

Charter School Type and Access to Music in NYC

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, charter schools have become a hallmark of education reform in the United States. While much research has sought to compare the effectiveness of charter schools and traditional public schools in terms of standardized assessments, scant attention has been paid to the role of the arts and music in charter schools, and little has been done to distinguish the distinct strands of the charter school movement. Given what we know about the importance of early childhood music education and the growth of charter schools, the purpose of this research was twofold: to develop a typology of New York City charter schools serving K-3, and to assess whether and how charter school type related to the presence of music instruction. The typology was refined by the researcher through discourse analysis of mission statements, which showed a tendency towards isomorphism, whereby the majority of NYC charter schools coalesced around constructions of character, community, and culture that asserted strict behavioral expectations and circumscribed notions of curriculum. The incidence of early childhood music programming correlated with charter school type. Charter schools that focused exclusively on core curriculum and character education in their missions were significantly less likely to provide K-3 music.

Keywords: charter schools, choice, access to music, equity in arts education, early childhood music education, typology, discourse analysis

Introduction

Charter schools expose in their discourses ideological and institutional commitments that explicitly condition the content and practices of curricula. As education policy in the United States trends towards privatization and an increasing emphasis on charter schools, it is useful to analyze their discourses, which are often richer and more pointed than the limited text published by most traditional public schools. Although we know that teachers and administrators do not necessarily follow the norms of an institution, the mere presence of charter school discourse allows us to chart potential patterns of pedagogy and curriculum that can help us understand how to categorize charter schools, how to further make sense of the present state of the movement in New York City (NYC), and perhaps even ascertain where it is going. NYC was chosen as the site of analysis because of the high number of charter schools and due to the prominence of certain NYC charter networks in the broader movement. As I will show, certain discursive patterns correlate with the presence or absence of music education in early childhood charter school settings.

This article attempts to answer the research question:

With regards to charter schools serving K-3, how does charter school type relate to the presence of early childhood music instruction, if at all?

This study is organized into four main sections: background, methods, typology, and music access. The first section provides context for the charter school movement, prior efforts to construct a typology, and reviews the scant research on arts and music in charter schools. The second section describes the mixed methods employed in the study—discourse analysis of charter school mission statements and descriptive statistical analysis of data collected from a researcher-constructed survey questionnaire. The third section, on typology, discusses the findings from discourse analysis of charter school mission statements, which centered on three main keywords that were identified in the corpus: “character,” “community,” and “culture.” The

fourth section of this article analyzes the incidence of early childhood music instruction in charter schools by type and by network affiliation.

Background: Arts, Music, and the Charter School Landscape

Charter schools represent a remarkable experiment in public education. On the one hand, they represent a promise, largely unfulfilled (Fabricant & Fine, 2012), to engage communities with innovative, responsive curricula. Absent many of the bureaucratic constraints of local school boards, these publicly funded, privately operated K-12 institutions, through their independence, are in unique positions to experiment in meeting the needs of the underserved communities they target. And yet, innovation has largely been confined to administrative structures and disciplinary procedures. The grand promise of charter schools must be tempered by the reality that they siphon funds away from traditional public schools under the veil of market metaphors like choice, competition, and competitiveness that assume an aura of accountability (Saltman, 2000).

One of the assumptions underlying the promotion of charter schools is that market-like dynamics will spur competition, innovation, and improvement because schools (as corporate entities) will be held accountable to their consumers (i.e., students and parents). However, this discourse belies the reality that charter schools in many ways evade accountability (Bracey, 2005). “Accountability” is one of the primary buzzwords featured in current debates about education reform, and yet charter schools can offer little by way of transparency or oversight.

Accountability takes on a much different meaning when examining the self-aggrandized record of charter schools, whose finances and student records are often notoriously difficult to access. Unfortunately, the deregulation that has accompanied the proliferation of charters has made it increasingly difficult to monitor academic achievement, school pushout (i.e., expelling students), fiscal management, equity of access, community engagement, and dissemination of effectiveness (Fabricant & Fine, 2012). Except for performance on standardized tests, accountability and community engagement must be called into question as guiding features of the school choice agenda. As charter schools have expanded, they are increasingly dominated by Charter Management Organizations (CMOs)—networks that run multiple schools.

In 2009, almost half of all charter schools in New York City were founded by Community Grown Organizations, led by parents, teachers, or a community organization (Hoxby, Muraka & Kang, 2009). However, as the charter school movement has expanded, a different philosophy and set of practices and goals have guided the trajectory of proliferation. While the notion of “community grown” charter organizations has largely faded from discourse in NYC, CMOs increasingly account for charter school growth. During the 2014-2015 school year, CMOs accounted for approximately two-thirds of elementary charter schools in NYC. As I will show, many of these networks, and especially the most visible ones, are premised on a streamlined, “no excuses” philosophy that underpins a “back-to-basics” curriculum, focused on drilling in skills and discipline, and geared towards performance on standardized tests.

The increasing prominence of charter school networks that coalesce around these guiding principles represents a major shift in the charter school movement in NYC. Images of this type of charter school preoccupy the space afforded education policy in academic and mass media discourse. With their uniforms, college iconography, self-regulation mantras, and rigid punishment systems, there is no doubt a specific image that “charter schools” signify to many in the public. And yet, the broad interpretation of charter schools as strict, traditional, and high achieving belies a more complex reality. Charter school type and performance are, in fact, highly diversified and broadly distributed. Although most recent charter school growth can be attributed to networks (and independent charter school operators emulating them), there has been little impulse to understand the nexus of charter school type, performance, and curricular offerings.

Setting aside the way that charter schools perform on high-stakes tests, this study seeks to make sense of the distinct discourses associated with different types of charter schools and to understand how scholars have mapped the charter school landscape. Despite the fact that charter schools often market and brand themselves on the basis of curriculum orientation and the strict disciplinary standards outlined above, there is little research delineating the different strands of the charter school movement. Likewise, there are but a few published studies (Austin & Russell, 2008; Elpus, 2012; and Kelley & Demorest, 2016) outlining the place that music and the arts hold in charter school curricula and discourse. This section is organized into two sub-sections. I first review the literature on charter schools and their typologies. Then, I summarize the available relevant research on the arts in charter schools.

On Charter School Typologies

The extant literature on charter school typologies is relatively scant. Whereas critics of the charter school movement have resisted attempts to analyze the differences between charter schools in order to castigate the overarching trends associated with privatization, proponents have been likewise wont to support charters in a general, and thus all-encompassing sense. Perhaps this explains why there has been little published research categorizing the different types of charter schools.

In an attempt to provide a general sense of the fledgling charter school movement in NYC, Hoxby and Muraka (2007) grouped charter schools by authorizer (State University of New York or SUNY, New York City Department of Education or NYCDOE, and New York State or NYS Board of Regents), by type of operating agency (Community Grown Organization, Charter Management, and Education Management Organization), and, using mission statements, assigned type based on a framework of five broad curricular foci: “child-centered or progressive philosophy... general or traditional educational mission... rigorous academic focus... a mission to serve a targeted population of students ... and a mission to offer a specific curriculum” (p. 7). The authors acknowledged the severe overlap between these five categories, but nevertheless saw fit to identify “several broad educational philosophies held by clusters of schools,” despite emphasizing the uniqueness of each charter school in terms of policy and practice (p. 7). Hoxby, Muraka, and Kang’s (2007) analyses, based on data from the 2005-2006 school year, showed that most NYC charter schools were governed by Community Grown Organizations and maintained a progressive, child-centered focus.

One avowed pro-charter advocacy group, the California Charter School Association (CCSA), published *Portrait of the Movement* (2014), that addressed charter school growth through five lenses: management structure, autonomy, classroom vs. non-classroom-based, conversion vs. startups, and the California-specific ASAM (Alternative School Accountability Model) charter schools which target at-risk youth (CCSA, 2014). The thrust of the CCSA (2014) report was to highlight improvement in the California charter school movement by demonstrating that a higher number of charter schools outperformed predicted academic performance index (API) scores in 2012-13, as compared to 2007-08. In this vein, a growing body of research by scholars with a decidedly favorable view of school choice (Dobbie & Fryer, 2013) has sought to distinguish high-performing charter schools from the rest.

