Spring 2023 Colorado Department of Education Schools of Choice Unit Equity Convening

Equity Convening

Access to School Choice: Transportation Innovation



White Paper prepared in collaboration with the Colorado League of Charter Schools

Acknowledgments

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EQUITY AND CHOICE

Introduction and Abstract

Within a policy structure that embraces choice, ensuring all children have access to high quality education is fundamental to creating greater equity in our schools. Evidence indicates that when all students have adequate access to their school of choice, we will see the academic wellbeing of all children improve (Garcia & Weiss, 2018). Thus, better access to transportation is a key strategy that needs to be promoted. The current reality across the nation, and in Colorado, is that many students do not have appropriate access to school transportation, hindering their ability to attend school (Edwards, 2022; Litman, 2018; Samelson, 2018). Students from traditionally underserved communities face the harshest consequences due to the lack of transportation. One study from the Urban Institute showed that school-provided transportation increased access to high quality schools for Black and Latinx students by nearly forty percentage points (Cordes & Schwartz, 2018). It is also well documented that access to transportation decreases student absenteeism across grade levels (Edwards, 2022; Mireles-Rios, Rios, & Reyes; 2020; Stein & Grigg, 2018). Finally, the reduction of absences and the increase in access to high quality education has a tremendous impact on student wellbeing, including higher academic performance (Garcia & Weiss, 2018), fewer chronic illness and mental health conditions (Allen, Diamond-Myrsten, & Rollins, 2018), improved oral health (Ruff, Senthi, & Susser, 2019), less food insecurity (Coughenour et. al. 2021), and a lower dropout or pushout rate (Malika et.al. 2021). With the positive impact of access to transportation and schools of choice; and the negative impacts of school absenteeism, it is imperative that we work to improve the access to transportation for all students, especially those from underserved communities.

Equity Convening:
The Equity Convening design is informed by an Advisory Panel of school, authorizer, and community leaders. This group selects the equity focus for the event. The problem of practice identified for the Spring 2023 Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Schools of Choice (SOC) Equity Convening was that a lack of transportation services creates inequitable access to schools of choice. The CDE SOC Spring 2023 Equity Convening: *Equitable Access to School Choice: Transportation Innovation* assembled research, experts, and practitioners from across the country to highlight promising practices with expanding access to student transportation to and from school. Pre-convening research included two case studies with successful transportation models. The case studies provide a local perspective from Durango, Colorado and a national perspective from New Orleans, Louisiana.

The convening findings are organized into four key strategies charter leaders and authorizers may consider as they work to find transportation solutions. The strategies highlighted can be utilized separately or in combination to create conditions and/or solutions for transportation innovation and access to ensure more equitable schools in Colorado. The white paper provides an overview of each finding as well as the implications for practice.

Four Key Approaches

Inclusive district transportation agreements: Establish collaborative and inclusive partnerships between the charter school(s) and the district to ensure all students have access to their school of choice.	**Change mindsets from "if" to "how":** Make transportation a requirement, not a benefit. When everyone is responsible for ensuring access students and families are better served.
Alternatives to busing: Research ways to transport students beyond the yellow school bus.	**State policy innovations:** Utilize policy and grant programs to fund transportation innovation and efficiency solutions.





Problem of Practice

Schools across the nation have focused on creating greater equity within their curriculum, policies, and offerings over the last couple of decades. This push focuses largely on the happenings inside of the classroom, on decisions around curricular and socio-emotional learning, and disparity in discipline. One area that is often overlooked is transportation. Transportation solutions and innovative approaches have emerged as a vital lever for creating greater equity for all students, especially those living in traditionally underserved communities and education systems. As school choice becomes more prevalent, and more students and families attend higher quality schools further from their homes (Gross, 2019), access to adequate transportation is becoming increasingly more important. The Bureau of Transportation Statistics estimates that a minimum of 20 million students in K-8 live too far to walk or bike to school, with students from low-income communities being disproportionately affected.

In some cases the optimal relationships between public school districts and their charter schools are not realized and may negatively impact access to transportation. Research suggests that tension between public school districts and charter schools may result in limited cooperation and coordination around issues pertaining to educational equity, including transportation services (Lake, Yatsko, Gill, & Opalka, 2017). Unfortunately, it is often students of color or students from traditionally underserved communities that disproportionately feel the negative impacts of strained district-charter relations. In many cases, charter schools operate independently or have different transportation arrangements, leading to fragmented and unequal access to transportation for students. The National Association of Charter School Authorizers reports that over 75% of charter schools do not initially offer transportation services, compared to the vast majority of traditional public schools that provide transportation to students. The lack of transportation options disproportionately affects students from low-income backgrounds who rely on public transportation or school buses for commuting to school. When there is an absence of collaboration between school districts and charter schools it can hamper efforts to ensure equitable access to education and undermine the goal of providing all students with equal opportunities for academic success.

