



Charter operators regularly evade Ohio's automatic-closure law, investigation finds

Schools, management companies avoid academic accountability

Of the 20 charter schools mandated to close for academic failure under Ohio's 2008 automatic-closure law, seven are still operating in the same location under new names, most with significant staff overlap, according to an investigation by Policy Matters Ohio. An eighth school avoided a closure order by shutting down a year early and reopening under a new name.

"The ability of schools and their management companies to skirt Ohio law reveals a systemic flaw in charter oversight," said Piet van Lier, report co-author and education researcher at Policy Matters. "Until Ohio strengthens its charter-closure law, the state will continue to fall short of the goal of improving public education for all Ohio's children."

For-profit management companies – the Leona Group, Mosaica Education and White Hat Management – run six of the schools, the non-profit Summit Academies runs one, and the last is independently operated. The investigation, detailed in a new report entitled [Avoiding Accountability](#), covered schools in Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo, Warren and Youngstown.

Based on its investigation, Policy Matters recommends that legislators revamp the closure law, strengthen the Ohio Department of Education's capacity to oversee charter schools, direct ODE to refuse the kind of expansion of charter contracts that has allowed schools and management companies to skirt the law, and hold charter management companies accountable for the academic performance of their schools.

"National charter advocates have recently highlighted Ohio's charter closure law as one of the strongest in the country," noted van Lier. "But with nearly half of the schools that were supposed be shut down for academic reasons still enrolling children, it's clear that this praise is misplaced."

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Key findings

- Ohio law requires automatic closure of academically failing charter schools.
- Loopholes in the closure law allow sponsors and charter management organizations (CMOs) to keep failing schools open despite orders to close.
- Seven of 20 closed schools are still operating, with five run by the same CMOs that first opened them.
- An eighth school avoided mandated closure by shutting down a year early, but reopened with much of the same staff.