A New York Times article published in 2016 boldly declared, “Many charter schools fail to live up to their promise, but one type has repeatedly shown impressive results” (Leonhardt, 2016). Based on evidence from a study of Boston’s charter high schools by Angrist, Cohodes, Dynarski, Pathak, and Walters (2016), the article lauded “high expectations, high support schools,” which “devote more of their resources to classroom teaching.... keep students in class for more hours.... set high standards for students and try to instill confidence in them.... [and] focus on giving teachers feedback about their craft and helping them get better” (Leonhardt, 2016, p. SR2). With varying degrees of overlap, researchers have also referred to this type of charter school as “no excuses”—schools which “emphasize discipline and comportment, traditional reading and math skills, extended instruction time, and selective teacher hiring”

(Angrist et al., 2016, p. 278). According to Ravitch (2016), “They are called ‘no excuses’ schools, since there can be ‘no excuse’ for failure.”

Using data collected from 39 NYC charter schools, Dobbie and Fryer (2013) identified many of the features of “no excuses” schools as salient in relation to school effectiveness, asserting that “frequent teacher feedback, the use of data to guide instruction, high-dosage tutoring, increased instructional time, and high expectations” accounted for almost half of the “variation in school effectiveness” (p. 30).

Whether praising the features and effects of a “no excuses” paradigm (Dobbie & Fryer, 2013), or reporting on the prevalence of charter schools oriented towards college readiness (Arce-Trigatti, Harris, Jabbar, & Lincove, 2015), recent studies have highlighted an important facet of the charter school movement—the growing prominence of “no excuses” charter schools, both in reality and in discourse, reflects an isomorphic tendency, whereby charter schools, constrained by specific standards of accountability, increasingly ascribe to the tenets of a “no excuses” doctrine deemed most effective. If charter schools are deemed successful by virtue of their students’ ability to perform well on standardized tests, it is only natural that most charter schools would adopt curricula that hone in on core content and high behavior standards. Not only does this “constraining pressure [potentially force] members of a population to resemble one another,” (Carpenter, 2008, p. 95, referencing Bulkley, 1999 and Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999), but the success of the “no excuses” model among certain charter schools compels new schools towards this isomorphism and predisposes the movement towards CMOs with an established track record of high achievement and high expectations. Likewise, Lipman (2006), discussing the neoliberal tendencies of school choice policies, argued that although charters are free to be more progressive in politics and pedagogy, these progressive schools are doomed to fail relative to schools that specifically focus on student success on high-stakes standardized tests. Indeed, charter schools are constrained by the very fact that the renewal of their charters depends on test performance.

Even though charter schools are ostensibly afforded more freedom to innovate curricula and pedagogy, they tend to integrate corresponding forms of classroom practice that relate more to strict management styles and rigid curricula built thereon. Given the isomorphic tendencies outlined below, charter schools are destined to fit into more conventional, teacher-centered educational paradigms.

Arts and Music in Charter Schools

Lost in the growing discourse surrounding charter schools is the important role of music in the early childhood curriculum and the role of the arts in school choice reform. Evidence from the interrelated fields of education, neuroscience, and musicology has revealed the profound connections that exist between music, cognition, language, social/emotional learning, and physical development. It is beyond the scope of this study to cite the myriad justifications for music as a vital component early childhood education. The qualitative portions of the larger investigation (Aprile, 2017), including interviews with and observations of music teachers, were framed by the idea that music instruction is an aesthetic benefit in and of itself, imbued with interpersonal, transcultural, and humanistic possibilities—not to be justified on the basis of improved test scores or because early childhood music instruction helps develop literacy (Lamb & Gregory, 1993; Hansen & Bernstorff, 2002; Forgeard, Schlaug, Norton, Rosam, & Iyengar, 2008), language (Gromko, 2005; Patel, 2011), memory (Gfeller, 1983; Campabello, DeCarlo, O’Neil, & Vacek, 2002), math (Geist & Geist 2008), kinesthetic (Hallam, 2010), or social/emotional skills (Turner, 1999; Perret, Angelou, & Fox, 2006). Before understanding the goals and type of music education, it was necessary to simply assess how access to music was distributed across charter schools within NYC.

More pertinent here is the fact that there are simply not many studies that have undertaken to assess the role of arts or music in charter schools. A 2010 report by the Arizona Arts Education

Research Institute (AAERI) compared district and charter schools and showed that charters were “significantly less likely to provide arts courses for students or have a highly qualified teachers providing instruction” (AAERI, 2010) (emphasis added). Less than a third of charter schools in Arizona employed a highly qualified music or arts teacher, compared with eight out of ten district schools. Only 11% of charter schools in Arizona provided students with highly qualified music and visual arts teachers, compared with just over half the traditional public schools. Though the Arizona Arts Education Census questionnaire garnered only a 22% response rate, the study remains significant because it presents some of the only empirical data on access to arts in charter schools. More significant is the fact that Arizona has promoted some of the most aggressive policies to expand the provision of charters.

In their multi-state study of charter school music programs, Austin and Russell (2008) found that 70% of the 122 charter schools that participated in the study included music. With attention to “course offerings, instructional time, student participation, teaching facilities, teacher qualifications, and institutional support related to music instruction,” Austin and Russell (2008) surveyed charter school principals and directors to examine the “relationships between charter school characteristics and the status of music instruction” and assess the comparability of charters and non-charter public schools. Austin and Russell (2008) concluded that charter schools were not neglecting the arts: “a majority of charter school students likely receive instruction in music” and “one out of ten schools claims the arts a curricular emphasis,” yet the authors could not claim that charter schools “embraced” the arts because music instruction therein did “not appear to be... commensurate with that of traditional public schools” (p. 177).

It is important to state that Austin and Russell (2008) acknowledged “no published research has examined music education within charter schools” (p. 176). It is not clear whether the narrower curriculum Austin and Russell (2008) described was based on differing value systems, funding discrepancies, institutional arrangements, or issues specific to place.

One compelling hypothesis is that charter schools often revert to a back-to-basics, traditional approach, enforcing strict behavioral standards while circumscribing curricula to focus on tested subjects like reading, writing, and math (Murphy & Schiffman, 2002; Lubienski, 2003). Ferguson (2005) used “parent surveys, student surveys, class observations, music teacher interviews, administrator interviews, and a student interview” to examine music education practices in three Edison for-profit charter schools in Ohio (in Ferguson, 2005). Ferguson (2005) also noted discrepancies in parents’ perceptions of their children’s engagement with music and their observed involvement in music in the classroom.

More recent research by Elpus (2012) and Kelley and Demorest (2016) on charter school music programs has shed light on the charter school movement in specific localities. Kelley and Demorest (2016) analyzed the incidence of music in charter schools and traditional public schools in Chicago and found that charter schools were more likely to offer music than their traditional public school counterparts, albeit at lower rates than national norms. Elpus (2012) detailed various features of music programs and charter schools in NYC, including school staffing and compensation, school authorizer, school design partners, academic focus, and music program and teacher profiles. Elpus’ (2012) study suffered from a relatively low response rate (41%), and the broad scope of inquiry prevented in-depth analysis of some issues that were deemed important for the present study. Significantly, Elpus’ (2012) analysis of the incidence of music by academic focus/emphasis—a self-reported response to the survey instrument designed by Austin and Russell (2008)—included 17 overlapping types:

‘Back-to-basics’, Civics, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), Vocational, Gifted and Talented, College Preparation, Arts ‘Infused’, Arts ‘Focused’, Integrated/Interdisciplinary, Experiential, Technology, Social/Emotional Learning, ‘No Excuses’, Student Leadership, Test Prep, Ethics-based, International/21st Century Skills. (p. 88)

Because of the small sample and exhaustive categories, no significant findings could be established regarding a potential connection between charter school curriculum orientation and incidence of music—after the largest group (11 of the 13 schools defined as “back-to-basics” were found to have music), no category contained more than six schools (Elpus, 2012).

With the exception of the small sample of studies briefly described above, there is a clear dearth of literature showing whether or how the narrowing of curricula relates to arts and music instruction in charter schools. In addition, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding what goes on in charter school music classrooms. In the next section, I turn to the methodology of this study.

Methods

This article reports on the convergence of two research modalities from a larger mixed methods study. A short survey questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered via email to the principals of all 146 charter schools serving kindergarten through third grade in 2014-15 to gauge the incidence of music. Only 16 principals responded to three rounds of email requests, so phone callsⁱ were made to each of the remaining 130 schools, asking administrators whether their school had a music program serving K-3 students. Phone surveys yielded an additional 99 responses and accounted for a 79% response rate. The 79% response rate was cross-referenced with online sources (official school websites and parent testimonies from insideschools.org), where possible.

