

Charter schools spend more on administration than traditional public schools

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While charter school advocates criticize public school bureaucracies as bloated and wasteful, it turns out that charters spend more on administration and less on instruction than traditional public schools, according to a new study led by a Michigan State University scholar.

The study, which examines school spending in Michigan, found that [charter schools](#) spend nearly \$800 more per [pupil](#) on administration and \$1,100 less on instruction, said David Arsen, MSU professor of education and lead researcher on the project. The study controls for factors such as funding levels, student enrollment and school location.

"Michigan's traditional public school districts devote 60.5 percent of total expenditures to instruction, while charters devote only 47.4 percent," the study says. "Charter schools spend less on both basic instruction and added-needs instruction, which includes [special education](#), career-tech and adult education."

The study doesn't examine the reasons for the [discrepancy](#) in spending. But Arsen said it's likely related to the fact that 84 percent of traditional public schools' expenditures are related to personnel costs - mostly salaries and benefits - thus driving instructional costs up.

When it comes to administration costs, charter schools dedicated more than \$500 per pupil to general administrative services such as paying organizations to run the school.

Provided by Michigan State University

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