

# MPS Charter School Evaluation Summary of Methodology & Key Findings

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# Background

- In June 2021, MPS Board of School Directors approved Resolution 2122R-007
  - Authorized a comprehensive evaluation of charter school effectiveness and the impact of charters on MPS
  - Follow up to Resolution 0708R-005, which commissioned a WCER evaluation report in 2010 examining selected aspects of MPS's charter school portfolio
- WEC presented scope of work in March 2022, developed in collaboration with MPS Department of Contracted School Services and Offices of Board Governance and Accountability and Efficiency

# Evaluation Questions

1

How do MPS authorizing/approval practices compare to other authorizers at the national, state, and local levels?

2

What is MPS's process for reviewing performance and renewing charter contracts with its schools, and how does this compare to the practices of other authorizers at the national and state level?

3

What are key similarities and differences between MPS-authorized charters and those overseen by other authorizers?

- 3a: What are the characteristics of MPS charter schools (collectively and individually) compared to those overseen by other authorizers in terms of student enrollment (demographic characteristics, exit rate, etc.), student engagement (attendance and behavior), and academic performance (attainment and growth on state assessments, AP/IB course-taking, and college enrollment)?
- 3b: How do the programming and discipline policies of MPS charter schools compare to the policies of other authorizers?

4

How do staff in MPS charter schools (administrators and teachers) view the benefits and challenges of charter status, and to what extent do they prompt innovation?

# Evaluation Design

- Mixed-methods evaluation of MPS charter schools and their impact on the district academically, financially, and organizationally
  - Document review
  - Interviews and focus groups (Spring/Summer 2022)
  - Descriptive analyses of enrollment, academic, and attendance data over time
- Comparing MPS procedures and data to those of other charter authorizers at the local, state, and national levels

Local	State	National	
City of Milwaukee	UW-Madison Office of Educational Opportunity	National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)	District of Columbia Public Charter School Board
UW-Milwaukee	Appleton Area SD	Central Michigan University	Denver Public Schools
	Janesville SD	Chicago Public Schools	Indianapolis Public Schools
	Verona Area SD		

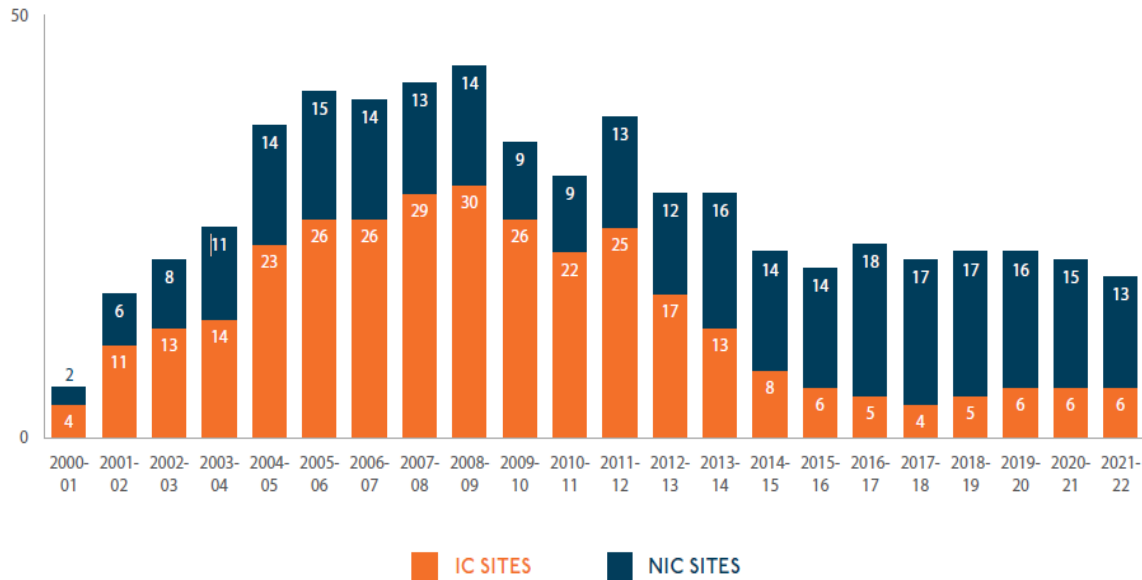
# Findings: Authorization

- MPS's policies and procedures **do not appear to differ substantially** from those of other authorizers
- Charter leaders find the **process for applying** for a charter from MPS **clear and straightforward**, thanks in large part to the guidance provided by the Department of Contracted School Services

