

Sharly Allen on School Choice: (From an email to Dick Pence 04/29/24)

School Choice has been in Montana for a very long time: Home Schools, Charter Schools by districts, Private Schools, independent online schools, and Montana Digital Academy transition from credit recovery to more robust course offerings for students for which districts pay tuition. Ingenuity is being used by districts as a choice option for students along with a teacher shortage solution.

I am in support of School Choice. I believe parents have the right to choose, the education provider they want for their child. However, I am questioning the duplication of what is already available. In the context of the question, if we are talking about District development and Board of Public Education approval of District charter schools, that has been around for a long time in the Accreditation standards of Montana schools, and used sparingly. If we are talking about educational units (method of getting additional funds) and district creation of alternative schools, multi-district agreement schools, remote location schools - that has also been in Montana for a long time. The question that should be asked is how are these district-created and run charter schools different than what has been. What has changed? How will this better serve Montana students learning results?

I am a big proponent of innovation and school choice that has evidence of student-driven learning, with critical thinking, relevance, student choice, and rigor. Preparing students for an ever-changing future should be the goal regardless of the education system. Charter Schools that can fulfill the Constitutional Promise to provide an educational system that will fulfill the full educational potential of each student, would be a good thing.

An example would be the Bozeman Charter School which has been operating since 2021 and is now transitioning to a public charter school:

BoCS Mission Statement: The BOCS will provide a model of instruction that is flexible and creative to ensure all students are met where they are in their learning and are supported as they advance in their learning. The BoCS aims to enrich each student with a sense of purpose, a belief in personal efficacy, and a passion for learning.

Although the Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) has built a separate and unique culture and identity, the program is closely tied to the core purpose

of Bozeman Public Schools: *Bozeman Public Schools exist to provide an outstanding education that inspires and ensures high achievement so every student can succeed and make a difference in a rapidly changing world community.*