



Office of the Washington State Auditor

Pat McCarthy

Charter School Accountability and Opportunities for Collaboration

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
December 12, 2018

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Summary of results



Varied in enrollment of at-risk students

- Limited influence on enrollment
- Not well known
- Unable to fully use weighted enrollment



Generally met requirements for government transparency



Met OSPI's requirements for teacher certification



Had mixed relationships with local school districts and neighboring traditional schools

Overview of charter schools in Washington

Ten schools last year
with over 2,400 students

Authorizer:
Spokane
Public
Schools

Authorizer:
Charter
School
Commission



5-year contracts with authorizer



Reviews and audits of finances,
operations, academic outcomes



Academic testing and reporting,
state and federal laws, flexibility
around educational models

Audit objectives

- Do performance frameworks align with laws and leading practices?
- Have charter schools enrolled the types of students they intended to serve?
- Have charter schools complied with teacher certification and government transparency laws?
- Do charter schools, traditional schools, and school districts collaborate and coordinate?

Frameworks align with laws and leading practices

State laws

Academic performance

Proficiency, growth, achievement gaps by student group, **attendance**, recurrent **enrollment, graduation**, postsecondary **readiness** ✓

Financial & Operational

Financial performance and sustainability, board compliance ✓

Leading practices

Mission-specific goals, disaggregated student data ✓

Uniform implementation ✓

State and federal requirements, common indicators, targets and ratings

Charter schools' intended student population

Statutes emphasize enrolling at-risk students such as:

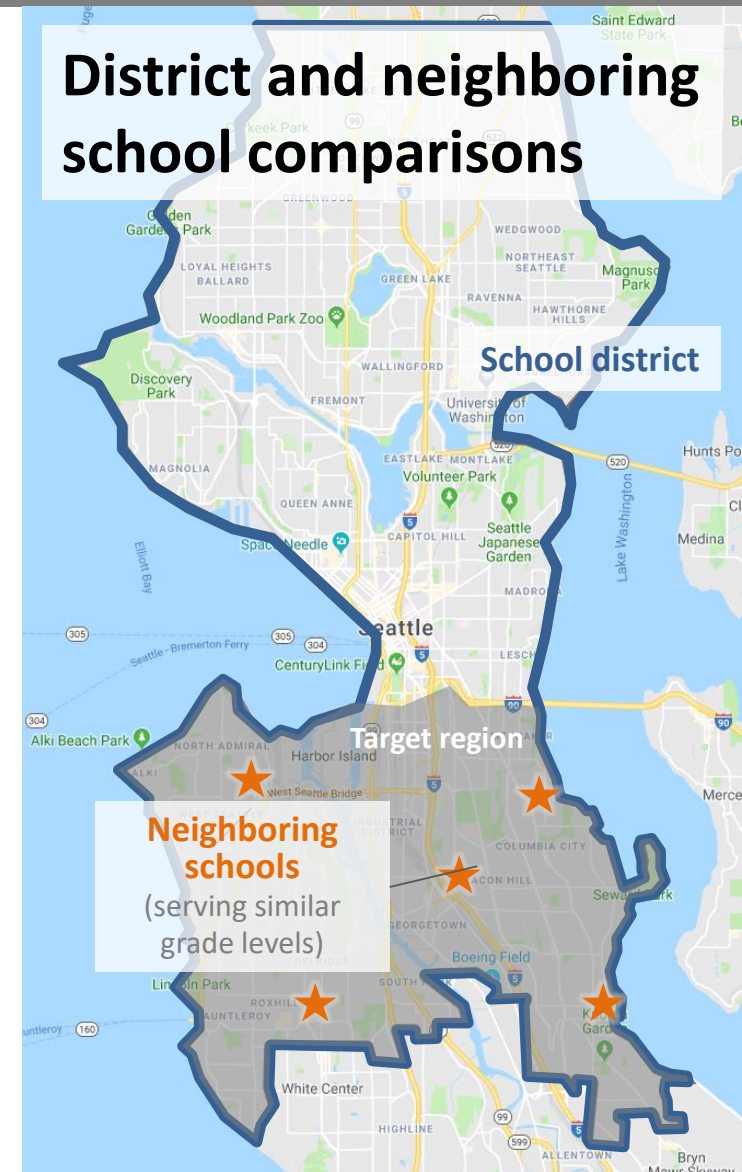
- Free and reduced-price lunch
- Special education
- English language learners

Other characteristics evaluated:

- Students of color
- Diversity

Refer to page 15 in the audit report for details on diversity and students of color.