In order to maximize the sample, the 115 responding schools were supplemented by investigations of the websites of the 31 schools that did not respond to the survey questionnaire. This supplemental research revealed the presence of a music teacher or program in an additional eight charter schools (CS), and the absence of music teacher or program in two CS. In tandem, survey responses from 115 schools and data gathered from 10 CS online yielded a sample of 125 CS (86% of the 146 CS) for which the presence or absence of K-3 music instruction was confirmed. Data collected on CS music programs should be viewed somewhat cautiously given the possibility that some administrators may have exaggerated the extent of music in their school, or that a nonresponse bias may have existed among the 31 schools that did not respond to the survey questionnaire.

Official charter school documents (e.g., mission statements) from all 146 charter schools serving K-3 in 2014-15 were collected from the NYCDOE and official charter school websites. Special attention was paid to the discourse of the 125 schools in the quantitative sample. These schools remain anonymous. Official charter school documents were subjected to discourse analysis. Discourse analysis homed in on the keywords “character,” “culture,” and “community,” and was in turn used to create a typology of charter schools.

Creating a Typology: Discourse Analysis of Charter School Mission Statements

Building on previous work by Carpenter (2005, 2008, 2009), this section develops a typology of NYC charter schools serving grades K-3. Although hardly non-partisanⁱⁱ, Carpenter’s (2005, 2008, 2009) comprehensive work developing a typology of Colorado, Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan, and Texas charter schools remains some of the only published research on this topic and presents a useful jumping-off point for this typology, even if certain aspects were not pertinent to New York City elementary schoolsⁱⁱⁱ. Using self-descriptions of over 1,000 schools, Carpenter (2008) identified with seven types: traditional, progressive, vocational, general, alternate delivery, open enrollment, and targeted student population.

Proceeding from Carpenter’s (2008) typology, I divided charter schools into two major types, according to their own mission statements: 1) academies and 2) progressive charter schools. Official statements of mission, values, and philosophy on charter school websites were analyzed recursively for themes related to academies as traditional programs, as well as progressive

schools. By focusing on the mission statement as the primary unit of analysis, this typology emphasized a crucial choice that schools made in representing themselves. The mission statement was used as a barometer of the school's priorities, an important piece of branding that showed off a school's focus. The mission statement was seen as a distillation of a school's core beliefs about the goals of education and suggested the means by which these goals were attained.

Academies are traditional in nature; they are focused on core academic curriculum and strict codes of behavior, priorities that encompassed school-governing philosophies variously described as "no excuses," "back to basics," and "high expectations, high support." In contrast, progressive charter schools emphasize pedagogical, political, and/or curricular commitments distinct from core curriculum and character education. Confusing this neat dichotomy were academies that maintained a focus on core academic curriculum and strict codes of behavior, but also incorporated tolerant features or alternative curricular emphases into their missions, characteristic of progressive schools. Because these schools were deemed only marginally progressive, and because their discourse aligned closely with other academies, they were defined as tolerant academies, a subtype of the academies. This distinction was important to make given the extent to which traditionalist discourses have permeated the charter school movement at large.

Like Carpenter's (2008) typology, the above framework was most in need of refinement when considering the two main categories, academy (i.e., traditional) and progressive. Distinguishing between these two categories demanded intricate rubrics to account for a long history of pedagogical thought, drawing dichotomies that John Dewey (1938) himself dismissed as false:

Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of Either-Ors, between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities.... The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without; that it is based upon natural endowments and that education is a process of overcoming natural inclination and substituting in its place habits acquired under external pressure (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 17).

Charter schools, and any other school for that matter, can be much more fluid in their approach than traditional/progressive "Either-Or" categories would suggest. Well-balanced classrooms implement teacher-directed instruction while maintaining the imperative of student-centeredness; they consider generative curricula alongside the need for conventional subject matter instruction. And yet, at the risk of reinforcing arbitrary boundaries, this typology made elisions in ascribing a singular status to each school. It was beyond the scope of this study to develop the scales that would adequately assess the degree to which charter schools exhibited a given characteristic, especially since the most valid research would necessitate spending time in every school, observing the extent to which predominant teaching practices aligned with school discourse surrounding curriculum and pedagogy. Although reductive, this analysis hopes to elaborate on Carpenter's (2008) typology by analyzing school type through the lens of discourse, with special attention to music and the arts, as well as concepts of character, community and culture. Below I first analyze the discourse of the academies, followed by that of progressive charter schools.

Discourse of the Academies

Looking at discourse alone, one can chart the charter school landscape with a matrix comprising various vectors, each vector representing a specific characteristic or feature. For Carpenter, traditional schools:

... stress high standards in academics and behavior, rigorous classes, and other earmarks of a "back-to-basics" approach. Classes tend to be teacher-centered, students are supposed to be industrious and well-behaved, and the courses full of challenging, prescriptive content.

Philosophically, traditionalists tend to subscribe to an objective view of knowledge and to see the teacher’s role as classroom expert and conveyor of information (2008, p. 99).

This definition points to some very important features of most NYC charter schools, as well as the charter school movement in general. Charter schools that focus on core subjects, achievement test scores, character skills, and college readiness fit this bill from the standpoint of curriculum orientation.

Student behavior and discipline take on the guise of curriculum, to the extent that teacher directives and classroom practices are primarily concerned with issues of student compliance, composure, and classroom management rather than subject-matter (i.e., music) content. Strict behavioral expectations encompassing individual responsibility were embedded in the missions and core values that many charter schools espouse in both discourse and practice (Aprile, 2017). When highly-structured, standardized codes of conduct are imposed institutionally, it is naturally more difficult for a teacher to evade the norms to which a school ascribes. In this sense, charter school discourse can be a starting point from which to examine the convergence of teaching practice, curriculum and classroom management.

If core curriculum/college readiness and individual student behavior (character education) were central to the school mission, this school was deemed an academy. Traditional and future-oriented in their missions, academies’ goals tend to be enforced through behavior management and a very specific notion of character education. Although mention of alternative/progressive features may have appeared on a school’s website elsewhere^{iv}, in its approach, or in specific classes, the mission statement denoted the extent to which progressive inclinations were ignored or absorbed into the school’s focus. For academies, you might imagine these dual vectors (core curriculum and character education) as comprising the central circle in a series of concentric circles, whereby outer circles represent supplement curricular emphases. I refer to a charter school as a discipline-based preparatory academy if core curriculum/college readiness and individual student behavior were so central to the mission the school put forth, that other goals and themes were left out of the mission statement entirely (i.e., only one circle, with no rings around it; see Figure 1 below)

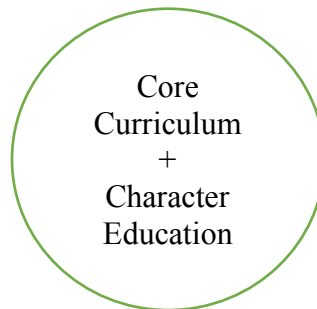


Figure 1. Curriculum Orientation of Discipline-Based Preparatory Academies

Discursively, the focus on core curriculum in mission statements was relatively straightforward and standardized, even if largely implicit. Literacy, math, and high-stakes tests were rarely named, but the evident linguistic uniformity surrounding core curriculum suggested a standardization best characterized by the mission statement of the most prominent charter school network in NYC, comprising 24 of the 146 (16%) K-3 schools operating in 2014-15:

The mission... is to provide students in New York City with an exceptionally high-quality education that gives them the knowledge, skills, character, and disposition to meet and exceed NY State Common Core Learning Standards, and the resources to lead and succeed in school, college, and a competitive global economy.

Seamlessly, academies, like the one above, conflated the “knowledge and skills” needed to “meet and exceed Common Core standards” (read English Language Arts and Mathematics) with the knowledge and skills needed to “succeed” in high school, college, and a competitive labor market.

Rather than subject matter or tests, however, ideas about school and career readiness in mission statements consistently converged on specific conceptualizations of character, community, and culture, which emerged as important keywords through discourse analysis of mission statements. Whether discipline-based or more tolerant, academies tended to talk about character, culture, community, in the same way, most often formulated to encompass and enforce a specific code of conduct, focused on non-cognitive skills associated with positive human capital outcomes. Below I describe the discourse around each of these elements in the academies—character, culture and community.

