

## Better to stay at Athens County schools than charter alternative

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By Guido H. Stempel III

When charter schools were authorized in Ohio, the idea was to give pupils a chance to go to a better school than the public school in their home district. Figures from the state proficiency tests have indicated that in general this may not be happening.

Now a compilation of figures for all 611 public school districts by the Ohio Education Association and Innovation Ohio gives more precise information. Figures for each district include the amount of money taken from that district and which charter school it went to.

The state proficiency rating based on test scores, graduation rate and attendance are shown for the public schools and the charter school. Each entry also includes average years experience for the teachers at that charter school, how much the state gives the school and the percentage of the budget used for instruction.

All this is in a very user-friendly web site called [KnowYourCharter.com](http://KnowYourCharter.com). You can go to any of the 611 districts very easily.

I looked at the figures for the five districts in Athens County. There are slightly more than 200 pupils from Athens County going to a charter school. More than \$1.5 million is being taken by the state and given to charter schools.

This is Athens County money leaving Athens County because there are no charter schools in Athens County. We don't really need that kind of help from the state.

Not one of the pupils from Athens County is attending a charter school with a higher performance rating than the public school in their home district.

Furthermore, 64 percent of the money and 64 percent of the pupils are going to charter schools with lower performance ratings than the school in their home district.

In short, as far as Athens County is concerned, the charter school movement is not meeting its promise. It is not improving education in this county.

Part of the reason for the charter schools is the poor performance of schools in the big cities in Ohio. Are charter schools more help there? I looked up the figures for Columbus schools. There are more than 15,000 pupils from Columbus schools in charter schools and the state takes \$116 million from the Columbus district.

The performance grade for Columbus schools is a D, and 30 percent —only 30 percent — of the Columbus pupils are in a charter school with a performance rating of D. Maybe this awesome collection of data will wake up the Ohio Legislature and the Ohio Department of Education. The charter school movement in Ohio is in big trouble.

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