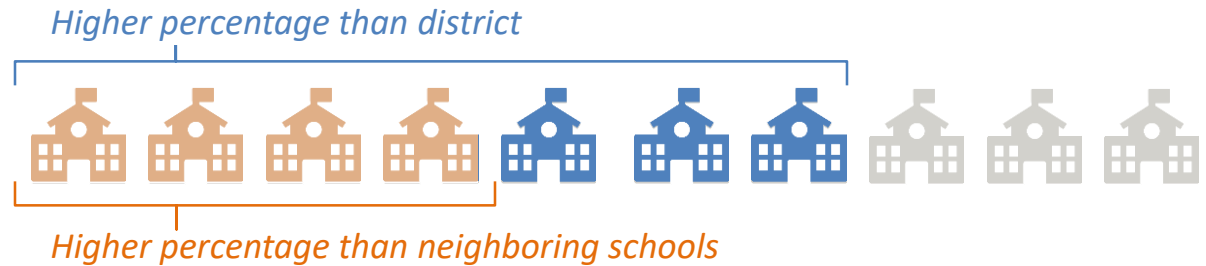
District and neighboring school comparisons



Charters varied in enrolling at-risk students

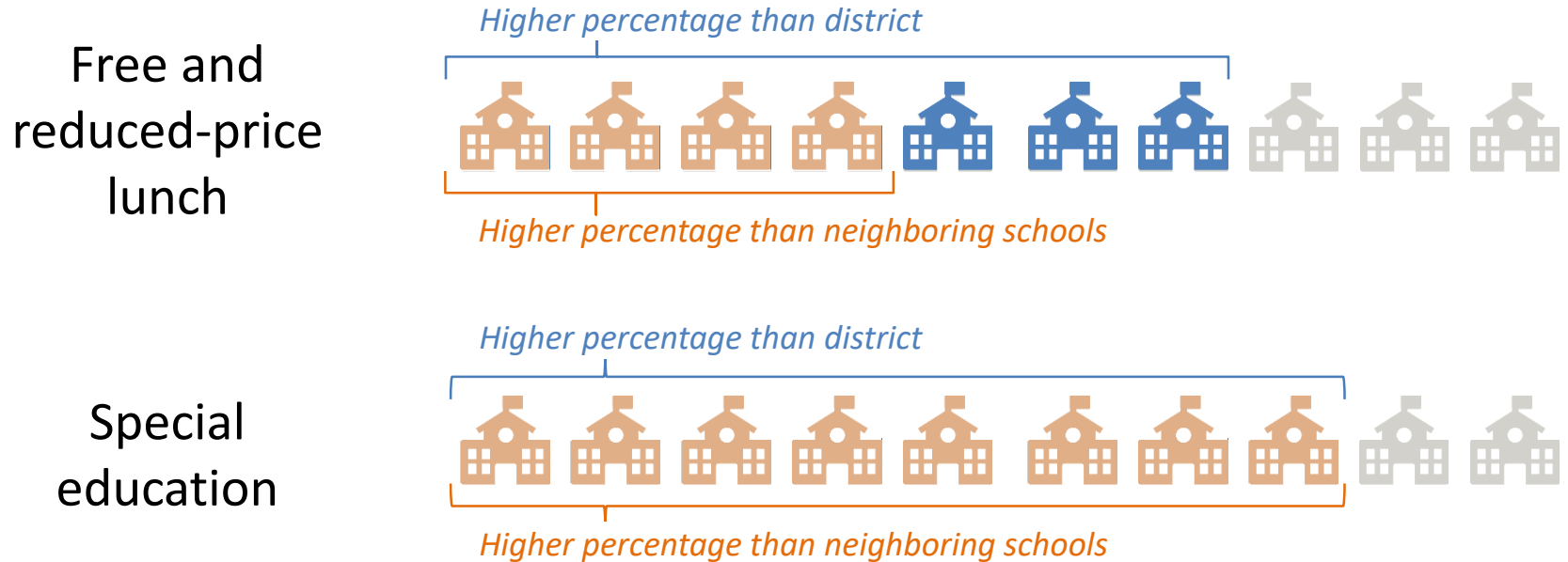
Charter schools varied when enrolling certain at-risk student groups

