

# Great Lakes Center for Education, Research, and Justice: Fiscal and education spillovers from charter school expansion

Posted on Thursday, Oct 4, 2018

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## Contacts

**William J. Mathis:** (802) 383-0058, [wmathis@sover.net](mailto:wmathis@sover.net)

**Clive Belfield:** (917) 821-9219, [Clive.Belfield@gmail.com](mailto:Clive.Belfield@gmail.com)

**Great Lakes Center:** (517) 203-2940, [greatlakescenter@greatlakescenter.org](mailto:greatlakescenter@greatlakescenter.org)

**EAST LANSING, Mich. (October 4, 2018)** — A recent report from the School Effectiveness and Inequality Initiative at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology examines the consequences that followed from an expansion in the number of charter school places available for enrollment.

The study uses data from Massachusetts, where charter school growth has been carefully managed and where there was significant excess demand for charter school places. In 2011, the state increased the cap on enrollments for charter schools located in school districts with low test scores, resulting in an increase in charter school enrollment in some of these districts.

Professor Clive Belfield of Queens College, City University of New York, reviewed *Fiscal and Education Spillovers from Charter School Expansion* and found that it provides important, high-quality evidence about the effects of expanding charter schools under a well-regulated set of conditions.

The report is part of Think Twice Review, a project of the [National Education Policy Center \(NEPC\)](#), funded by the [Great Lakes Center for Education Research and](#)

## [Practice.](#)

**Belfield's key finding** is that the report is a useful and informative study of charter school expansion. The paper presents a high-quality study by MIT which finds that charter expansion, under the unique set of conditions found in Massachusetts, is benign and slightly positive.

The paper reaches three key findings. First, due to a subsidy provided by Massachusetts law, per-pupil expenditures in the impacted public schools increased as charter schools expanded. Second, these districts appeared to respond to competitive pressures from charter schools by moving funding to inputs directly related to instruction. Third, test scores in math and English language arts in the existing public schools increased very slightly. All three of these impacts, however, disappear after six years of initial charter school expansion.

The paper affirms a two-part consensus from past studies on the economic and academic impacts of charter schooling. First, the flows of public funds to charter and public schools are complex, idiosyncratic, and variable. These features make economic evaluation of charter schooling very difficult. Second, the academic influence of competition between charter schools and public schools is small and, in this case, positive. This second finding suggests that expanding charter schools, at least under the relatively restrictive conditions that existed in Massachusetts, will have a benign effect on the overall education system. However, because of funding complexities identified in the first finding, it is extremely difficult to determine how cost-effective or equitable such expansions might be.

### **Find the Think Twice Review by Belfield on the web:**

<http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

*Think Twice, a project of the National Education Policy Center (NEPC), provides the public, policymakers and the press with timely, academically sound reviews of selected publications. The project is made possible by funding from the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.*

Find *Fiscal and Education Spillovers from Charter School Expansion*, written by Matt Ridley and Camille Terrier and published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, at: <https://seii.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/SEII--Discussion-Paper-2018.02-Ridley-Terrier.pdf>

**You can also find the review by Clive Belfield at the NEPC website:**  
<http://nepc.colorado.edu/thinktank/review-charter-spillover>