborative initiatives, both groups must be aware of what the topic will require of the other parties and pursue routes that are based on “fair standards independent of the will of either side.” Pursing positive public relations requires

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representatives to explain their side’s point of view without criticizing opposing outlooks. Discussions that descend into disputes draw attention away from the needs of students and reflect poorly on both parties.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth recommendations are closely related, as well. The MCPSA recommends that parties build bridges by establishing connections with other service providers or educators that support public education, including children’s service agencies, historical societies, environmental groups, and civil rights groups. Such relationships develop a positive tone in the conversation about public and charter school collaboration. Representatives from each side should also join committees and endeavors supporting the public education efforts of other schools. **Representatives must consider all parties as equal and positive contributors to the benefit of public education.** MCPSA also suggests that one “win-win” endeavor that can engender a positive outlook is joint grant-writing which requires effort from all sides and instigates conversations about both schools.

**District-Charter Collaboration Compacts**

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation sponsored an initiative to encourage collaboration compacts between districts and charter schools. The Foundation declares that

> The goal of the compact initiative is to improve collaboration and innovation between charter and districts schools to provide all students in a city with a portfolio of highly effective education options, accelerating 80 percent college readiness in the city.\(^{18}\)

In 2010, education leaders in nine communities signed compacts outlining the cooperation between public school districts and charter schools. In April of 2011, an additional seven communities signed charters. The Center for Reinventing Public Education monitors these compacts and publishes annual reports to measure the overall progress of these partnerships.\(^{19}\) The following cities have developed compacts.

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Figure 2.2: District-Charter Collaboration Compact Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Compact Districts</th>
<th>Compact Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin School District</td>
<td>Baltimore Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Public Schools</td>
<td>Central Falls School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Public Schools</td>
<td>Denver Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford Public Schools</td>
<td>Los Angeles Unified School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools</td>
<td>Minneapolis Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans Recovery School District</td>
<td>New York City Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia Public Schools</td>
<td>Rochester City School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento City Unified School District</td>
<td>Spring Branch Independent School District</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Center on Reinventing Public Education

The compacts are signed by the district superintendent, multiple charter school leaders and are supported by city mayors, local teachers’ unions, and school board members.

These compacts are considered among the most promising developments in charter and district collaborations. While size and location of the district do not seem to affect the success of collaboration, the leadership and the “acknowledgement that all youth in the city are the responsibility of that city’s educators and elected officials” are very important.20

The compacts cover six broad topics, as itemized below.

- Equity and access
- Financial resources
- Advocacy and policy-shaping
- Facilities
- School accountability
- Teacher and principal effectiveness

Below, we present an outline of typical compacts as a best practice for collaborations.

*Statement of Common Purpose*

The compact documents begin with a paragraph affirming the mutual belief that students deserve high-quality public education, regardless of the provider and regardless of the child’s race, income, citizenship status, or special needs. Some examples of the language used to describe this shared commitment are reproduced in the figure below.

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Figure 2.3: Sample Statements of Common Purpose from Compacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denver Public Schools</strong></td>
<td>We believe that all students can achieve and deserve the highest quality public schools. We believe that it is the collective responsibility of all schools – district, charter, performance, magnet, or innovation – to ensure all students have access to an excellent education that successfully prepares them for college and career. These opportunities must be available to all students in all parts of the city, and our students’ access to them must not be limited in any way by socioeconomics, language, citizenship status, or special needs of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hartford Public Schools</strong></td>
<td>This…Compact commits district and charter leaders …to improve way they will work together and influence each other for the benefit of all students in the city, and to ensure that all children have access to high-quality public schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philadelphia Public Schools</strong></td>
<td>The undersigned believe that all children- when challenged with high expectation- can learn at high levels. We share a responsibility to enable the children of Philadelphia to reach the age of 18 well prepared for postsecondary educational or career achievement. We affirm our collective responsibility to ensure an educational system in Philadelphia that provides high-quality school choices and diverse learning opportunities to all students- regardless of race, income, first language or special needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Center on Reinventing Public Education

**Describing Community**

Some compacts include a section describing the network of schools or the community the schools serve. For example, the Denver Public Schools compact includes measures demonstrating “equity of opportunity, equity of access and responsibility, and equity of accountability” already existent in the community. These measures include eight different measures, two of which we reproduce below.

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Charter schools, in aggregate, serve students populations that nearly mirror district averages in terms of free/reduced lunch status (73%), ethnic minority percentages (75%), English language learner status (30%), and special education status (11%).

In the last two years, the District’s Call for Quality Schools new schools RFP and rigorous screening process has resulted in the approval of 2 successful district-run schools and 12 successful charter schools. The third iteration of the Call for Quality Schools will be issued early in the new year.

