



## **Group Unveils Traditional/Charter School Comparison Website**

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Innovation Ohio, a left-leaning policy group, and the Ohio Education Association (OEA) announced Tuesday the introduction of a new website that they said will allow Ohio families to compare charter and traditional schools, as well as help policy makers make informed decisions during the education debate.

The website, [knowyourcharter.com](http://knowyourcharter.com), includes public information provided by the Ohio Department of Education, but the groups said it improves on the data by aggregating it into a single, easy to use website. Stephen Dyer, the former state representative and education fellow at Innovation Ohio, noted that the website includes data that is normally provided in 18 separate spreadsheets by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in an easier to use format.

Visitors to the website can compare schools by geographical area and see how much state money schools receive, the percentage spent on classroom instruction and the average number of years of teacher experience, among other things. They can see if a school is an online school or a brick-and-mortar, and if the school is chartered, who the sponsor is and whether it is a for-profit or non-profit entity.

Becky Higgins of OEA said the website will perform an important public service by giving Ohio citizens data on how charters are performing and what they cost traditional public schools.

"We want people, be they parents, taxpayers, concerned citizens, or policy makers, to look at the data and make their own judgments on what they think about charter schools in their communities or more importantly, statewide," Higgins said.

Keary McCarthy, president and chief executive officer, said the website will help provide transparency on charter schools and will provide a useful service to taxpayers, teachers and lawmakers. Before, he said it was not easy for parents to do a side-by-side comparison of local public schools and charter schools.

The speakers were also joined by Greg Ring, the superintendent of the Lorain County Educational Service Center, who said that there is too little public understanding of how charter schools work, perform, or are funded. He said it brings clarity to a decision as important as

school choice.

"It is time for Ohioans to have meaningful conversation about school reform and the direction of education in the state of Ohio," he said.

When asked if the website is negative towards charter schools, McCarthy said the data speaks for itself, and in some cases it is easy to see that the charter schools are outperforming the traditional school.

"I would hope that lawmakers, charter operators, and public education advocates would welcome this type of transparency," he said. "We think this is about providing that choice for parents and providing a new level of financial transparency."

He said while the data is public information offered by ODE, it can take a "financial backflip" to find it and understand it.

Dyer said the only data that did not come from ODE is the data on whether a charter is a non-profit versus a for-profit. He said that data comes from national groups that track those things.

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