Free and
reduced-price
lunch

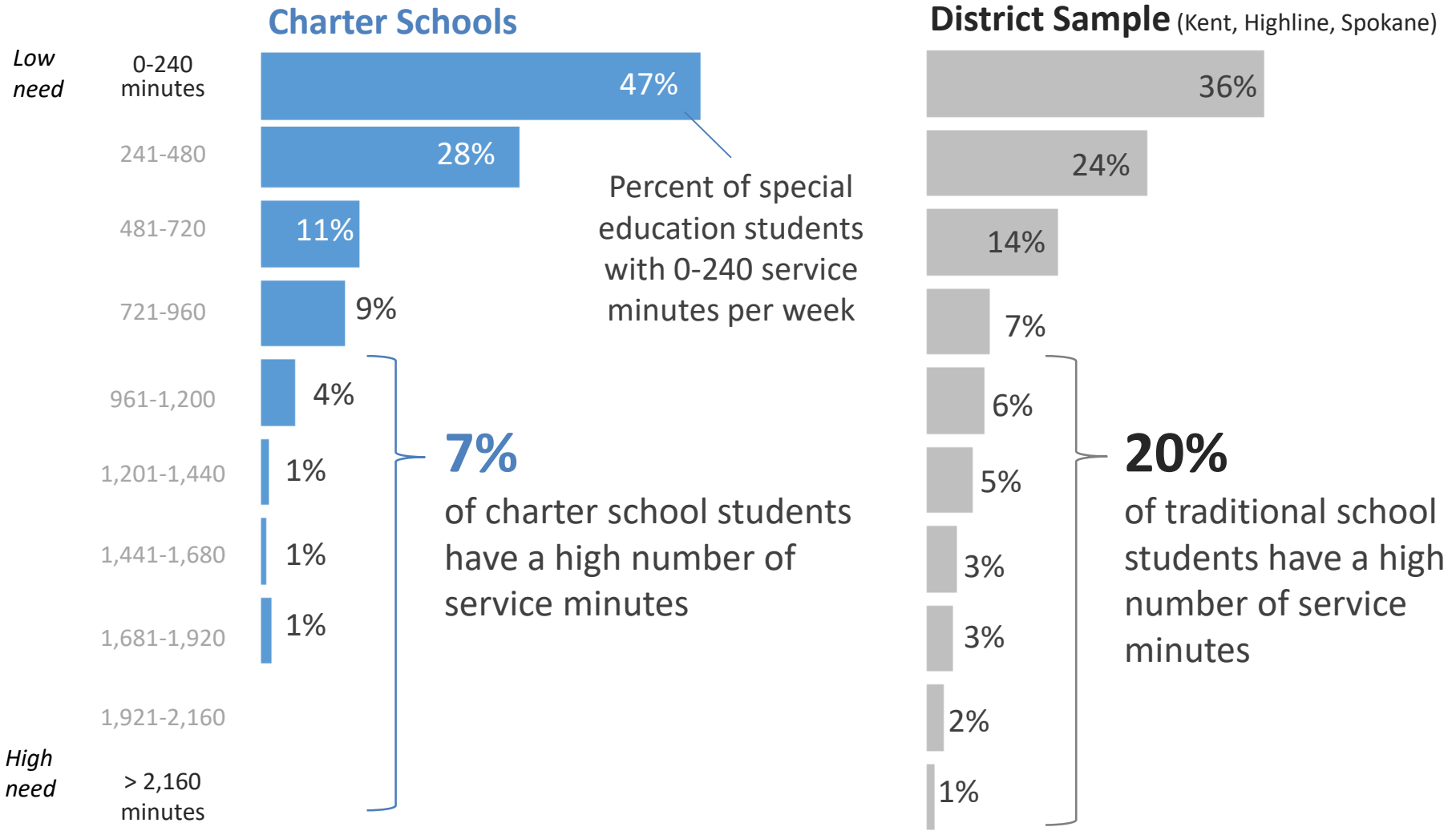


Charters varied in enrolling at-risk students

Charter schools varied when enrolling certain at-risk student groups

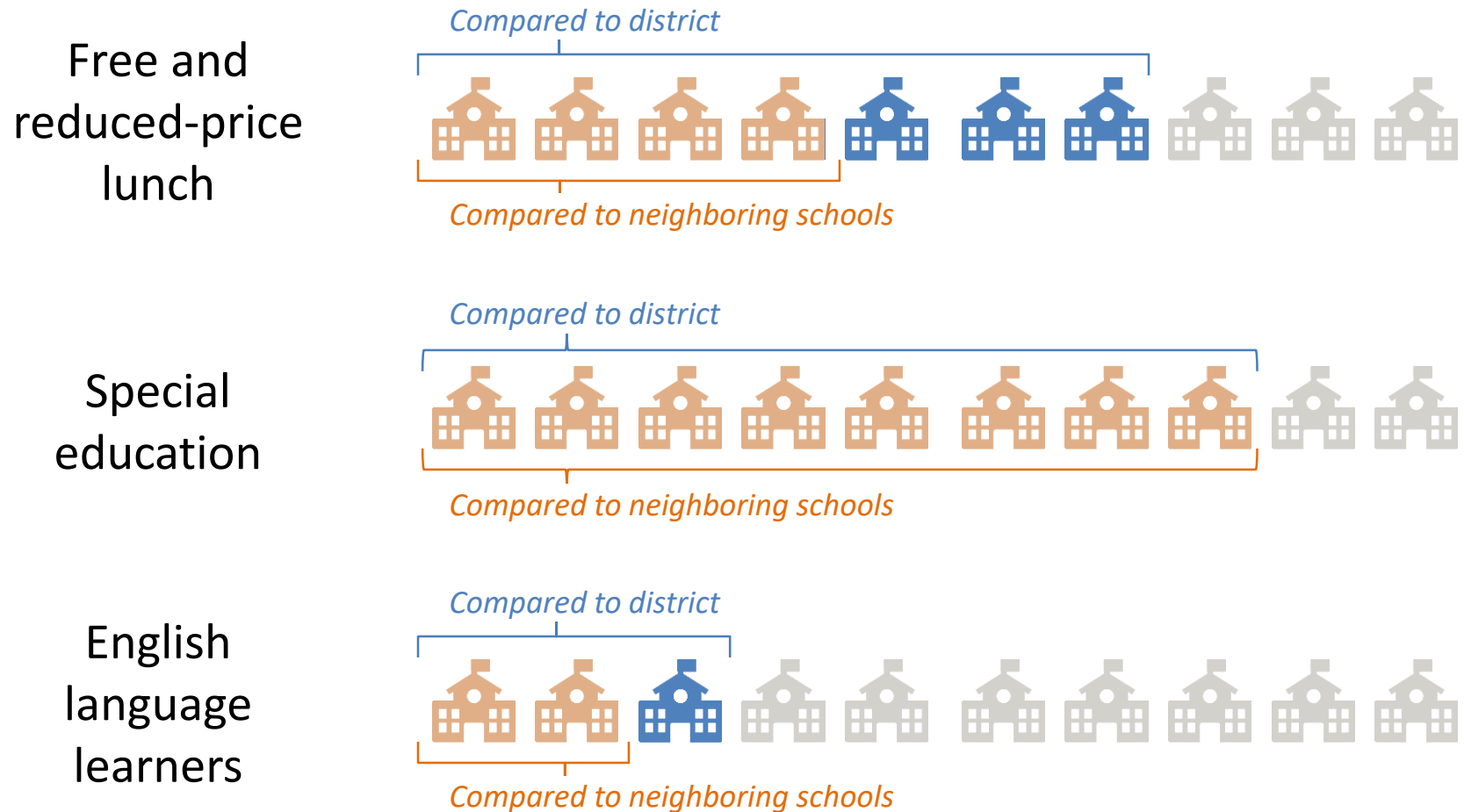


Charter schools enrolled fewer students with higher needs

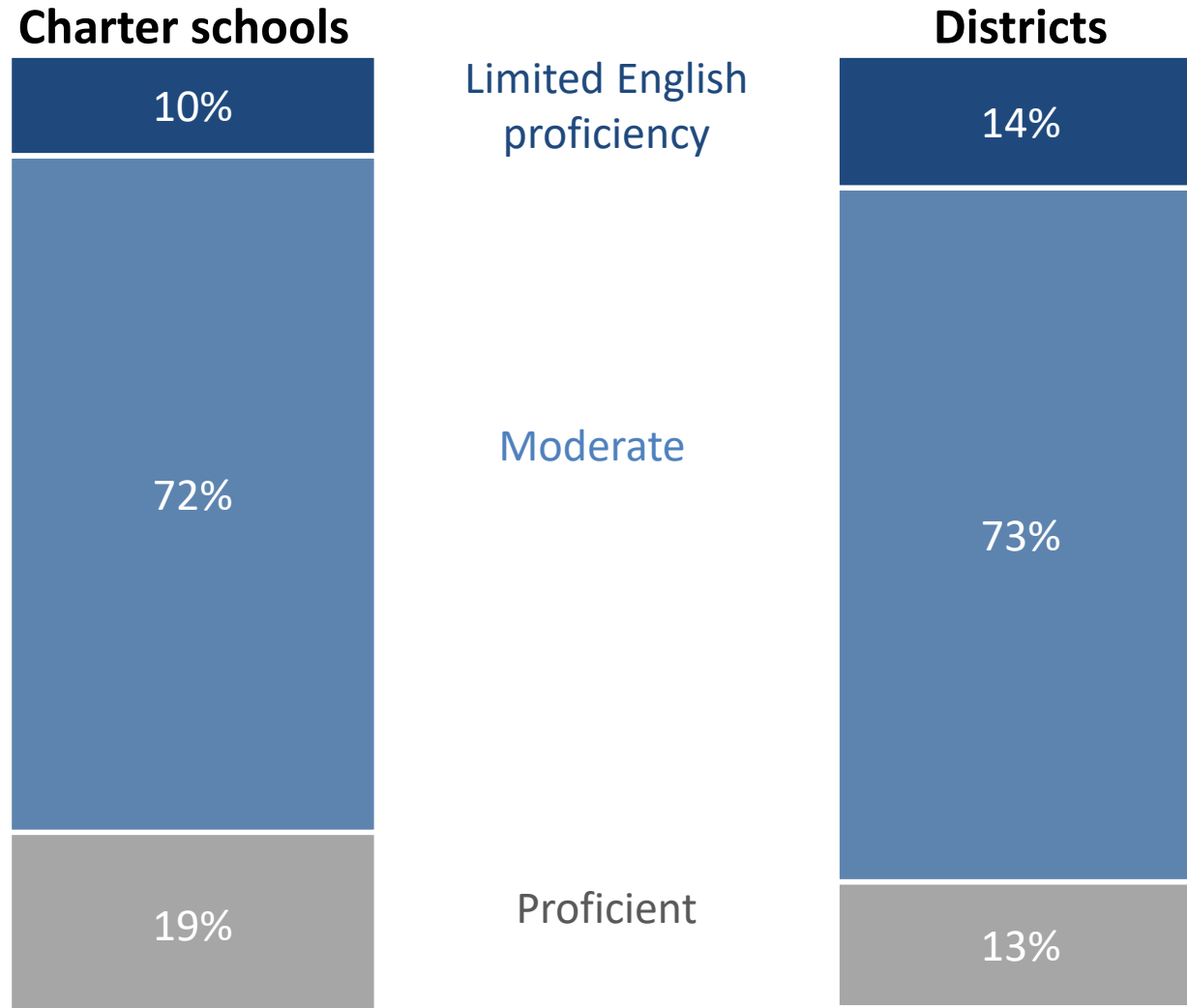


Charters varied in enrolling at-risk students

Charter schools varied when enrolling certain at-risk student groups



Charters enrolled similar distribution of English learners



What helps explain these results?

1

Limited influence on enrollment

Charters balance enrolling at-risk students while accepting any student that applies.

2

Not well known

Charters are new; misconceptions exist about charter schools.

3

Not all populations tracked or measured

Some intended student groups not tracked or measured for fear of discrimination and legal risks.

4

Unable to fully use weighted enrollment

Laws require that Charter School Commission review and approve, even if it is not the authorizer.

Weighted preferences could impinge on other laws.

