

# A Star-Studded Reminder that Chartered Public Schools Rarely Represent School Choice, and Even Less Frequently Represent the Effects of Market Accountability

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[Problems](#) with Deion Sanders' Texas-based Chartered Public Schools (CPS) have gotten a fair amount of attention lately because Neon Deion is a flashy celebrity. Neon Deion's school promotion and management struggles and the threats they pose to children, directly and indirectly as examples of CPS in action, are good cases in point for several issues I have raised previously. First, an easy one; Sanders' CPSs specialize in athletics, which is not the same thing as the [sports theme](#) I have used on several occasions as an example of specialized schooling. Nevertheless, as a specialized schooling option, an athletics theme, like a sports theme, will be quite attractive to some families, but not to others. It cannot be provided, as a consistent theme through which to teach math, reading, and government (etc.) in a traditional public school (TPS) with children assigned to it.

Predictable TPS to fit all, the Sanders focus on an attractive theme, alongside Neon Deion's fame, or as he put it, his "notoriety", [generated a waitlist](#) of over 2000 children in 2012-2013. We know that persistent shortages (waitlists) result from [mandated 'pricelessness.'](#) And we know that mandating 'pricelessness' results from the widespread school system [sacred cow](#) of the 'free-to-all' price control. We know that shortages (waitlists) leave thousands of children in schools their families believe are a poor fit for them, or worse, while they also invariably erode quality and largely eliminate accountability to clients. 'Pricelessness' persists because of the widespread assumption of significant net equity gains from 'free-only' for taxpayer-financed schooling, even though the [opposite is more likely](#) to be the case.

When troubled chartered public schools (CPS) stay open until the authorities close them through a protracted due process, we have the potential for the [apocalyptic accumulation of scandals](#) associated with ‘school choice’, which is especially ironic in the case of chartering because the vast majority of CPS, because of their typically long wait lists, represent school chance, not school choice. Because of the eventual long odds of getting in, and widespread dissatisfaction with an assigned TPS, families make fast, haphazard school choice decisions when new charters are announced. The schools fill quickly, often long before they open, including through many hasty decisions to choose the new school even when the child enrolled at the new CPS is not a good match for the specialized approaches used by about half of all CPS.