

EDUCATION CORNER

Senator's Take

Letter to the Editor

The Dallas Morning News

The Senator wrote this Letter to the Editor in response to an earlier Sunday Commentary piece by Dallas Morning News editorial writer Tod Robberson about a successful charter school experiment taking place in New York City that Dallas might want to look to for ideas and inspiration.

The Promise of Charter Schools

[Re: "Fast track to innovation -- Dallas has a lot to learn from NYC charter school experiments, says Tod Robberson," Sunday Points.](#)

I agree with Robberson's perspective: Charter schools can change an entire community's perception of public schools. Charters challenge the status quo and infuse healthy competition -- a competition, he notes, that pushes everyone to higher standards.

Charters innovate to increase student achievement. Extending learning times, adjusting schedules and discarding old-style teaching habits are just some of the innovations. This results in more time on task and better planning.

DISD has committed to co-locate with Uplift charter school in a chronically low performing area in West Dallas. This will allow parents to see schools side by side, and empower them to make the best decisions for their children.

The Harlem Children's Zone highlights the success that can occur between charters and traditional public schools. New York isn't unique. Robberson finds consistency between New York reforms and charters currently in Dallas; we can innovate now! The debate is about raising educational standards and ending a cycle of failure. Let's allow competition from charters to lead the way.

Not all charters excel; we must still address those performing poorly. However, tradition for tradition's sake won't adequately educate our youth. Innovation, opportunity, and educational success are the hallmarks of the charter school movement. Let's encourage more growth and reap the rewards. It's an exciting challenge. We must continue raising the bar -- for our students and the future of Texas.

State Sen. Florence Shapiro, District 8, Plano