Source: Denver Public Schools

Similarly, the Minnesota Public Schools compact includes a description of the current educational condition that necessitated the creation of the document. This portion of the compact includes both the details of the “Minneapolis Achievement Crisis” and the “many signs of progress.” These passages include specific measures of achievement or low performance, as demonstrated in the excerpts below.

**Figure 2.5: Measures of Minneapolis Current Educational Situation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Achievement Crisis Measures</th>
<th>Sample Signs of Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis continues to have among the nation's widest gaps and lowest levels of achievement for children of color, English language learners, and children living in poverty…[B]lack and Latino students [sic] results were among the nation's lowest…with the largest 4th-grade black-white gap of any state. On reading and math tests, nearly 50 percentage points separate Minneapolis district black and Latino students from their white peers.</td>
<td>MPS is beginning to realize significant improvement in key areas, including 10th grade reading performance, graduation rates, and college prep course-taking…MPS has rapidly implemented its new schools strategy by creating a high-capacity Office of New Schools…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Minneapolis District-Charter Collaboration Compact

The Austin Public Schools compact includes a description of the local community that serves as a backdrop for developing ambitious educational plans.

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Figure 2.6: Description of Austin Community and Economy

Excerpt Description

Austin, Texas is a city of unique character, with a prime location and business-friendly outlook. It is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States and has more than doubled in size in the last 20 years. It is home to successful businesses including Dell Computers, Freescale Semiconductor and Whole Foods Market to name a few. The City prides itself on being innovative, open-minded and entrepreneurial. To maintain such a climate, Austin’s education system must be able to keep pace with the increasing needs of the business community. This goal can be accomplished by providing high-quality instruction and academic options that will allow all students to graduate from high-school ready for college, career and life.

Source: Center on Reinventing Public Education

Stakeholder Commitments

The bulk of the district-charter collaboration compacts outline the commitments of all signing stakeholders. In many instances, this portion of the compact is divided into joint commitments, charter commitments, and district or superintendent commitments. The compacts vary in the scope of the commitments described and the level of detail of each compact provides. We reproduce the general outlines of two compacts to demonstrate both the commonalities among the compacts and also the details specific to individual compacts. We observe the following common traits.

- Firstly, all compacts qualify obligations, though few quantify the commitments. For example, a compact may state that all stakeholders will cooperatively seek grant funding “when mutually beneficial,” but no compacts declare a goal of seeking a determined amount of funds or number of grants. Furthermore, most of the commitments do not lend themselves to quantified definitions, as they tend to declare positive intentions rather than a specific action plan. For example, districts may commit to “removing barriers” to public charter schools in the name of improving the tone of the relationship. These statements tend to be sweeping declarations and do not itemize the types of barriers currently in place. We note the exception to this is the Minneapolis compact, which identifies metrics for evaluating improvement in student achievement.24

- A second commonality among the compacts is the nature of the commitments. In nearly all compacts, districts agree to share underutilized facilities with charter schools, charter schools pledge to serve a diverse sample of students from the district, and both commit to sharing best practices.

The compacts differ in content and scope. We observe that the Hartford Public Schools and New York City Public Schools put forth a compact very similar to the Rochester Public Schools in content and design. Denver and Minneapolis developed more detailed and comprehensive compact agreements in comparison.

The Nashville-Davidson County Collaboration Compact employs a structure unique to other compacts. The compact states mutually agreed-upon characteristics of high-performing schools followed by commitments made jointly, by the district, and by the charter to achieve each goal. The stated characteristics of high-performing schools are included in the figure below, along with a sample commitment from stakeholders.