Another problem arises when districts and schools do not see transportation as a fundamental right for students and families. Most states do not require that transportation be accounted for when opening a new school (McShane & Shaw, 2020). As of 2020, 31 states provide some funding or service for transportation of students who attend charter schools. Of those 31, roughly half mandate that transportation funding for charter school students be equivalent to those attending traditional public schools. Changing mindsets from “if” to “how” is a shift in school transportation thinking that enables families that struggle with getting their students to

school greater access. Without commitments to provide transportation, the disparity around access to high quality educational institutions will continue.

While committing to offer transportation is a step towards shifting sentiments and access to school transportation, it is not the only shift that needs to occur. In Colorado, 86% of school districts have reported that they do not currently have enough bus drivers to operate at 100% capacity of mandated routes, let alone add routes for those who have not been traditionally served by school transportation services (Ekbatani, 2022). Research has shown that the shortage of drivers nationwide has impacted the ability of families to access high quality education, and this issue has only been exacerbated since the COVID-19 pandemic (Faheid, 2021). The shortage of bus drivers and the current state policy around how districts can use funding for transportation forces schools to become overly reliant on the availability of a limited work-force (CDL Bus Drivers) to solve the problem of transportation. There are few, if any, mechanisms for innovating current school transportation structures. Finding transportation options beyond the yellow school bus can reduce the strain on current busing systems and find other practical solutions.

Access to transportation is a priority. ”School choice” cannot technically exist without viable, safe, and reliable transportation. Addressing educational equity means ensuring that we have the infrastructure to get all students to high quality schools. That is yet to be a reality and educators continue to look for solutions.



Summary of Activities

The Equity Convening Advisory Panel, in recognizing a correlation between limited transportation options and access to school choice helped identify four key approaches for the convening to focus on as outlined below:

Inclusive district transportation agreements: Establish collaborative and inclusive partnerships between the charter school(s) and the district to ensure all students have access to their school of choice.	**Change mindsets from "if" to "how":** Make transportation a requirement, not a benefit. When everyone is responsible for ensuring access students and families are better served.
Alternatives to busing: Research ways to transport students beyond the yellow school bus.	**State policy innovations:** Utilize policy and grant programs to fund transportation innovation and efficiency solutions.

A summary of how these approaches were integrated into the Equity Convening follows:

Inclusive District Transportation Agreements:

Establish collaborative and inclusive partnerships between the charter school(s) and the district to ensure all students have access to their school of choice.

Durango: A strategy to ensure that all students have access to all schools, both district and charter, in their geographic location is to ensure a strong partnership between the school district and local charters. Demonstrated in the Equity Convening local case study, Durango, a rural community in Colorado shares their approach to establishing a collaborative and inclusive partnership with their local school district. This collaboration resulted in a transportation agreement enabling charter school students to utilize Durango school district buses and be a part of a larger shuttle system.

Before the transportation agreement, the relationship between the district and charters needed to be more cohesive and balanced. This successful partnership resulted from the hard work and vision of the charter and district leaders working in solidarity toward enhancing student outcomes. With the implementation of a new superintendent at the time and a school board

open to exploring new collaborations, leadership united the community. As a result, stronger relationships and sentiments between the two entities emerged.

Establishing Partnership:
The catalyst for the collaboration of charter schools and Durango School district representatives came at the behest of parents seeking viable transportation options. Parents at the charter schools saw district buses pass by their homes and wondered why their children were not provided these same services. The Superintendent at the time, Dan Snowberger, worked with charter school leaders Sean Woytek, Animas High School, Head of School, Shane Voss, Mountain Middle Head of School, and the district transportation department to find a solution. By assessing the current infrastructure, as well as funding, safety, staffing, compliance and liability issues, it was revealed that transportation options could be offered to charter schools without a high cost to the district. Charter schools authorized by the Charter School Institute (CSI) and the district's only district-authorized charter school were granted access to district transportation options.

Overcoming the barriers often associated with providing bus transportation, Durango began to transport children who live within district boundaries and attend a charter school. This agreement allowed families that otherwise would not be able to attend their school of choice a reliable, safe, and viable mode of transportation.

Transportation Agreement:

The transportation agreement was created in large part by the district transportation department. District representatives outlined stipulations that ensured alignment with their current policies and practices. Each year the charter schools would sign the agreement that outlined the bus routes, insurance requirements, liability for any vandalism or damages as well as supervision and discipline expectations of their riders.

