Key Aspects of American Education to Inform a Charter School Discussion: And U.S. and N.Z. Cases

National Association of Charter School Authorizers
Background:
US Public Education Context
Numbers for K-12 Ed in U.S. (With some back of the envelope rounding)

- 50 states (plus some non-states)
- 13,600 districts
- 100,000 public schools
- 50+ million students
- 6,000+ charter schools
- 2.3 million charter students
- 1,000 charter school authorizers
Diffused Governance:

1. American system is a non-system
2. Federal, State, District, and School-level Involvement
3. Each level has issues that it “owns”
Federal Role

- Limited but recently expanding role & funding
- Historically shaped by “Equal Protection Clause” of U.S. Constitution (no federal “right to education”)
- “Sputnik” produced investment in rigor -- math/science
- “War on Poverty” produced investment in children in poverty - Title I
- “Brown V. Board of Ed” lead to Civil Rights Focus
- Advocates for special populations:
State Role

- States are primary entity for American education (from constitutional perspective)
- States increased their proportion of budget and control in recent decades
- States laws and practices vary dramatically to reflect local political reality
District Role

• Historically unit by which schools were founded, funded, and governed
• 13,600+ districts, vary from New York City to tiny “one-room school houses”
• Elected boards hire superintendents, who administer school systems
• District is the legal entity that “owns” public schools
Developments that relate to chartering

• States fund larger proportion
• States adopted standards, testing, and accountability regimes
• Four decades of pressure to “improve” produces “activist” federal role and periodic state attention
• Reforms have gone on for so long, they cycle and compete with each other and the status quo
Charter Schools Defined by States:
in general, they are:

- Public schools
- Fixed-term performance contract
- Tuition Free
- Not religious
- Open admissions/lotteries
- Accountable to state tests/systems
- Responsible for serving “all students”
- Schools of choice
- Receive slightly less $ than traditional public schools
Cases:

- New Orleans, Louisiana
- New Zealand
New Orleans, Louisiana

- Historical “White Flight”
- Parallel School Systems (suburbs, private, magnet)
- Non-traditional district role/State “take-over”
- Then, Hurricane Katrina destroyed everything
New Orleans, Louisiana

- State take-over pre-dates hurricane
- State- and district-authorized charters
- Chartering as rebuilding strategy
- Huge Federal & philanthropic investment
- Nearly universal charter system
  - 79% Charter (2013, higher now, highest in nation)
  - 36,000 students in charters
Figure 24: State Average Charter School Growth Compared to 2011 4th Grade NAEP Score—Reading
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<th>Reading Days of Learning</th>
<th>Math Charter Impact</th>
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CREDO, 2013
New Zealand’s “Partnership Schools”
Modest Program

• Insisted on by government coalition member as condition for joining
• First cohort of 5 schools open
• Five more expecting approval
“Real Charters”

- Open Application (35 applicants)
- Rigorous Review by Minister of Education (5 initially approved)
- Diverse Operators (sponsors) Allowed
Autonomy for Accountability

• Accountability
  – Six-Year Contract
  – Performance and Engagement Goals
  – Performance Goals

• School Autonomy
  – Budget
  – Staffing
  – Curriculum
Extensive NACSA Consulting on Program Development

• Application RFP
• Review Rubric
• Contracting Advice
Pedagogy and Population

- 2 Maori Trust Operated Schools
- Military Discipline School
- Progressive School
- Christian Affiliation (“uncharterish” by American standards)
Questions
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