Character in the Academies

The word character appears more than 60 times in the corpus of 146 charter school mission statements assembled for this study. Though the word was used in different and often implicit ways, character was generally employed to convey a specific, neoliberal ideology centered on personal responsibility, an important feature of discourse in both academies and charter schools at large. Some would argue that notions of individual character, comprised of personal responsibility, self-discipline, and “the central role of personal industry in defining rectitude and merit,” have formed the bedrock of American education since the inception of the common school in the mid-19th century, cohering with a broad ideology rooted in the mutually reinforcing features of “republicanism, Protestantism, and capitalism” (Kaestle, 1983, p. 76). However, critical scholars have adroitly taken note of a lexical turn towards a more hyper-individualized and marketized discourse (Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2006, 2007, 2013; and Holborow, 2015). These scholars have located the language of the charter school movement and concomitant market-based reform policies within logic of neoliberal capitalism.

According to Harvey (2005), the neoliberal discourse surrounding personal success and failure has served to accentuate and circumscribe the role of individual character, while simultaneously de-emphasizing community and the public good, be it health care, welfare, or public education. Referencing the crystallization of neoliberal policies during the Thatcher years, Harvey noted that, “All forms of social solidarity were to be dissolved in [favor] of individualism, private property, and personal responsibility” (2005, p. 23). Even though most charter schools have adopted “the neoliberal ideology and the logic of capital,” they can also manifest “aspirations of communities for educational and cultural self-determination and teachers’ desire for greater professional autonomy” (Lipman, 2013). Discourse was analyzed to understand the extent to which neoliberal conceptions of the individual suffused charter school discourse, naturalizing as common sense the connotation of character to mean personal responsibility. Conversely, fissures in the discourse pointed to the ways that some schools resist taken-for-granted notions of character.

Character education might stand for social and emotional skills, civic virtues, or any host of interpersonal competencies, compassion and cooperation to name two, but charter school discourse, especially the discourse of academies, narrowly defined character for the individual, in terms of his/her ultimate labor market potential. What’s more, social and emotional skills and civics were subsumed under the neoliberal logic of personal responsibility, often confined to represent high expectations and leadership skills.

There were some exceptions to this phraseology—schools that articulated a notion of character based on a different set of ethics or concerns were assigned a school type distinct from discipline-based preparatory academy. But by and large, the neoliberal framing of character was standardized in charter school discourse, no doubt owing to the real and perceived successes of the six largest networks (CMOs operating five or more K-3 charter schools in NYC), which accounted for 38% of the sample (n = 56 schools) and presented uniform mission statements for all schools within the network. The extent of linguistic uniformity can be seen below.

Consider again the mission statement from the largest network, a discipline-based preparatory academy, in which “... character, and disposition” would propel students to “meet and exceed” standards and “lead and succeed in school, college, and a competitive global economy.” Now compare this to the mention of character and personal responsibility in the five other largest networks, all academies, whose mission was:

... to provide all of our students with the academic and character skills they need to graduate from top colleges, to succeed in a competitive world and to serve as the next generation of leaders for our communities.

... to prepare students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. We cultivate in our young (wo)men the knowledge, skills, and character necessary to succeed academically, embrace responsibility, and become honorable citizens and courageous leaders.

... to teach our students to develop the character and academic skills necessary to succeed in high school and college, to be self-sufficient, successful, and happy in the competitive world, and to build a better tomorrow for themselves and us all.

In the above examples, character was for the most part reduced to a set of self-directed, discrete skills that should be competitively applied towards “leadership” and “success,” and “from the earliest grades.” Even the mention of “community” or civic “honor” subsumed collective and cooperative goals under the ethic of personal responsibility, whereby social and emotional skills consist of an individual’s perseverance and adherence to rigor. Note how this notion of character took shape and maintained its presumed significance in other discipline-based preparatory academies, where the mission was:

... to challenge each child to achieve by offering a challenging, character-based education through a rigorous curriculum with high academic expectations.

... [to prepare] students to thrive in competitive high schools and four year colleges.... [and] provide the children of Brooklyn with a rigorous academic program and a school community built on the school’s core values of Perseverance, Achievement, Vibrance [ad sic] and Excellent Character.

... to develop students into young men and women of good character and spirit by fostering their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical excellence.

... to empower each student to build strong character, demonstrate critical thinking, possess a core body of knowledge, and be on a predictive path to earn a degree from a four-year university.

... [to prepare] students in the South Bronx to excel in college preparatory high schools. Through a classical curriculum and highly structured setting, students become liberated scholars and citizens of impeccable character who achieve proficiency in and advanced mastery of New York State Performance Standards.

Results from the survey questionnaire administered to charter school personnel indicated that discipline-based preparatory academies were significantly less likely to offer a music program

than other charter schools in the sample. This finding will be discussed in the following section, and was especially noteworthy (if expected) because discipline-based preparatory academies comprise the largest type of charter schools, and because prevailing trends showed a tendency towards isomorphism (recall the previously mentioned phenomenon, whereby charter schools, to an ever-increasing extent, cohere around the forms, relations, tenets of a dominant, “no excuses” model). Data collected through observations and interviews as part of the larger study (Aprile, 2017) provide a glimpse into what character education means in practice for music classrooms in academies. Though not the initial focus of this study, character education proved to be a salient feature of music instruction in both discipline-based preparatory academies and more tolerant academies. As reported elsewhere (Aprile, 2017), classroom management and discipline comprised a sort of hidden curriculum in charter school academy music classes.

Character in Tolerant Academies

Distinct from discipline-based preparatory academies were academies that focused on core curriculum and individual student behavior, but also incorporated alternative features into their mission statements, like civics, collaborative project-based learning, arts enrichment, or curricular attention to subjects outside the common core (e.g., foreign language(s), multicultural literacies, the environment, and/or the surrounding community). These schools were considered a subtype of the academies, but had some features in common with progressive charter schools, the second type. To differentiate them from progressive charter schools, I call these tolerant academies—their goals were still mainly core academic and behavioral, but they articulated some progressive tendencies, not so marginalized as to be left out of mission statements, but clearly in the service of core curriculum and individual student behavior goals (progressive tendencies would reside in an outer concentric circle—see Figure 2). Many of these schools made direct allusions to civics and “critical thinking” in order to distance themselves from the drill-based learning implied by exclusive attention to core curriculum and behavioral standards.

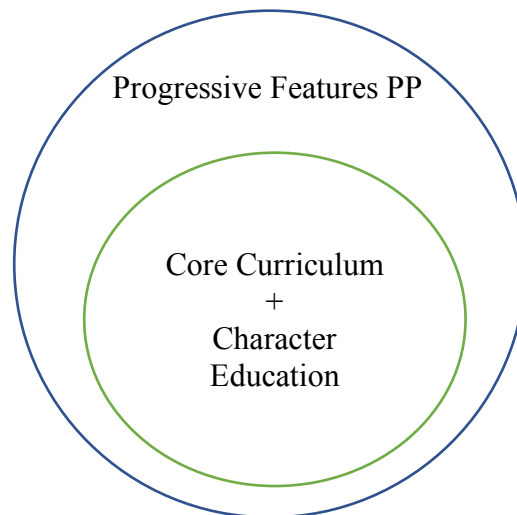


Figure 2 Curriculum Orientation of Tolerant Academies

In this subtype of academies, the tolerant academies, the more progressive features of the discourse of the mission statement still coalesced around a neoliberal framework of personal responsibility. Tolerant academies were apt to equate citizenship and civics with notion of character outlined above, consistent throughout all academies. Note how the missions of civics-oriented tolerant academies adhered to the same conceptions of character and discipline prescribed by the discipline-based preparatory academies:

... to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship. [This school] believes in more time to learn, data-driven instruction,

rigorous curricula, a safe and structured school environment and exemplary educators. The core values of Democracy... are DREAM (Discipline, Respect, Enthusiasm, Accountability and Maturity). [This school] challenges all scholars to Work Hard, Go To College and Change the World!

... to prepare students for high-performing high schools, colleges and beyond through a rigorous academic program that develops critical thinkers who demonstrate a love of learning, strong character, and a commitment to wellness and active citizenship. [This] Charter School inspires all students to recognize their potential and realize their dreams.

In the above discourse of civics-oriented tolerant academies, a school may have adopted a seemingly progressive term like “democracy,” even if its practices were not very democratic.

Culture and Community in Academies

In addition to character, two terms that proved revealing through discourse analysis were culture and community. Culture and community provided a lens with which to discern whether and how schools reinforced the subtext of character outlined by academies. It was imperative to decode these two catchwords because they often were used differently in more traditional academies than in progressive schools. Charter schools employed the term community in reference to both the surrounding community and to the school community. Within these different usages were differences in presumed meaning that uncovered the precise dynamic through which students’ communities and cultural backgrounds were taken into account, exhorted, or ignored, with profound implications for curriculum practices. One use, consistent with the discourse of academies, positioned the school as a community, enforcing a culture of personal responsibility^v.