Charters met OSPI's teacher certification requirements

- ✓ **Teacher professional qualifications** that meet requirements for:
 - State certification and licensure
 - Subject matter endorsement
 - Teaching assignments

- ✓ Or, appropriate school board approval if teachers were placed out of endorsement or out of field

- ✓ **Highly qualified paraeducators** that meet state requirements

Charters largely complied with Open Public Meetings Act



Information about **meeting time** and **place**



Meeting **agendas online**



Document **decisions**



Prompt meeting **minutes**



Train board **within 90 days**



Charters largely complied with Public Records Act



Appoint, train, post contact inform
Public Records Officer

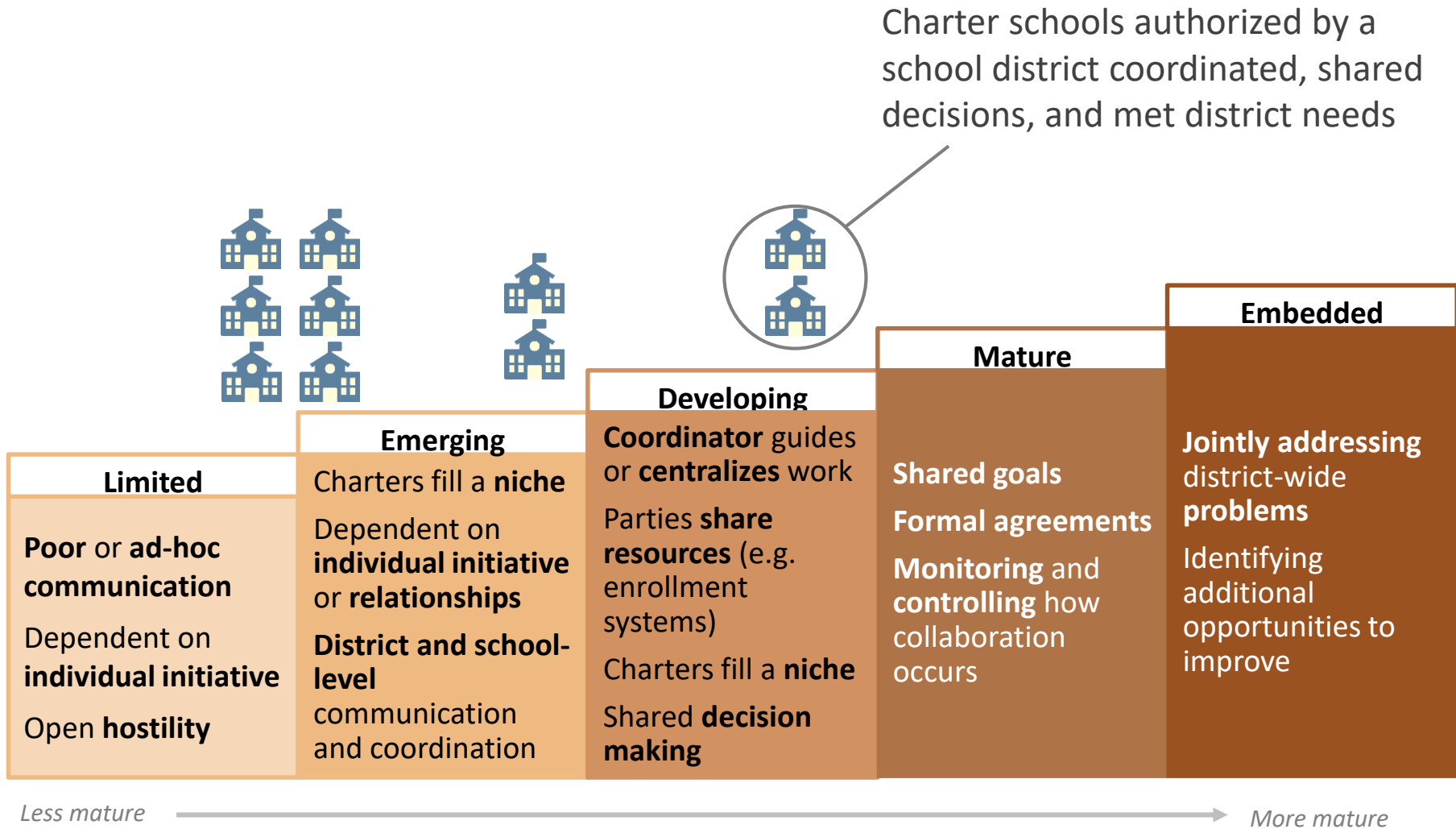


Establish and publish procedures



Publish costs, index, exemptions

Opportunities for collaboration



Recommendations

To the Legislature

- Consider statutory changes to require approval of admissions policies and weighted enrollment preferences by the charter school's authorizer

To charter schools and authorizers

- Continue exploring weighted enrollment preferences
- Track and measure enrollment of targeted student groups

To charter schools

- Establish all basic procedural requirements and incorporate leading practices on government transparency

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