A critical component of the Durango agreement was that the district would maximize the usage of existing routes and vehicles. The initial agreement began in 2013 and used a transportation hub system. Charter school students were assigned to the bus route closest to their homes. Students would be routed to the district high school and then transfer to another bus that took them to their charter school. While this meant that charter school students were dropped off last each morning, it did not disrupt the routine of district school students. The high school is located in a central location and was seen as the best location to serve as the transportation hub for students across the district. To ensure this transportation option was manageable, this transportation hub system utilized existing routes and added an additional stop for each bus and driver. As part of the negotiation, the location of the charter schools was determined "reasonably convenient" and in the direction of the bus barn where buses were parked when not in use. The transportation agreement was the first step in building trust between the district and charter community.

Continued Collaboration:

Over the next several years, the parties continued to work together, strengthen community engagement, and shared other successes. In later years the district decided to include the CSI authorized charter schools in the Mill Levy. It was the combination of these forces that led to another charter-district success in 2016 with the passing of the mill levy. The collaboration did not stop there. The district and charter leaders would go on to pass a bond in 2020 recognizing their collaborative work together benefits everyone.

Superintendent Snowberger intentionally spent his first several years building trust and unifying the community. He offered the charter schools access to other district services like school nurses and snow removal. Additionally, he invited charter leaders to district meetings and training. He encouraged the boards of charter schools and Durango's school board to collaborate and engage in cross-board work. From these investments, the charter and district now have instilled a collaborative mindset, and have deepened trust so that all students, regardless of where they go to school are treated equitably.

> "*I didn't want to lead half of the community. I saw all Durango students as our students. I truly believe in choice in our district and competition makes us all better. Being choice friendly improves all of our schools and we want our families to find the right fit for their child*." -Dan Snowberger, Former Durango School District Superintendent

Denver: Denver Public School's Success Express is another example of a transportation system that provides families access to their school of choice. The Success Express is a shuttle system that enables students to hop on the bus at a location near their home and hop off the bus at their school. The circular routes are repeatedly traversed and operate over an extended period each morning and afternoon, running from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. This system is an example of district and charter leaders collaborating and creating a transportation model that is inclusive of all students. The Success Express enables all students to have access to all schools both district and charter in their geographical region.

Both Durango and Denver offer promising practices to increase access to schools of choice. By providing transportation to both traditional and charter schools, families can choose a school model that best meets their child's needs.



Changing Mindsets From "If" to "How":

Make transportation a requirement, not a benefit. When everyone is responsible for ensuring access students and families are better served.

New Orleans: Another strategy to provide access to school choice is to make a deep commitment that all schools will offer transportation. After the destruction of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, New Orleans began recovery efforts. With thousands of families evacuated due to the devastation, local leaders needed to draw families back to the local schools. To entice families, local leaders ensured that all New Orleans schools would be open to all families regardless of the neighborhood in which they lived. The belief that families should have access to school options regardless of their zip code is a shared value across stakeholders. To ensure transportation is provided by each school, the Recovery School District mandated that a transportation plan be included in each charter application. At the time, legislation and Act 91 was used to return all schools to the Orleans Parish School system. As such, New Orleans was able to require transportation of all its schools.

Recovery plan:

The recovery plan included replacing all of the locally controlled public schools with charter schools, and New Orleans became an all charter school district. The resulting charters had autonomy over their unique model. Charter schools ran their daily operations including hiring practices, curriculum choices, and setting a distinct school culture. To support the success of the many charter school models, the district oversees a differentiated funding formula, the enrollment system, transportation requirements, as well as the expulsion process.

Enrollment:

The New Orleans school district oversees the charter school enrollment process. By unifying the schools under one enrollment process, it is streamlined and more efficient. Furthermore, the enrollment system enables the district to keep its promise that all students and families have the same opportunity to choose a school that suits their interests and needs. The centralized system removes barriers that families may face when navigating unique enrollment requirements at each school. While there are certain enrollment priorities for open seats located within a family's geographic zone, for siblings, and for students of closing schools, the enrollment process is seen as equitable, and over 70% of families report that they are satisfied with it. The centralized enrollment process gives families the ability to choose any school in New Orleans for their child.

Transportation:

In regard to transportation, the district and charter schools work together to navigate the many intricacies with transportation compliance, regulatory, and safety measures that are required by the city and state. The district provides resources to support charters in meeting compliance regulations such as training on how to navigate city inspections. Most schools utilize contracted busing services to provide transportation to their families. The district supports the charters by providing sample contracts and lists of vetted vendors. Contracting busing services alleviates the need to purchase bus fleets, but schools are still responsible for meeting regulations, creating bus routes, and ensuring student safety. The district works to support charters with the complexity of running a transportation department without running a centralized busing system. This leaves each charter responsible for coordinating and running its own transportation system.

