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### GAME, SET AND MATCH

Every year the Texas Education Agency releases the “snapshot” of the prior school year’s academic and financial performance for ISD’s and charter schools. These are the facts from the 2012-13 school year (the most recently released report – released last week). Check them for yourself here: <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/snapshot>.

I offer the following key comparisons between ISDs and charter schools:

#### **Dropout and Graduation Rates:**

ISDs had a dropout rate of 1.5%, charters had a 5.5% dropout rate  
ISDs had a 4-year graduation rate of 91%, charters had a 60.6% rate  
ISDs had a 5-year graduation rate of 92.9%, charters had a 70% rate

#### **Academic Performance:**

ISDs outperformed charters on 3 out of 5 STAAR tests  
(*Math, Science, Social Studies*)  
ISDs matched charters on the other 2 out of 5 STAAR tests  
(*Reading and Writing*)  
ISDs tested 64.5% for college admissions, charters tested 44.2%  
ISDs average SAT score was 1422, charters average was 1412  
ISDs average ACT score was 20.6, charters average was 19.7

#### **Staff expenditures & allocation:**

ISDs spent 57.4% on instructional expenses, charters spent 50.9%  
ISDs spent 6% of central administrative expenses, charters spent 13%  
ISDs had 3.8% of employees in central or campus administrative roles  
Charters had 7.6% of employees in central or campus administrative roles

**Teacher salary/experience/turnover and class size**

ISDs average teacher salary was \$49,917, charters average was \$43,669  
ISDs had 15.3 students per teacher, charters had 16.8  
ISDs had 32.1% of teachers with less than 5 years experience  
Charters had 75.2% of teachers with less than 5 years experience  
24% of ISD teachers had advanced degrees, charters had 17.4%  
ISDs had a teacher turnover rate of 15.6%, charters had 36.7%

**Conclusions**

Keep in mind these are statewide numbers and admittedly, there are good and bad ISDs and there are good and bad charter schools. But, at the end of the day, we are talking about the state of Texas as a whole and over 5 million kids and their families.

Here are the conclusions I reach after studying the data and talking to experts, educators and people in my district and across Texas.

- 1) For at least the second year in a row, ISDs outperformed charter schools on dropout rates, state tests, graduation rates, and college entrance exams. If charters are supposed to be competing with ISDs, they are getting beaten in straight sets (to use a tennis analogy).
- 2) Charter schools spend more on central administrative expenses and less in the classroom, which leads to larger classes being taught by less experienced teachers.
- 3) Charter schools pay their teachers \$6,248 less per year than ISDs. Many refer to competition from charter schools as a key factor to improving education. I do not see this "competition" helping teachers as some try to claim. The fact is, charters hire teachers with less experience and education to save money. This results in a high turnover rate. Over a third of teachers at charter schools leave when they get more experience or more education. Many times, they go work for a nearby ISD.

In conclusion, when you hear the unending and unsubstantiated rhetoric about "failing public schools" from those that support vouchers or other "competitive" school models, it is important to have the facts. ISDs aren't perfect, but they graduate more kids, keep more kids from dropping out and get more kids career and college ready than their politically connected competitors. Any claims to the contrary just simply are not supported by the facts and at the end of the day facts matter because these lives matter.