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What Have We Learned in 15 Years About Getting High-Quality Charter Schools? Lessons for Washington State

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- **Strong authorizing is key to quality**
 - o Districts cannot be only authorizer, but authorizers need to build competency
 - o Weak or negligent authorizing leads to many low-performing schools
 - o Promote authorizer clarity/accountability in law, implementation
- **You cannot get good schools without paying for them**
 - o Provide for equal access to resources (state, local, federal funds) and facilities access or funding
 - o Predictability, flow of funding are as important as amounts
- **Caps discussions should be about quality, not politics**
- **Good schools can and should be replicated**
 - o Consider ways to attract and build charter national providers: money, personnel, authorizing, regulatory, allow one governing board for all CMO schools
- **Time and investment ease start-up pains**
 - o Pro vide planning and start-up funding
 - o Proposal and review cycles must allow adequate time for planning
- **Provide strong autonomy and accountability**
 - o Do not bother to create more schools with limited autonomy (charter lite)
 - o But balance that freedom with no-nonsense accountability (i.e., closures)
- **Clear language, oversight, and financial incentives are best guarantees for equal student access to charters**
 - o Special education and other pots of funds should follow kids
 - o Avoid quotas or other rigid input requirements
- **Do not expect to get it right the first time**
- **Do not expect the law to take care of quality**

The [National Charter School Research Project \(NCSRP\)](#) was established at the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education in the fall of 2004 with funding from a consortium of foundations. NCSRP brings rigor, evidence, and balance to the national charter school debate.

The [Center on Reinventing Public Education](#) at the University of Washington Bothell engages in independent research and policy analysis on a range of K-12 public education reform issues, including choice & charters, finance & productivity, teachers, urban district reform, leadership, and state & federal reform.