**Figure 2.7: Nashville-Davidson Commitments Outline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic of High-Performing Schools</th>
<th>Sample Commitment Related to Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| High-performing schools rely on, cultivate, develop, and support highly effective school leaders and teaching professionals. | *Joint:* Deepen and extend joint engagements that promote efforts to enlarge and enrich the pool of prospective educators and school leaders from both traditional and non-traditional sources.  
*Charter:* Provide information within annual reports detailing teacher recruiting, evaluation, and support practices for the purposes of collaborative district/charter learning and continuous improvement.  
*District:* Continue to offer access to District professional development as widely as practicable for public charter school teachers, leaders, and other personnel, including but not limited to on-line resources such as MNPS Tube. |
| High performing schools are student-centered, pursuing innovation and actively sharing demonstrated best practices to support their dissemination and implementation at scale. | *Joint:* Deepen and extend joint engagements that promote efforts to enlarge and enrich the pool of prospective educators and school leaders from both traditional and non-traditional sources.  
*Charter:* Provide information within annual reports detailing teacher recruiting, evaluation, and support practices for the purposes of collaborative district-charter learning and continuous improvement.  
*District:* Identify and actively share demonstrated best practices with other public schools, and support efforts to introduce and scale such practices as appropriate. Create formal venues and a process of exchange between and among a set of these public schools. |
<p>| High performing schools empower parents by offering meaningful choices for students and developing creative | <em>Joint:</em> Collaboratively establish a common high performing school indicator that provides a clear, credible, and intelligible measure, includes multiple variables, weights student growth highly, and strives for clarity of communication to all relevant stakeholders that can be used to improve communication and parent-friendly information regarding all public schools in Nashville. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic of High-Performing Schools</th>
<th>Sample Commitment Related to Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ways to engage families in the design and success of their school</td>
<td><strong>Charter:</strong> Remove barriers for all eligible students to attend public charter schools by offering information regarding school enrollment and pertinent data in all languages and forms (i.e., no barriers to entry). <strong>District:</strong> Continue to support parents in all public schools through programs like Parent University and personnel like the Family Liaisons, Cluster Support Teams, and Interpreter or Translation services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High performing schools collaborate as partners in the county-wide effort to provide an excellent education for all students and, as partners, work to share best practices between classrooms, schools, and leaders</td>
<td><strong>Joint:</strong> Continue to assess and revise language and practices that reinforce notions of “us and them” between charters and other district schools. <strong>Charter:</strong> Continue to pursue grant funding in collaboration with the District where such opportunities are mutually beneficial. <strong>District:</strong> Maintain annual identification of surplus facilities available for charter school use according to the District’s facility disposition policy that give high performing charter operators first right of refusal for access to those facilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Center for Reinventing Public Education

The Rochester compact outlines the commitments to collaboration more succinctly. The superintendent and charter leaders’ obligations are described in five points, and joint commitments are described in two points. These commitments are reproduced in the figure below.

**Figure 2.8: Rochester Compact Commitments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superintendent Commitments</th>
<th>Charter Leaders’ Commitments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❖ Making available…benefits of school district economies of scale …(e.g., contracts for purchasing supplies, products and services)…</td>
<td>❖ Serving all types of students in the city…seeking to recruit, serve and retain as a sector comparable percentage of students as district schools in the following categories: special education, ELL, and at-risk population students].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Working toward equitable distribution of public school resources for public charter and district schools, including advocating for equitable per-student funding and ensuring access to district facilities for public charter schools</td>
<td>❖ Ensuring transparency regarding student mobility and achievement, particularly college readiness, including publicly tracking and reporting these data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Removing obstacles and barriers that hinder the success of individual public charter schools or thwart expansion and replication of most promising models.</td>
<td>❖ Operating and describing public charter schools as partners in the city-wide effort to provide an excellent education for all students, and fostering a cooperative and collaborative relationship between district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Protecting the autonomies of all public</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Superintendent Commitments

- charter schools and honoring state public charter school statutes, including openness to all students.
- Actively sharing demonstrated best practices with all public charter schools to scale up what works and build capacity of public charter schools.

### Charter Leaders’ Commitments

- and public charter schools.
- While responding to parent demand, also working with the district to locate new schools in highest-need areas, aligned to district plans and connected to district feeder patterns.
- Actively sharing demonstrated best practices with the Rochester City School District to scale up what works and build capacity of public district schools, where appropriate.

### Joint Commitments

Both superintendent and charter leaders accept a mutual obligation to create highly effective schools….supporting successful schools…and working to…address persistently low-performing schools.

Both … embrace and will act enthusiastically to help the most effective schools expand and replicate, whether those schools are district or charter schools, in order to extend quality offerings.

Source: Rochester Public School District
Section Three: Collaboration Examples

In the following section, Hanover Research provides descriptions of the type of collaborations between school districts and charter schools. In some cases, particularly among the Gates Foundation-sponsored District-Charter Collaboration Compacts, multiple types of collaboration may exist between districts and charters. According to the Center on Reinventing Public Education, there are three main types of collaboration:

- Sharing best practices
- Sharing resources
- Sharing responsibility

We will highlight examples of sharing best practices and sharing resources, as they relate most closely to our member’s request.

Sharing Best Practices

Central Falls

This district has developed a Growing Readers Initiative, a professional development partnership between the Central Falls School District and the local charter school, The Learning Community. The Central Falls School District is an urban district serving a population with a high percentage of students living in poverty. The Learning Community is a charter school that serves as a laboratory for teacher training and professional development. The Learning Community student body is composed of 88 percent free and reduced-price lunch students, 95 percent minority students, and 20 percent ELL students, metrics comparable or higher than the Central Falls district.

