

"That era was a turning point," Palmer said. "No one challenged the system before us, and culminated in the explosion of 1967."

For Palmer, a lifelong educator who, in recent years has established the Walter D. Palmer Leadership Learning Partners Charter School, said many of the same problems exist now as did 44 years ago.

"From 1967, 1968, we kept pushing for all kinds of reforms, but we didn't get real motion until 1997, when we organized and fought for charters and vouchers. The charter school legislation allowed Black people to set up charter schools," Palmer said, noting the part of the next wave of issues to come will include reversing the demonizing of charter schools as the root of erosion of public education. "There's still an imbalance in terms of how much money goes into Black education, and this is and always has been about the business of maintaining and controlling Black education in America, because it's profitable, not because they care.

"And they are doing this on Black people's watch," Palmer continued. "You have a Black mayor, a predominantly Black city council, and yet, white folks are controlling the purse strings and the outcomes of education in Black schools."

Sidebar

Coordinated Citizens Concerned 1968 flyer calling for Frank Rizzo to be fired in response to 1967 demonstration. - PHOTO COURTESY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Feb 1, 2013

Philadelphia Tribune

"Dismal showings by Pa. charters in new AYP

Damon Williams

The startling results of the U.S. Department of Education's mandated recalculations of the Adequate Yearly Progress - AYP of all the charter schools in the commonwealth has caused immediate fallout, now that the recalculations show only 28 percent of all charter schools met AYP, as compared to 49 percent determined under the calculations made last fall.

According to the School Boards Association of Pennsylvania, the recalculation led to 31 fewer charter schools making AYP; that drop from 77 charter schools to 43 represents a 21 percent decrease. With the recalculation, no cyber charter school in the commonwealth made AYP. Seven

fewer charters attained the "making progress" designation, while 27 more charters received the "warning" designation, finally, the recalculation also shows that a further nine charter schools are in either of the two stages of "corrective action."

While neither the USDE nor the Pennsylvania Department of Education mentioned the names of the schools that failed to meet AYP under the new calculations, Truebright Science Academy Charter school is one of the handful of charters that have made AYP in consecutive years - a strong showing on its own, but made more impressive given the fact that not too long ago, there was talk that the state wouldn't renew Truebright's charter.

For Truebright CEO Bekir Duz, the recalculations have both good and bad points, but were overall meaningless for his school, as it has made AYP under both calculation methods.

"We were confident in our PSSA performance, and we are only bolstered by this new information from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. It is further proof that Truebright's curriculum and staff are successfully educating students to the highest standard in Pennsylvania," said Duz.

According to the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS), Truebright showed moderate evidence of exceeding the state standard for academic growth in math at the high school level and met the state standard for academic growth in reading at the high school level. The PVAAS website also shows that Truebright's graduation rate hovers near 100 percent, while traditional neighborhood schools are graduating students at a rate closer to 60 percent.

"The news from PDE combined with our track record of academic success is ongoing proof that Truebright Science Academy Charter School is a valuable and lasting addition to the City of Philadelphia," said Duz. "Truebright made AYP on initial calculations in September, and then the state decided to recalculate, and Truebright maintained AYP under those recalculations, and we are grateful about that. But we were expecting this.

"I think in Philadelphia, 23 charter schools out of 80 made AYP under the recalculation, compared to 43 in the original calculation. But when you compare it to district-run charter schools, only 19 percent of those made AYP, and right now, 29 percent of [non-school district] charter schools made AYP, so charters are still doing better than [traditional] public schools.

"But the recalculation also proves that both charters and the school district have a lot of work to do."

It's properly measuring that work that leaves charter operators puzzled by the move to recalculate the AYP scores, given that charter schools operate under a unique set of rules and often take in students with severe learning, behavioral and societal deficiencies.

"We take the failing students from failing schools and bring them into our schools, and we are held accountable the same way [the traditional school districts are]. They have to take into consideration the demographics of these children, the economics, if they are fed properly, if they come from a single-parent household or what they are exposed to in their community," said Dr. **Walter D. Palmer**, founder of the **Walter D. Palmer** Leadership Learning Partners Charter School and one of the trailblazers in the fight to establish school choice and the charter school system in Pennsylvania. "I think the federal government is wrong.

Charter schools should be measured as a district, not as individual schools. The state got that and understood it. But because of pressures from the unions and special interests who petitioned the federal government, the recalculation came about.

"Withstanding all of that, there are still a significant number of charter schools that are doing better than public schools."

Confusion and the uneven measuring system, **Palmer** says, plague the AYP system itself. For example, if a charter school is judged on 20 AYP measurements and fails at any of the 20, then that charter school is designated as having not made AYP.

"There is a hostile white takeover of Black education in urban centers across America, and the public needs to be educated on AYP, as it has a number of fields in it. If I had 20 AYP fields to look at, including attendance, consistently providing lunch and collegebound rate and I missed one, I wouldn't make AYP" **Palmer** explained. "So, look at the fields. Say I have 98 percent attendance rate, 95 percent of our graduates are college bound, had a 100 percent graduation rate for three years running and 100 percent testing proficient-to-advanced - but I failed to put how many free lunches I provided - as a charter school operator, I failed.

"And the public says, 'Ah, look another failing charter school. We really need the state to help us develop a tool that really demonstrates the charter school reality', and it cannot be a one-size-fits-all measurement," **Palmer** added, noting that a proper measurement would include safety, student

interaction and parental satisfaction. "Using the same criteria [used for traditional public schools] is a fallacy."

Feb 26, 2013

Philadelphia Tribune

"Several city schools to be converted to charters"

Damon Williams

Headnote

Renaissance Charter, Promise Academy to take over sites

As everyone involved - including the School Reform Commission, community groups, stakeholders, parents, students and educators - take a step back to reflect and shore up their positions in the aftermath of the recently-concluded series of three final school closure hearings, the School District of Philadelphia continued its business of reforming its portfolio by announcing several schools will be converted to Renaissance Charter Schools and Promise Academies.

Sunday marked the third and final SRC hearing on school closures; now all parties wait for the SRC to make its final decision on March 7.

Elementary schools James Alcorn, Kenderton and Pastorius will operate under the Renaissance Charter School model in the 2013-14 school year, while high schools Edison and Strawberry Mansion - along with elementary schools Barry, Bryant, Cayuha and McMichael - will operate in the Promise Academy model.

According to the district, compared to traditional schools, Renaissance Charter Schools have a greater autonomy in exchange for a higher degree of accountability; schools were chosen to become Renaissance Charters because of a history of low performance. These schools will be managed by private educational operators selected through the submission of Requests for Proposals the district sent out last month.