# Findings: Review and Renewal

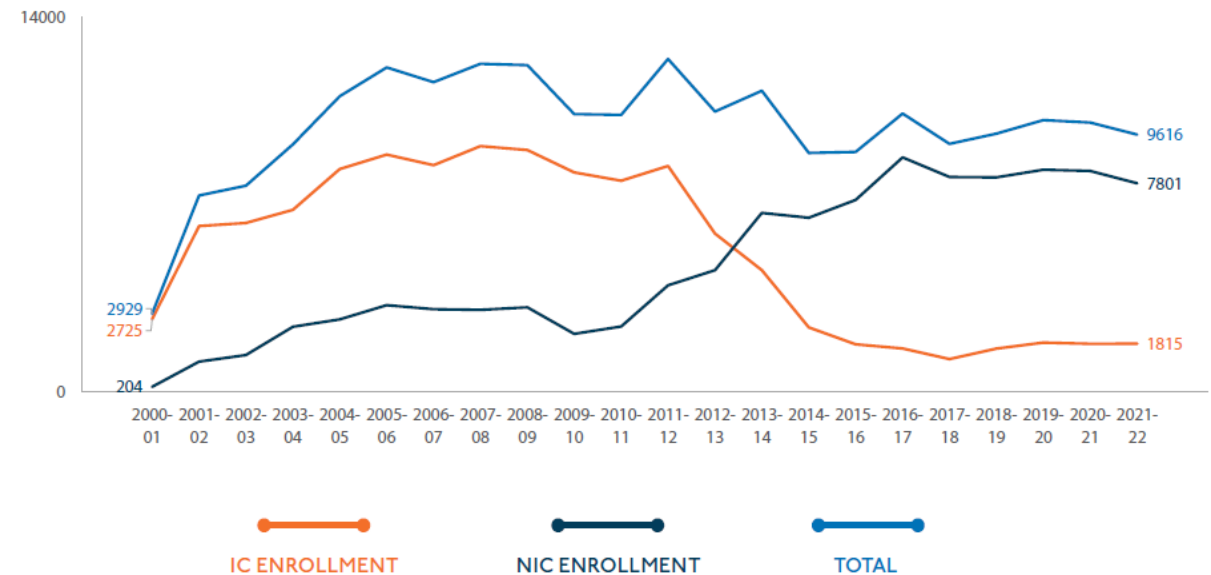
- Charter school leaders view process as **unpredictable, inconsistent, and often subjective**
  - Decisions are perceived as being influenced by criteria and factors that differ from those listed in their contract
- When renewals are issued for **shorter lengths of time**, it creates challenges for school leaders in terms of **convincing families to keep their children enrolled**
- Charter school leaders attribute frustrations to **political considerations** and **lack of Board familiarity** with state/district charter regulations

# Characteristics of MPS Charters



Shift from IC to NIC

13.9% of MPS total enrollment in charters  
81.2% of MPS charter enrollment at NIC sites



# Other Data Presented in Report

- Charter sites and enrollment by authorizer
- Grade spans
- Educational models
- Student demographics
- Student outcomes
  - Attendance
  - Behavior
  - AP course-taking
  - Postsecondary enrollment
  - Attainment
  - Growth
  - Forward Exam proficiency



# Findings: Programming and Discipline

- Authorizers tend to give **wide latitude** to charters to choose the **programs** they offer, but **diverge** when it comes to **discipline**
- **Perception that NIC sites are a lower priority** for at least some types of MPS programs
- Some charters are comfortable using the **MPS code of conduct**, while others prefer to adopt their own guidelines

# Findings: Services Provided

- Authorizers tend to **focus less on services and more on the authorization and renewal processes**
- **NIC leaders feel like they receive lower priority** compared to traditional MPS schools and IC sites in terms of services such as repairs and food service
- Full report has details on services other authorizers do or do not provide:
  - Facilities and maintenance
  - Governance, financial, and operational support
  - Transportation
  - Technology
  - Professional Development
  - Special Education and English Learners
  - Support for new schools, schools that are closing

# Findings: Co-Location

- Other authorizers shared successes and challenges
  - Denver: team works with co-located schools on shared-space agreements
  - Chicago: developing guidelines for shared facilities
- WEC Carmen Southeast-Pulaski study
  - Difficult to find much in the data to suggest that the co-location partnership has met its goals

# Findings: Benefits and Challenges

- **Service fees** relative to non-MPS charters and services actually received
- **Performance metrics** – charters don't just focus on outperforming MPS average
- **Tradeoffs** of charter status
  - Compared to other types of charters or authorizers
  - Facilities and services
  - Autonomy and governance
  - Relationship with MPS, value of charters to the district
- **Positive perceptions** of Department of Contracted School Services
  - **Perceived lack of knowledge** by other MPS departments/staff
- Need for more **collaboration, onboarding and training, mentoring** opportunities for new leaders
- **District-required documentation** – time-consuming, duplicative

# Recommendations

- Refine the **review and renewal process** to make it more transparent
- Consider the level of **service provision** the district offers its charters by reviewing other authorizers' philosophies and offerings
- Engage with charter leaders on **novel and effective practices** that might benefit traditional schools
- Develop guidelines for **co-location**

# Charter School Leader Recommendations

- Instrumentality
  - Provide guidance on **training, networking and mentoring**
  - Review and update district **policies and procedures**
- Non-Instrumentality
  - **Provide information about charters to new Board members**, such as the difference between instrumentality and non-instrumentality
  - Clarify **prioritization of work orders and IT services** for NICs
  - Clarify which **opportunities for students** are available to students at NIC sites concurrently with other (non-charter) sites

# QUESTIONS/ DISCUSSION

