

## RE 'Charter Schools Trail in Results'

Letter to the Editor

by

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&  
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To the Editor:

Re "Charter Schools Trail in Results, U.S. Data Reveals" (front page, August 17, 2004):

It is a bit surprising, if not ironic, to those of us who have been public school supporters that those defending charter schools, despite the recently revealed low test scores, are using the same lines long voiced by public school advocates: the scores reflect a commitment to a diverse urban population that traditionally scores lower on tests, that charter schools need more of a chance and a commitment, that charter schools should not be judged by test scores alone at this time, but looked at from the perspective of the diverse population that they serve, and as the Secretary of Education stated, charter schools should not be viewed as monolithic. Oddly enough, such claims when asserted by public school advocates were summarily dismissed by charter school defenders (and investors). Also, some might disagree with the Secretary that charter schools are in fact monolithic to the degree that more than three quarters of new charter schools are for-profit, affirming the claim of the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University that charters represent the new face of public school privatization. Defenders of charter schools have wrongly prioritized scores over student diversity as if excellence is at odds with issues of equity. They now appear to be acknowledging the significance of social and cultural differences among students attending their schools. Schools ought to provide a genuinely public role, one that strengthens a diverse democracy by not merely providing functional literacy and numeracy measured by scores (or opportunities for investors) but that fosters the knowledge and capacity for students to participate as citizens in governing and making the world they come to inhabit-- a function aimed at by public schools all along.

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