

APA'S POSITION ON CONTROVERSY AND RESPONSE TO MEDIA ARTICLES

American Prep has been educating students and pioneering school choice through the charter school sector since 2003 - over two decades of service to students and families, and working to promote laws and rules that expand autonomy for charter schools and meaningful options for parents.

As in all cases where social, political and legal changes to long-standing institutions are pursued, there has been dynamic and intense dialogue and disagreement surrounding charter schools in Utah. The path to opening school choice to Utah parents has been blazed by passionate supporters who have been met with passionate opposition. Nonetheless, proponents have succeeded in expanding charter schools which now serve nearly 12% of Utah students. This significant growth is the result of many discussions and actions at the legislative and agency levels (Utah State Board of Education - USBE). Shifts in public education policy in Utah have been incremental but substantial over the past 26 years of policy development related to charter schools.

APA considers opposition to such significant change as an important component of our American process of governance "by the people". Diverse voices, free to express their positions, create a vigorous process of debate that is fundamental to progress in a healthy democratic republic. American Preparatory Academy's vision includes perpetuating the American ideals through education and experience of students and staff, and to actuate that commitment we must accept that we will encounter opposition and then, in good faith, engage in productive dialogue and efforts to contribute to advancing the greater good.

The opposition to school choice has taken general forms which push against change in law and policy, as well as specific forms where opponents fight against specific charter schools. In the general form, opponents have organized efforts to oppose pro-school choice legislative initiatives, as well as advancing anti-change policies at the agency level (USBE), with the overall objective being to limit the growth of charter schools and maintain the status quo. The Utah legislature has been consistently supportive of the expansion of charter schools, supporting their autonomy and the potential for charter schools to innovate and provide upward pressure on student achievement at all schools.

Because of their unique structure, charter schools are uniquely accountable - beyond traditional public schools - due to the fact that charter schools have no guaranteed enrollments. They must attract and retain each student to receive any financial support from the government. Yet charter schools are also accountable in all of the ways that apply to traditional public schools including accreditation, audits, academic results, and compliance with all laws and regulations. This double accountability must be considered whenever opposition or controversy arises.

With regard to specific forms of opposition against particular charter schools, American Prep has been the subject of many such incidents of opposition. This could be due to APA's active role in law and policy development as well as APA's size - having grown to 7 campuses serving 5500 Utah students. APA is larger than half of the traditional school districts in Utah, and larger than all of Utah's charter schools.

Perhaps because APA and its founders and leaders have been engaged in the healthy dialogue and debates that have advanced school choice via charter schools over the past two-plus decades, APA has been a target of misrepresentation of facts, unsupported accusations, and personal attacks on numerous occasions.

APA intends by this document to provide a response to the public related to media articles.

We believe that interested members of the public benefit from factual information in order to gain a fuller understanding of issues raised in the media.