



Charter Schools at the Crossroads: Predicaments, Paradoxes, Possibilities

Chester E. Finn Jr., Bruno V. Manno, Brandon L. Wright

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Charter Schools at the Crossroads offers a frank and nuanced analysis of the successes and shortcomings of the charter movement, and outlines possible directions for the future. Few observers present at the creation of the first charter schools a quarter-century ago could have predicted how rapidly this movement would spread or how thoroughly it would come to dominate the education reform agenda. And few recent debates in education have been as highly charged as those over charter schools' roles, responsibilities, and results.

Chester E. Finn, Jr., Bruno V. Manno, and Brandon L. Wright write that charters have been “spectacularly uneven in many ways, succeeding wonderfully in some cases while faltering in others.” They counter the often-oversimplified narrative of the movement's origins, showing how multiple agendas and intentions led to a cacophony of results. The authors highlight some of the key accomplishments of charter schools in serving selected populations while acknowledging the mixed results of the sector as a whole, and identify critical challenges for strengthening the charter sector.

The candor of the authors' analysis and the forthrightness of their concerns offer both allies and opponents valuable insight into the workings of a movement whose influence is indisputable and whose future is far from clear.

Chester E. Finn, Jr. is a distinguished senior fellow and president emeritus at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and senior fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution. **Bruno V. Manno** is a senior advisor for K–12 education at the Walton Family Foundation. **Brandon L. Wright** is the editorial director of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

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