Culture and community in Tolerant Academies

Schools that established community as distinct from the surrounding neighborhood often set a culture discursively opposed to what the students and their families might bring to the classroom and were considered academies. Culture here was “implemented” or “communicated,” rather than acknowledged or recognized. The “strong,” “adult”-nature of the school culture was evident in the “rigorous” high standards and molding of students to reach academic and behavioral standards.

Our school culture communicates high academic and behavioral expectations for all learners... the school is focused on the following three priorities to lead to high student outcomes: high quality reading instruction and dramatic reading achievement, consistent implementation of strong school-wide culture systems in order to maximize student learning and building an adult culture of Team and Family.

We want students to become intellectually sophisticated, wholesome in character, avid readers, independent thinkers and compassionate individuals who make a meaningful contribution to society. Cultures of teamwork, ownership, and learning.

[We] will provide a positive, nurturing environment along with an exciting, rigorous, academic and cultural program where boys learn to become responsible citizens, life-long learners, and community leaders.... We believe that a strong school culture is essential for our young leaders of tomorrow.

...the cornerstone of the school culture is the value of team and family as embodied by the ‘wolf pack’ (the school’s mascot is the wolf). Students earn their way into the pack by demonstrating citizenship, hard work and achievement.

In these examples, culture is tied to conceptualizations of character, morality and discipline associated with academies. Even discourse that referenced concepts of “teamwork” and “family” as part of a school’s culture seem to have utilized those concepts to reinforce the academic and behavioral standards of the individual student (i.e., a lack of personal responsibility is detrimental to the team/community). Similarly, discursive constructions of community-as-school often prescribed (rather than integrated) students’ experiences of community:

We believe that every member of our school community is responsible for student success. ... [Our] Charter School has a high bar for expectations for all members of our community. ... Scholars are expected to work hard daily and model the school core values.

Students realize success through a rigorous academic program, with a strong focus on writing, in a supportive and structured school community.

[Our] community lives by four core values: scholarship, merit, sisterhood, and responsibility.

There is no doubt that schools can be conceived as a community of teachers, learners, and administrators, and there are cultural dispositions manifest in the institutional procedures and practices of a given school, but when charter schools stand for a community unto themselves, or imply in that their vision community is superior, they can negate the communities and cultural backgrounds that their students are coming from. Still, many charter schools referred to the community or communities that their students come from.

A second use of the term community acknowledged students’ communities but viewed them as lacking. Within this deficit model, a student would gain the knowledge and skills to lead and help transform her community. Distinct from sociocultural theories surrounding cultural competence and communities’ funds of knowledge (outlined in the literature review), the community-improvement paradigm implied that the community was in need of repair, and that the school would sufficiently mold a child to go out into the community and change it for the better. This view of community seemed to align with the neoliberal brand of civics promoted by tolerant academies, centered on personal responsibility. To varying degrees, discourse from the following tolerant academies positioned surrounding communities as deficient in terms of the very qualities that constitute good character in most charter schools.

... students develop and use G.R.I.T. (Good Judgment, Resilience, Integrity, and Teamwork) for personal and community improvement.

Our vision is to develop scholars who have the intellectual capacity, the emotional strength of character and the social capital to be individually successful, and to act as effective change-makers in their communities.

... our graduates will be equipped with the necessary skills to lead fulfilling personal and professional lives, including a developed sense of self, the ability to think in innovative and flexible ways, and the inspiration to make a positive impact on their community.

Though these schools often echoed the language of success and personal responsibility articulated by academies, this discourse was supplemented by nods to diversity, culture, and the arts. It is important to note that the arts were more widely available in tolerant academies that stressed community impact or improvement. Culture took on a different meaning in these schools, often coupled with the arts as a form of enrichment, not altogether extraneous, but in the sidelined service of academic and behavioral goals. Notice how the arts are infused into, rather than the basis of the curriculum. “Traditional subjects” might provide a foundation for the addition of “art and other cultural studies.”

The School will instruct all students using the Core Knowledge curriculum and will supplement all instruction with the classical study of the Greek and Latin languages, as well as history, art and other cultural studies.

... we prepare our scholars through rigorous programs that provide them with a foundation that will allow them to succeed in and graduate from college. Our unique arts-infused curriculum, emphasis on social development and integration of diverse cultural opportunities augments learning and broadens horizons.

Students will participate in a variety of local cultural and educational adventures. Through their exploration of the sights, sounds, and tastes of Brooklyn, they'll develop curiosity and a connection to their community as they develop their own voices and identities.

In the above, culture and the arts were conflated, valued as supplemental to the core curriculum by broadening “horizons” and offering opportunities for “adventure.” Therein lay an intriguing paradox—culture and the arts were deemed inessential but empowering, outside the scope of the core curriculum, but in the service of college and career success. One school made this equation plain: “Academic Excellence + Multi Language + Cultural Heritage = Global Competent Edge.”

Diversity here was more a marketable asset than a pedagogical resource. Like the school that “celebrates the cultural heritage of students and families with a yearly multicultural showcase and potluck dinner,” diversity might be superficially attended to or accommodated, but not so much absorbed and utilized. These mentions of arts and culture confused efforts to make neat delineations between what was truly progressive and what was only marginally progressive. Based on discourse alone, it was nearly impossible to definitively state the role of the arts in a school’s curriculum, much as it was difficult to objectively judge how superficial a cultural “adventure” might be.

Within the academy type, structure provided a crucial way in which to categorize charter schools, and will be briefly discussed here because of the way that network discourses converged on the tenets of the academies and related to the issues of isomorphism and community described previously. A network school is a charter school managed by an organization (CMO) that runs two or more schools. It makes sense that a management organization attempting to run multiple schools would need to coalesce around a discourse that supports standardized goals and procedures and would thus pay less attention to the needs, backgrounds, and experiences of individual students. Network charter schools were far less likely to incorporate students’ cultural backgrounds and communities into their curricula precisely because the variance within and between schools’ surrounding communities inhibited the uniformity and conformity that many networks are intent on imposing. Just as discipline-based preparatory academies are constrained to focus on core curriculum and behavior goals, networks tended to brand themselves as custodians of high academic standards and character development. Such curricular goals contrasted with progressive charter schools, which will be discussed in a later section. I now turn to those charter schools deemed progressive, whose discourse stands in sharp contrast to academies.

Discourse in progressive charter schools. According to Carpenter:

[Progressive] schools subscribe to educational philosophies and/or practices aligned with ‘progressivism,’ which places a premium on individual development. Learning is approached holistically and includes paying attention to students’ emotional, spiritual, physical, social, and intellectual needs. Classroom activities are often student-centered, hands-on, project-based, and cooperative in nature (2008, p. 99).

Carpenter (2008) went on to state that progressive schools may include a range of orientations, from “ethnocentric to Montessori to environmentally focused charters,” and related to me that

arts-focused schools would also be considered progressive (Carpenter, personal communication, January 3, 2015). Whereas tolerant academies keep progressive features at the margins, charter schools that put progressive features at the center were simply referred to as progressive charter schools (see Figure 3 below).

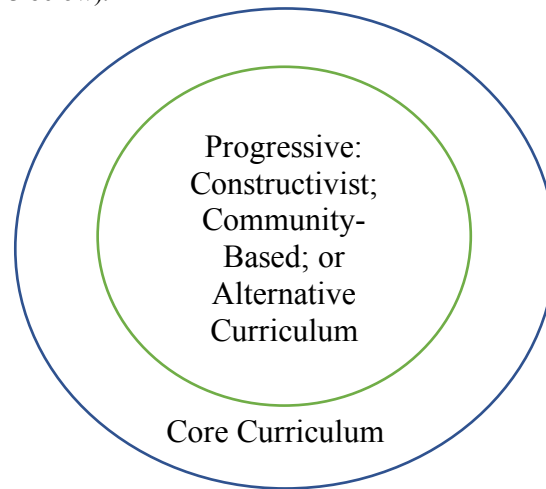


Figure 3 Curriculum Orientation of Progressive Charter Schools

Culture, Community, and the Arts in Progressive Charter Schools

Unlike academies, many progressive charter schools mentioned arts instruction in their missions and made arts part of the core curriculum. Arts proficiency was vital, elevated to the status of core subjects, and likely woven into the daily, interdisciplinary curriculum, rather than simply enriching or augmenting.

[Our] mission is to provide an exemplary, K-12 standards-based arts education program that promotes superior scholarship and strong cultural arts proficiency.

