



## Free to Learn: Lessons from Model Charter Schools

By Lance T. Izumi, Xiaochin Claire Yan

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Charters are by nature different not just from traditional public schools, but from one another. With their freedom and flexibility, some charter schools have opened doors and opportunities for many poor minority children who were previously trapped at failing campuses run by school district bureaucracies. These successful charter schools have perfected alternative models of organization, management, and discipline that shatter the status-quo orthodoxy. In *Free to Learn*, successful charter principals and teachers – who often do things contrary to the public education establishment – offer hope and practical advice for the charter movement. After Hurricane Katrina, *Free to Learn* served as an inspiration and handbook for charter school administrators in New Orleans.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“While charter schools are promising educational alternatives for thousands of parents, children, and teachers nationwide, experience has taught us that the ‘charter’ label by itself does not ensure success. *Free to Learn* examines innovative charter schools at work, and documents how they combine smart teachers, effective curricula, and strong management to produce results. Its findings offer a roadmap for all charter schools to emulate, and a lesson in what should be possible in all public schools.” -- **Rod Paige**, former U.S. Secretary of Education

“Unlike most traditional public schools, charter schools have to earn their revenue by serving students and their families well. Like any organization that has to earn its keep, some charters will fall short while others will flourish. Izumi and Yan have provided an engaging and insightful account on how schools can be among the high performing.” – **Jay P. Greene**, Ph.D., Endowed Chair and Head of the Department of Education Reform, University of Arkansas

#### About the Author

**Lance Izumi** is the Senior Fellow in California Studies and Director of Education Studies at the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy (PRI), California's premier free-market public policy think tank in San Francisco. He is the author of several major PRI studies, including "Putting Education to the Test: A Value-Added Model for California" (2004), the "California Education Report Card: Index of Leading Education Indicators" (1997, 2000 and 2003 editions), "Developing and Implementing Academic Standards" (1999), "Facing the Classroom Challenge: Teacher Quality and Teacher Training in California's Schools of Education" (2001), and "They Have Overcome: High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools in California" (2002).

**Xiaochin Claire Yan** is a Policy Fellow in Education Studies at the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy. Before joining PRI, she was an editor at Regnery Publishing, a nonfiction, politics/current affairs publishing house in Washington, D.C. She has also worked at the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal* in Asia, based in Hong Kong. She has written editorials on education in Southeast Asia, free trade in ASEAN, and democracy and politics in China and Taiwan. In addition, Ms. Yan was a Collegiate Network journalism fellow and a contributing editor to *Choosing the Right College: A Guide to American's Colleges* published by ISI Books.

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