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Charter vs Public—the Battle in Buffalo

There are some who think that Charter Schools are the answer to what they view as a broken public school system. There is no doubt that there are huge achievement challenges, often unmet, in Public Schools. Proponents of Charter Schools paint a picture of students graduating at high rates after meeting equally high standards.

A closer look reveals that Charter Schools can be selective in the students they enroll and the students they keep. Public Schools are mandated to teach all students. This system sets up unfair comparisons. Each time a Charter School opens, the students are sorted again. The Charter chooses who they enroll and those not chosen go to the public school. Right now, in Buffalo, there is a push to create more Charter Schools.

Unbelievably, in Buffalo, there are members of the Board of Education who are seeking to dissolve all the Public Schools and have the District's students go to Charter schools or Private Schools. Appealing to these members is the breaking of the unions—teachers' and administrators'.

It is not without self-interest that they pursue Charters. There have been newspaper reports that great financial profits have been made by at least one sitting board member in property sales, leases, construction and tax subsidies based on Charter schools. It appears that four other Board Members join him in favoring Charters. Thus a majority is formed.

Conversely, the minority on the Board favors the retention and reform of struggling schools. Public Schools offer parents and the community more input. Public Schools are transparent in their reporting.

So the battle in Buffalo goes on. The focus currently is on the four "out of time" schools. Groups writing proposals to keep the schools in the system will face Board Members who could profit from rejecting the proposals so that the path was clear for all the schools to become Charters.