The partnership was initiated by the district’s superintendent who maintained the outlook that the education system must serve all Central Falls public school children. Realizing that they were both serving a similar demographic of student, school leaders committed to partnering in a mutually beneficial way, determining that reading instruction was a shared emphasis.

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., p. 3.
28 Ibid. p. 4.
The Growing Readers Initiative is a **professional development effort** that strives for effective data usage, targeted professional development, supporting individualized lesson plan development, and rapid response for struggling students. Effective data usage allows teachers to identify students with weaknesses at earliest stages of struggle. Targeted professional development is carried out by a shared resource, an instructional coach, who visits classrooms, carries out observations, and provides immediate feedback. The program also coaches teachers how to best apply targeted extra support. The district and charter school share the instructional coaches and all teachers across a single grade level meet to discuss units and refine lesson plans. Teachers also complete observations throughout the district and charter schools.

The program has shown initial signs of success. Student outcomes are improving and teachers have reported gains. Teachers opened up to the new instructional coaches because the program is based on individual teachers and is not a sweeping reform program that is enacted and then dismissed in a short period of time.

**Edward W. Burkes Charter School and Clarence Edwards Middle School (Boston Public Schools)**

In 2005, the Edward W. Burkes Charter School approached Clarence Edwards Middle School in Boston about a one-year partnership to develop formative assessments in mathematics and share effective data interpretation techniques.29 The Mathematics Achievement Project defined goals of “disseminat[ing] EWBCS best practices around administering formative assessments, analyzing the results, and providing targeted student support on the basis of that analysis.”30 The schools cooperated to develop formative assessments and then shared best practices in analyzing data produced from the assessments. The data was used to target specific support efforts. The one-year collaboration resulted in a defined process for administering assessments, analyzing results, and providing targeted student support according to data.31

**Sharing of Best Practices in District-Charter Collaboration Compacts**

Most of the collaboration compacts examined in Section Two include commitments to sharing best practices. The figure below cites specific statements to this effect from

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
a sampling of compacts. These commitments tend to be broad statements of intentions rather than specific plans or projects.

Figure 3.1: Compact Commitments to Sharing Best Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denver Public Schools</th>
<th>Philadelphia City Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… create systematic approach to the sharing of best practices through the year on specific topics, such as academic support for struggling students, to advance practical solutions and strategies to common challenges. Include, and learn from, both district-run schools and charter school in formal and informal venues.</td>
<td>… coordinate planning, collaborate on training and development, and share best practices as all schools move to adopt curricula aligned to the national “Common Core” standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>Austin Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Charter schools will] actively share[e] demonstrated best practices with the public schools in New York City, to permit those best practices to be introduced and scaled throughout public schools in New York City…[District schools will] actively share[e] demonstrated best practices with all public charter schools to scale up what works and build capacity of public charter schools</td>
<td>District and Charter leaders will research a wide array of school reform models and best practices designed to enhance the academic success of area students, [including] the development of in-district charters focused on college-preparation and/or alternative education. Key to student achievement will be the sharing of best practices and expertise around curriculum and pedagogy in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), dual language immersion, social and emotional learning (SEL), Early College High School and dual credit offerings, effective strategies for English Language Learners (ELL) and special education students, early warning systems for at-risk students, as well as alignment of curriculum to new state standards and accountability measures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Charter Collaboration Compacts

Sharing Resources

New York City Schools

In 2012, approximately 100 charter and district schools practiced “colocation,” or sharing unused district space with charter schools.32 The city reviewed building utilization within the districts, and discovered various buildings that had low

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usage rates. These building were opened to charter schools, and as of 2012, approximately 750 schools within 300 campuses in the city are colocated.

Charter schools **pay a nominal rental fee but do not sign leases. Utilities and janitorial costs are “absorbed within the DOE budget” in cases where the district operates in the same building.** Logistics of building sharing are addressed early in the process of collocation implementation. The city’s Office of Space Planning hosted meetings between principals slated to collocate. When planning how to allocate classroom space, the district has developed a formula that takes into account the students that will be using the classrooms, allowing for larger space for special education students. Usage shared spaces, such as cafeterias, hallways, libraries, laboratories, and gymnasiums is carefully planned, accounting for legal requirements such as time to be spent in physical education or science class.