Our school provides students with a sophisticated core curriculum in English Language Arts, mathematics, the sciences, social studies, art, music, technology and physical education. We incorporate Hebrew language instruction across the curriculum through a partial immersion proficiency model.

Our program of performance-based instruction in choral singing will guide students through the development of creative and critical thinking and learning skills that they will learn to apply to daily living and the core academic subject areas.

[Our school] will prepare its students to achieve high academic levels in the four core academic subject areas and music, to communicate effectively in verbal, mathematical and musical languages, and to apply critical thinking processes and ethical standards to learning, living and problem solving.

A truly progressive school would not just pay homage to “critical thinking,” or “civics,” nor would it view the arts as less important; a truly progressive school should embody the spirit of democracy, acknowledging students for who they are while seeking to create environments where children can meaningfully participate in art-making processes on their own terms. While John Dewey would not advocate abandoning traditional subjects or methods, he, along with sociocultural theorists and culturally-relevant pedagogues, would probably argue that conceptions of community and culture are central to a teacher’s understanding of her students, and that this understanding is integral to the development of the curriculum.

From this theoretical perspective, it was only natural that keywords like community and culture wound up becoming major fault lines for progressivism. Only a few charter schools departed from the normalized discourse and positioned their students' communities and/or cultural backgrounds as resources. But it is important to acknowledge their work resisting the conformity of charter school discourse.

All subtypes of progressive schools, not only attended to the surrounding community and appreciated diversity explicitly, but emerged from the community through partnerships and mutual support. One particular sub-type of progressive school can be called community-based/social justice focus progressive charter schools. In these schools, cultures of “community, collaboration, and cooperation,” were made “nurturing, caring, and supportive by enlisting family support.”

Progressive charter schools also acknowledged culture as an object of study or a resource that their students brought to the classroom, providing “opportunities for cross-cultural enrichment... [and] community service,” “reflect[ing] the abundant socioeconomic, racial and cultural diversity of its surroundings,” or “teach[ing] students and their families to work successfully together across differences.” Notice how these schools articulated a more comprehensive, broad, and humanistic code of ethics; how communities and families in the discourse below were involved, engaged, embraced, and integrated; and how service learning provided a vital connection between school and community:

[Our] Charter School serves the communities of West Harlem by providing students in grades K through 8 with an education that is rigorous, inquiry-based, and that teaches students and their families to work successfully together across differences in language, culture, economic background, age, and nationality.

We focus on educating the whole child with a proven approach that combines a model core academic curriculum with strong programs in the visual arts, music and dance.... Our program is tailored to each student and designed to raise each individual's academic achievement levels as well as cultural knowledge—and social conscience.... We hold Harambee daily, providing an opportunity for teachers and students to create a positive community and to deal with problem-solving and conflict resolution. This opportunity extends beyond our school building. We focus on strengthening the relationships between home and school, family and faculty, neighborhood leaders and our administration. The result... a community of learners that is informed, creative and confident, capable of succeeding in highly-rated middle and high schools – and in life. Won't you join us?

[Our mission] is based on the conviction that a change in the destiny of a single individual can lead to a change in the destiny of a community, nation, and ultimately humankind. Its mission as a K-12 school is to foster educated, responsible, humanistic young leaders who will through their own personal growth spark a renaissance in New York. Its graduates will be global citizens with an abiding respect for peace, human rights, the environment, and sustainable development. With these goals in mind, [we] built a culture of community, cooperation, and collaboration.... Traditional subjects such as math, science, language arts and social studies are related to the study of the geography, history, economics, culture, and people of New York. Rooted in this study of their communities, students engage in community involvement activities and work on individual and small group projects to prepare them for the work of the 21st century. Since the arts are so central to New York, students take classes in dance, music, fine arts, chorus, and drama.

The mission of [our] Charter Schools is to create community-based public schools that reflect the abundant socioeconomic, racial and cultural diversity of their surroundings. Our schools exemplify an intellectually challenging, experiential learning environment that develops each student's abilities, confidence, and sense of responsibility for themselves and their

community. In this spirit, we work conscientiously to build strong communities both within and outside the classroom.

Even in some instances where the school was discursively positioned as community, the central focus was not on personal character and success, but rather, about engaging the world:

... a small learning community founded on the principle that children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning. Our students raise questions about the world around them, engage with a wide range of materials, and learn through their interactions with each other and all of the adults in the school community.

... a rigorous K-8 learning community where learning is embedded in meaningful real world context, where children are deliberately taught to see the connections between school and the world.

... a diverse, caring and nurturing learning community that fosters high academic achievement and the development of ethical character for elementary and middle school students. An enriched curriculum and dynamic partnerships between the school, families and community enable all students to excel.

... a safe and caring community where ethics, service, and social justice are the principles that inform every aspect of school life; where teachers lead and collaborate with students in a culture of rigorous academics and mutual respect; where analytical thinking and creativity are prized over learning by repetition; where children become individuals of integrity, insight, autonomy – and socially productive citizens, workers, leaders.

Some of these progressive schools likely enlisted parents to help enforce behavioral codes of conduct—the above examples show that charter schools that conceptualized their school community as something more than prescriptive were not necessarily precluded from articulating a school mission around the same standards of success that defined academies. But the sentiments surrounding community in the above were palpably more progressive, both pedagogically and politically. Pedagogically, the above schools presented a vision of an actively engaged student, making meaningful connections with the outside world. Politically, these schools sought to involve and engage communities through service and social justice.

Many of the above mission statements overlapped with related subtypes of progressive charter schools, such as those oriented around language and culture, that put certain linguistic and cultural practices at the center of their curriculum while also integrating students' communities. Carpenter (2008) defines this subtype as “ethnocentric,” with schools that coalesce around a specific community, such as the school that integrated the study of “Spanish.... world culture.... arts and music.”

The founders and Board of Trustees have set these goals for the school: Rigorous academic curriculum Spanish beginning in Kindergarten. Integrated study of world culture. Integrated study of history of ideas. Arts & music integrated in curriculum. Individualized learning plans.... We are committed to an educational philosophy based on inquiry, active and experiential learning, and social justice.... [Our] Charter School is located in the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in the United States. We celebrate this by integrating the cultural richness of our community with the lessons of the classroom and the governance of the school. All members of the [our] community—students, teachers, and administration—are expected to reflect on the nature and quality of their work and interactions, and to strive to reach their full potential as learners and as citizens.

The mission of [our] Charter School is to develop bilingual, biliterate global citizens who will be the leaders of tomorrow.... Teaching students the foundations of respect and responsibility, first for themselves, and then for their community. Providing students with

opportunities for cross-cultural enrichment. Providing students with opportunities for community service. Educating students with a global perspective using critical thinking and resources from other cultures and countries.

This rich and innovative curriculum will be enhanced by art, music, technology and physical education, all of which will incorporate Hebrew language instruction, using a partial immersion proficiency model. Students... will develop a strong sense of social and civic responsibility through the integration of community service and service learning into their classroom studies.

Our mission is to provide an exceptional educational solution through an integrated educational design with high expectations, extensive academic and social-emotional support, and a high level of family and community engagement. [Our school] was born out of a desire to honor [Taíno] heritage and embrace the power of multilingual literacy and reading skills for success and leadership... [and] has a singular focus that integrates families, school staff, and community members all invested and united in building a community focused on achievement.

Note how these community-based charter schools heaped praise on the contexts that shaped their students' out-of-school lives and included participatory action and engagement with surrounding communities.

Besides community-based/social justice focus schools, progressive schools were further categorized by subtype based on their pedagogy and curricular focus. Constructivist schools were pedagogically progressive in that they focused on the whole child through inquiry, discovery or project-based learning and tended to acknowledge the importance of collaboration and teamwork. This constructivist type was related to schools that implement curricula with an alternative focus, and use a particular theme or subject to permeate the academic goals.

As we have seen above, progressive charter schools also have alternative curricular foci. In the above, culture/language focused progressive schools and arts-based progressive schools (two of which focused on music) were considered. Similarly, environmental progressive schools use the environmental sciences as a lens to explore multiple aspects of the curriculum, engaging students with a “green culture.” Finally, in examining mission statements there was at least one progressive charter school focusing on STEM and one with a target population of students with disabilities.

