

I am a current 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher at I.S.A.A.C, a charter school in down town New London. Prior to ISAAC I worked in a great traditional public high school and loved that job as well. I moved into a charter environment because I felt it offered an exciting challenge and motivating curriculum. With this move I am currently making close to \$16,000 less, have 45 minutes less daily for planning time, and have 1 additional course to teach. Yet I love it. I feel strongly that as our leadership in education continues to educate and demand that teachers differentiate their instruction in our classrooms we also need to hold the school systems to the same high standard. It is unrealistic to assume that a traditional public school is the correct environment for 100% of our Connecticut students. If we are asking our teachers to differentiate then why are we not supporting school systems to do the same? Children need to have a fair choice when exploring their education, what school model fits their learning style and motivation. It is irresponsible to not provide kids and families with different school models and missions that meet their child's learning ability and interest. We are beginning to have more choices, but without equal funding, the choice is not fair and equitable.

I was discouraged to read in the Hartford Courant that people who oppose the Governor's education reform supporting charter schools, magnet schools and CommPact schools argue that these schools hand pick students and discourage special education students from applying. As a parent of a special education child and a teacher I find these statements hurtful and uninformed. Our school has a current special education population of 16.23%, which is more than 30% higher than the state average, (currently at 12% receiving special education services in the state of Connecticut according to the CT department of education web site.) Furthermore our school also has over 10% of our student body as E.L.L students.

Children and families deserve to have equitable school of choice allowing them to choose the school model that will give them the greatest ability to be successful. According to the Center for Disease Control and prevention 1 out of every 10 students in the United States is now diagnosed with ADHD, I think this is in part a reflection that kids need different options other than their sending traditional school where expectation are not appropriate for their learning styles. Every child, including children with disabilities, gifted children, minority children, wealthy children, happy children, silly children...all these children deserve to go to a school that is equally funded and best fits their learning styles and learning needs.