In order to address conflicts and situations, **school principals serve on a building council, composed of all principals sharing one space.** The city has established a policy that these councils must address all issues by reaching consensus, not by voting. The councils are required to meet monthly to facilitate personal interactions. In the event that even these meetings cannot resolve conflicts, the school’s network, a level of management below the city level, is responsible for leading the mediation. In the event the conflict must be taken to the city level and still cannot be resolved, principals may be assessed as acting in “bad faith” which would negatively reflect on their performance reviews.

Costs for capital improvement that are incurred to accommodate a charter school moving into a building that exceed $5,000 must be approved by the chancellor. Furthermore, **matching improvements** are to be made for the non-charter schools within the same facility.

**Haverhill School District**

The Haverhill School District is the twelfth largest in Massachusetts. In 2000, the state began experiencing a financial crisis causing the district to experience budget constraints. In the same year, the district was notified that the high school needed 27 million dollars of repairs. Amid this upheaval, Hillview Montessori was granted public charter school status, attracting new students and the tuition funding tied to each of them.\(^{33}\) District leaders recall that the timing of the school opening added additional stress to the district which could have established a hostile relationship between the

two entities. However, instead, they chose to cooperate, becoming one of the prime examples in the literature for successful collaboration.

The district and charter school shared both facilities and other resources. The district facilitated the charter school’s opening in an unused district facility, reducing the amount of time needed to bid on a lease. In the spirit of cooperation, the charter chose to invest lease money in the city rather than a private facility. To commend this cooperation, the mayor approved the allocation of half of rental income, amounting to 50,000 dollars, to be set aside for the district. The district also cooperated with the charter school to allow the Montessori School to take advantage of the reduced rate for utilities that the district is able to negotiate.

Additionally, the charter school and district collaborated on transportation costs and arrangements. Under Massachusetts law, the district is required to provide transportation for resident charter students, and the district had not accounted for the additional costs (100,000 dollars) in its original budget. Initial meetings were strained, as the district believed the charter should modify its extended school year and school day. Ultimately, consensus was reached when the charter offered to have parents transport students the additional two weeks per year and start the school day slightly later than originally planned. Once that adjustment had been made, the transportation operator agreed to send bus drivers who finished their rounds earliest back to the charter school to transport students home. This saved the district 70,000 dollars.34

District Charter Collaboration Compacts

The Gates Foundation collaboration compacts also include language regarding joint commitments to share facilities or resources. These commitments vary somewhat between cities and address particular needs in a community. We provide specific examples of three compacts and the shared facilities and resources addressed in their agreements.

Nashville County Public Schools address the issue of the distribution of state funding. The district pledges to

...include charter schools in the long-term strategic plans of the district including, but not limited to, student assignment planning and facility usage. Continue to ensure complete transparency regarding calculation and distribution of 100% of the per pupil share of all eligible district expenditures including facility allocations administered by the State Department of Education according to the Tennessee Charter Law and devote one annual Charter School Principals’ meeting to ensuring full understanding and open

34 Ibid.
discussion regarding financial and budgetary interactions between charters and the district that promote misunderstandings whether real or perceived.

This passage suggests that the charter and public schools had had disagreements regarding the calculation of funds to be transferred to charter schools. The compact acknowledges this past conflict and pledges to including charter schools in regular meetings to prevent “real or perceived” misunderstandings.

The Minneapolis Public School district addressed both facility usage and budget constraints faced by charter schools. The district pledges to

…continue to provide MPS facilities for high performing and high potential charter schools (with preference for district-authorized schools), subject to availability.

Furthermore, the district has acknowledged the financial struggles faced by burgeoning charter schools and laid out a plan to “address financial barriers (such as [state policy decisions] that force first year charter schools to operate on 70 percent of state per-student revenue” their first year of operation. Proposed solutions include “a low-interest loan fund...[or] or risk-sharing partnerships to enable low-interest working capital loans for existing schools.” This suggests openness and desire to aid one another in a shared mission.35

The Central Falls district identified various facility and resource sharing commitments in the district and charter compact document. The superintendent commitment regarding facilities is four-fold, as reproduced below.

❖ Commit to a mapping study that defines excess space that might be available for use by charter schools.
❖ Provide sufficient lease terms for charter schools to secure financing necessary for renovations.
❖ Secure municipal financing or guarantees for charter renovation projects.
❖ Partner with a non-profit financing entity to provide district incubator space for public charter start-ups.36

Furthermore, regarding funding, the district pledged to provide “100 percent equitable per-pupil funding for monies passed through the district” and “permit charter schools to purchase food service, transportation, procurement, and back

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office functions from the district, if they desire.”37 Other shared resources addressed in the document are athletic team participation and other after-school activities that are “unavailable in a charter school due to smaller enrollment.”38

37 Ibid. p. 4.
38 Ibid.
Project Evaluation Form

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