In reality, schools lie on a spectrum of progressivism. Some classrooms and some moments will be more student-centered than others, different themes and subjects will infuse the broader curriculum to varying degrees. It was deemed important to distinguish between a school that makes alternative features central to its mission, and one that places these features in service of something else because of the ways that music relates to broader curricular issues. There is a freedom—which lends itself to acts of movement, creativity, improvisation, and public displays of vulnerability—that is surely hampered or denied when strict codes of character are in place. If music and arts teachers must enact the core curriculum and behavior models that proved so prominent in the discourse of academies, what does that do to the music instruction? The next section details access to early childhood music instruction by charter school type.

Quantitative Analysis of Charter School Music by Type

Using parameters established by the discourse analysis in the preceding section, all 146 NYC charter schools serving K-3 in the 2014-15 school year were divided into types and sub-types based on their mission statements. Tables 1 and 2, below, show the breakdown of NYC charter schools by type and subtype. As indicated above, the broad grouping schema exhibits two main types: academy and progressive.

Table 1. Typology and Breakdown of NYC K-3 Charter Schools, 2014-15.

Academies (73%)	#	%	Progressive (27%)	#	%
Discipline-Based Preparatory Academies	64	60%	Community-Based / Social Justice Focus	17	44%
Tolerant Academies	43	40%	Constructivist Pedagogy	5	13%
			Alternative Curricular Focus	17	43%
TOTAL	107	100%		39	100%

Table 2. Subtypes of Tolerant Academies and Progressive Charter Schools with Alternative Curricular Focus, 2014-15.

Subtypes of Tolerant Academies:	#	%	Subtypes of Progressive Alternative Curricular Focus:	#	%
Arts-Infused	8	19%	Arts-Focused	6	35%
Civics-Oriented	23	53%	Culture/Language	7	41%
Community-Oriented	8	19%	Environment	2	12%
Constructivist Pedagogy	4	9%	STEM	1	6%
			Target Population: SPED	1	6%
TOTAL	43	100%		17	100%

Table 1 shows that the majority of K-3 charter schools in NYC (73%, or 107 out of the total 146 charter schools) could be defined as academies, more traditional in their pedagogical approach, and that a majority of these academies (60%) were discipline-based. This finding provides stark contrast to the typologies created by Carpenter (2008), which classified a plurality of schools as progressive. Of the 107 schools classified as academies in this study, 64 (60% of the 107 academies and 44% of the 146 total) were deemed discipline-based preparatory academies. The remaining 41 schools were deemed tolerant academies. Within tolerant academies, charter schools emphasizing civics made up the majority (53%).

The progressive type of charter schools only accounted for 27% of all charter schools. Progressive charter schools that emphasized community and social justice were more numerous, closely followed by progressive charter schools that had an alternative curricular focus. The following figure streamlines the above data and presents the three most prevalent types/subtypes in a pie chart.

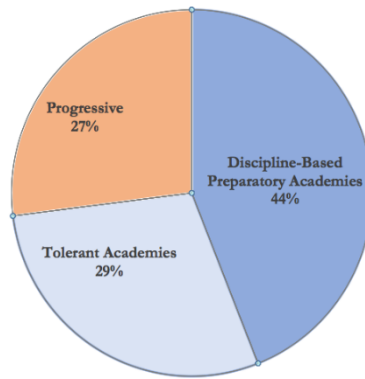


Figure 4 Main K-3 Charter School Types in NYC, 2014-15

Note that discipline-based preparatory academies accounted for a plurality of charter schools serving K-3 in 2014-15, and that the remaining charter schools were split relatively evenly between tolerant academies and progressive schools. Charter schools in the sample (n = 125) approximated the above proportions (40% were discipline-based preparatory academies, 30% were tolerant academies, and 30% were progressive).

In the ensuing analysis, the presence of music education in different types of charter schools was assessed for the 125-school sample (data on music instruction was not available for 21 CS)^{vi}. As previously reported, 87 of these 125 schools (70%) reported having music instruction. Table 3 shows the presence of music within each charter school type.

Table 3. Presence of Music Education in K-3 in Charter Schools by Type, 2014-15.

Charter School Type		Schools with Music (n = 87)		Schools without Music (n = 38)	
		#	%	#	%
Academies	n = 88	55	63%	33	38%
Discipline-Based Preparatory Academies	n = 50	22	44%	28	56%
Tolerant Academies	n = 38	33	87%	5	13%
Subtypes of Tolerant Academies:					
→ Arts-Infused	n = 8	6	75%	2	25%
→ Civics-Oriented	n = 20	17	85%	3	15%
→ Community-Oriented	n = 7	7	100%	0	0%
→ Constructivist Pedagogy	n = 3	3	100%	0	0%
Progressive Charter Schools	n = 37	32	86%	5	14%
Community-Based / Social Justice Focus	n = 16	14	88%	2	13%
Constructivist Pedagogy	n = 5	3	60%	2	40%
Alternative Curricular Focus:	n = 16	15	94%	1	6%
Subtypes of Alt. Curric. Focus:					
→ Arts-Focused	n = 6	6	100%	0	0%
→ Culture/Language	n = 7	6	86%	1	14%
→ Environment	n = 2	2	100%	0	0%
→ STEM	n = 1	1	100%	0	0%
TOTAL	n = 125	87	70%	38	30%

Of the 88 schools that were categorized as academies, 55 (63%) were found to have music, while 33 (38%) did not have any sustained music instruction. The prevalence of music in academies (63%) approached the norm for charter schools overall (70%), but paled in comparison to the 86% of progressive charter schools that were found to have music, and the 85% of traditional public schools that reported music instruction. The prevalence of music instruction in academies was almost entirely depressed by a specific subtype, the discipline-based preparatory academies.

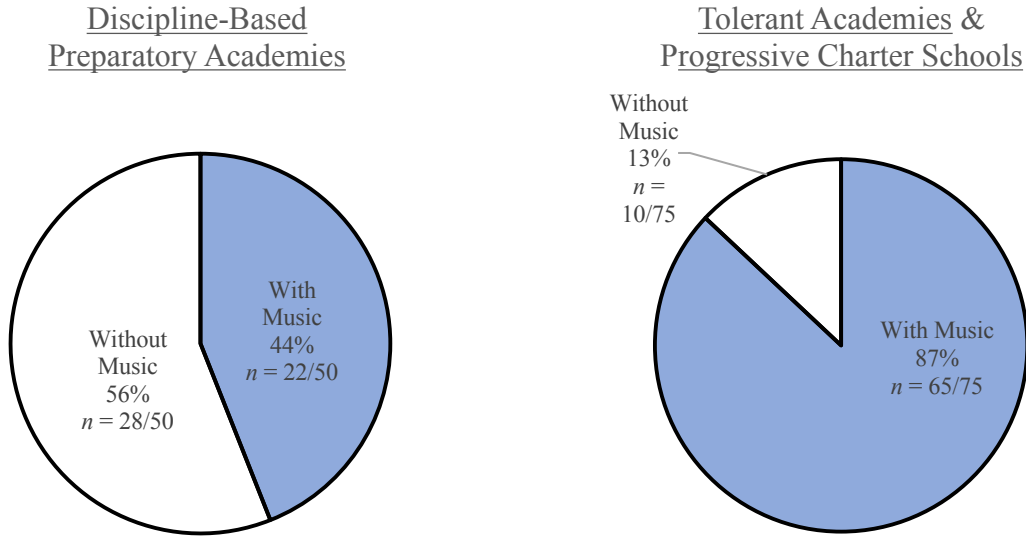


Figure 5 Prevalence of Music in Sampled CS by Type, 2014-15

Of the 50 sampled charter schools defined as discipline-based preparatory academies, only 22 (44%) were found to have music, making them almost half as likely to have music as progressive charter schools (86%), tolerant academies (87%), and traditional public schools (85%). This finding was significant because discipline-based preparatory academies represented almost half of all K-3 charter schools in 2014-15, and because the isomorphic tendencies associated with charter school growth and discourse make it likely that this type of charter school will be increasingly prevalent.

There was significant overlap between discipline-based preparatory academies and network affiliation. Forty-two of the 50 discipline-based preparatory academies in the sample were network affiliated, and most of these schools were associated with three large-scale networks (34 schools run by CMOs operating more than four K-3 schools in the City). Even when discounting the largest network (n = 17), of the remaining 33 discipline-based preparatory academies in the sample, only 17 (52%) had K-3 music, significantly less than both charter schools in the aggregate (70%), and tolerant academies (87%). Table 4, below, shows the presence of music in the six largest charter schools networks serving K-3 and lists their type.

Table 4. Prevalence of K-3 Music in Sampled Network Charter Schools, 2014-15.

Largest Charter School Networks (> 4 schools)	Charter School Type	% of Sampled Network Schools with Music	Sampled Network Schools % of Sample	<i>n</i> Schools Not Responding to Survey
Largest Network	Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy	29% (<i>n</i> = 5/17)	14%	7
Second Largest	Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy	43% (<i>n</i> = 3/7)	6%	2
Third Largest	Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy	0% (<i>n</i> = 0/7)	6%	0
Fourth Largest	Tolerant Academy	67% (<i>n</i> = 4/6)	5%	0
Fifth Largest	Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy	100% (<i>n</i> = 3/3)	2%	2
Fifth Largest	Tolerant Academy	100% (<i>n</i> = 3/3)	2%	2

When attempting to access basic information about music education from the City's most prolific network, consisting of 24 elementary charter schools, seven schools denied my request outright, and only five of the 17 responding schools (30%) reported having a music program for K-3. It is important to make note of this reticence. Some administrators at this network answered only the first question (and for fear of breaking protocol did not proceed), and others refused to answer any questions, referring me to the network headquarters. Network headquarters was repeatedly unwilling to provide data on basic information regarding the presence or absence of music programs. That the City's largest charter school network refused multiple requests for data and was generally less receptive to my requests for research was troubling and noteworthy, if understandable—the lack of transparency evinced by such caginess suggested an unwillingness to be held accountable to certain standards, at least when approached by a researcher. Despite the network's consistently high academic achievement, rational efforts to protect its image seemed to supersede the very ideals of transparency and accountability that charter schools have been assumed to uphold. Data were not just harder to collect from this one network, though.

Networks and academies in general were less likely to present data. Whereas only one progressive school (of 39 total) did not provide data for this study, 13 discipline-based preparatory academies (of 63), and six tolerant academies (of 44) did not present data. I noticed a trend: the more progressive a school, the more likely administrators were up front about their music curriculum.

The lower incidence of music among academies may have created a non-response bias. Academies, especially discipline-based preparatory academies, were generally less transparent about their music curricular practices, a bad omen for those who believe that charter schools assure transparency and accountability. The depressed data yield held true even when discounting the outsize effect of the largest network.

In the second largest network, consisting of nine schools that each published their own unique mission statements, only three out of seven reporting schools (43%) had a music program. The third largest network, situated in the Bronx, adopted E.D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge curriculum and was comprised of seven schools, none of which reported having a music program, with only three offering any arts at all. The schools in this network that reported arts programming conceded that these arts classes were not part of the regular curriculum, they were only offered as afterschool clubs, or during the six-week span at the end of the year after tests had been administered. These data show that the trend in charter school expansion towards large networks and discipline-based preparatory academies might be concomitant to a lower incidence of music. Although music education should be a valued component of any early childhood curriculum, networks and discipline-based preparatory academies seem intent on other priorities during the early elementary years. For the networks that offered a more progressive approach and fell into the category of tolerant academy, music was provided at a rate comparable to progressive charter schools.

Despite the meaningful discursive differences that emerged between progressive schools and tolerant academies, there was no significant difference in the provision of music education between the two. This similarity is perhaps an indication of how impossible it is to pinpoint "progressive education," but also implies—a need for further refinement of the typology—perhaps tolerant academies and progressive charter schools are more similar than the above typology would suggest. The comparability of incidence of music in progressive schools and tolerant academies was an indication that access to music was not different for schools that assert any progressive orientation, regardless of the extent to which they made progressive features central to the core mission—33 of the 38 (87%) charter schools defined as tolerant academies, and 32 of the 37 (86%) schools defined as progressive provided music instruction (see Table 3). Charter school type did correlate with the absence of music in the more extreme cases of the discipline-based preparatory academies, where curricula were more circumscribed, but charter school type did not appear to affect music access for any other type of schools.

Nor did subtype seem to correlate with music access. Looking at the schools that responded in the negative to having a music program, aside from networks and discipline-based preparatory academies, there were no noteworthy deviations from the norms of music incidence. In fact, the prevalence of music in tolerant academies and progressive charter schools (87%) resembled the statistics for low-poverty traditional public schools. Of the five tolerant academies and five progressive schools that reported not having a music program, school administrators were quick to mention other arts programming, the presence of music in prior years, plans to have music in the future, integration of music and drama in performing arts classes, interdisciplinary integration of the arts during the school day, or extended day programs that provided arts enrichment opportunities to students.

Conclusion

With its large sample and comprehensive, streamlined typology, this study has filled in some of the gaps of extant research; the above analysis presented a framework for understanding charter school differences, and a clearer picture of what type of charter school is more likely to lack music: discipline-based preparatory academies. This finding should be viewed with some caution, since a few charter schools without music were still expanding, and expecting to add music. More consequentially, this finding cautions us to consider the direction of the charter school movement in NYC, and fret the fact that the most lauded type of charter school—"no excuses" discipline-based preparatory academies, accounting for a plurality—offer significantly less music than traditional public schools and other types of charter schools.

One of the presumed benefits of charter schools is that with greater accountability they will "allocate scarce resources away from management functions and into the classroom, and spur innovation..." (Fabricant & Fine, 2012, p. 10). Resources are especially scarce in the arts, which are usually the first programs to be cut when budgetary restrictions are put into place and when

curricula narrow for the sake of high-stakes tests. If charter schools perform better in terms of fiscal management, and are free to innovate curriculum, it follows that they would likely spring up from the community and provide more music and arts to their students. However, this has not proven to be the case.

This study calls for further research into the reasons that charter schools focused on core curriculum, especially larger networks, might be less likely to include music education. New York State requires education in all four arts domains for every child and must hold charter schools accountable to this legal mandate. In addition, researchers must continue to interrogate classroom practices and join teachers in reimagining music instruction that is not beholden to narrow conceptions of curriculum that prescribe character as obedient. As currently constituted, charter schools are bound to provide music and arts education that align with their rigid structures. However, we must insist that charter schools offer robust arts programming that gives students the opportunity to hope, dream, think, and expressive themselves in critical and creative ways.

Appendix A

- 1) Does your school have a music program?
- 2) Is there a designated music teacher for grades K-3?
- 3) Is this teacher certified to teach music?
- 4) Are there any other arts featured in your school (visual arts, dance, drama)?
- 5) Is there anything you would like to add about the music program in your school?

*In addition, survey respondents were asked to forward the researcher's contact information to music teachers who might be willing to participate in the qualitative phase of the study.

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Biography

Andrew Aprile is an early childhood music educator and a doctoral lecturer in the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at Queens College, City University of New York. Dr. Aprile's preschool music teaching and work as an early childhood teacher educator and researcher coalesce around values of cultural responsiveness and social justice, applying, advocating, and defending play-based, arts-rich, developmentally appropriate pedagogies as a means to tap into children's nascent sense of joy and empathy, so vital in the first years of schooling.

ⁱ The researcher used a basic script introducing self and school affiliation and then read the questions from the survey questionnaire (see Appendix A).

ⁱⁱ Carpenter's 2005 report was funded by the Fordham Institute and included a forward by Chester Finn.

ⁱⁱⁱ General/conversion schools (traditional public schools that have adopted charter status) no longer exist in New York City—the NYCDOE has not authorized a conversion since 2002; rather, traditional public schools are closed, to be replaced by an independent charter school. Nor do alternative delivery (virtual) schools exist in the City. Vocational schools are for higher grades, even if a few elementary charter schools claim to train students for “successful” careers in the 21st century global economy, with higher income careers as entrepreneurs, doctors, or lawyers. And open enrollment nor targeted student population adequately describe the admissions requirements for charter schools in the City (lottery and district priority, with only one school targeting a special needs population).

^{iv} For instance, the two largest networks made reference to progressive pedagogy on their websites, but they were deemed discipline-based preparatory academies because of the overarching theme of their discourses. Whether referencing project-based inquiry in its approach (as is the case with the elementary schools that are part of the largest network), or a constructivist math class in one of the nine mission statements of the second largest network, the network overviews stressed college readiness and character education and nothing else.

^v It should be noted that many families are attracted to this idea of a school. They don't want to become the subjects of the curriculum; rather, they gravitate towards academies because they want their children to go to a school where their children are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and cultural capital to become successful workers in the global economy. Only a few elementary charter schools spoke directly to this idea in their mission statements, but as shown, human capital theory was embedded within the logic of the academies—college readiness seemed less about the joy and wonder of a college education than the higher-paying job that one would presumably get after attending and completing college.

^{vi} The two CS that reported sustained music instruction (but not a music program) are included in this analysis.