Up until 2013, transportation was centralized and offered through the district. Charter school leaders preferred having control over their transportation system. School controlled transportation allows for more flexibility to run services that meet their students' needs. Each school has staffing positions devoted to running and overseeing its transportation services. When families have concerns or issues of discipline, safety, or commuter ride times, school staff are more agile and responsive than a district run system.

To that end, New Orleans allows charters to have autonomy over their transportation services. Regardless of who implements transportation systems, providing transportation to all eligible students has a significant impact on each school's budget. After staffing, transportation is the most prominent expense schools face. Schools are estimated to spend approximately $400 per day per route, which adds up to about $2.5 million or $1,000 per student for busing each year. With high transportation costs, schools build their budgets around these costs. Even with this financial burden, charter leaders and New Orleans families continue to value providing school choice with guaranteed transportation. The combination of New Orleans enrollment process and transportation mandate, ensures that families have access to school choice. The district-run enrollment process ends with notifying students where they have been accepted, and providing each school with their student rosters approximately three weeks before school starts. Charter schools are then tasked with creating its bus routes and ensuring any students with unique needs or Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are met. Once students are accepted into a school by the enrollment office, the charters work directly with families to communicate their bus route and/or transportation options. For some students who live across town from their school, this could mean a commute time of more than 2 hours each day. Regardless of commuter ride times, families and charter leaders continue to value a district with many school choice options and the accessibility to each one. The community understands that you might not get your first choice, but the barriers that might keep you from that school are removed.

Alternatives to Busing:

Research ways to transport students beyond the yellow school bus.

Expanding the types of transportation offered beyond the traditional yellow school bus can help alleviate some of the barriers associated with school transportation. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a bus driver shortage, as well as the long standing inefficiency of less than full buses. In addition, bus routes often do not maximize ridership or meet the needs of families that live in rural areas or on the outskirts of town. For these reasons, finding transportation options beyond the traditional school bus is more urgent than ever. Moreover, the increasing number of charter schools that often face budget constraints and limited infrastructure lack the ability to transport students to their schools, resulting in a significant barrier for many families. The need for equitable access to school is forcing many to look for creative and viable solutions.

New Legacy: New Legacy, a charter school in Denver, has researched and employed transportation options beyond the yellow school bus. New Legacy is a small high school for pregnant and parenting teens. The school serves 95 high school students as well as 60 infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Of the students enrolled 86% are students of color; 66% are female, 34% are male, 100% qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and one-third are under-credited when they arrive. In addition, 32% of students qualify as homeless. While teen parent graduation rates are 50% nationally, New Legacy has an 82% graduation rate. New Legacy credits its success to the ways they meet their students' needs. This includes supporting student attendance by working to remove barriers. The school purchased passenger minivans to support students in getting to their extracurricular internships, college classes, and medical appointments. School staff are able to drive the smaller vehicles after completing a two hour training. While there are limitations with the number of students minivans can transport, they utilize them to bring many students and their children to the school each day. Furthermore, the school continues to look at ways to broaden the use of or access to existing options such as providing RTD passes; purchasing additional minivans; utilizing McKinney-Vento funds for their homeless students; and picking up students who travel far distances at central locations like the train stations. New Legacy is also working with the community by asking staff to drive students in their own cars; accessing Non Emergent Medical Transport (NEMT) that is paid for by Medicaid to help with some of their transportation needs during NEMT schedule gaps; creating more robust carpooling systems and/or paying families that are already driving to New Legacy to pick up additional students. Narrowing their focus to provide transportation to the students who have low attendance rates or who are at risk of dropping out, the school is considering operating a

CDE approved mini bus to service certain routes. Although this will not guarantee a ride for every student, it will service those who live in the school's main enrollment zone.

HopSkipDrive: Solutions like HopSkipDrive, which was founded in 2014 by three working moms, is another example of an innovative student transportation solution. The program offers youth ride-share services that operate in a similar fashion to Uber or Lyft. Using the HopSkipDrive platform, families can set up one-time or repeated rides for their children. This personalized approach can be tailored to each family's specific transportation needs. Drivers are vetted to ensure the safety of the children riders. Families receive alerts for each stage of the ride so that caregivers are informed in real time to address any issues that may arise. The organization includes assistance programs for homeless and foster care youth, students with special needs, in addition to serving students in general education programs in both traditional and charter schools. HopSkipDrive partners with over 400 school districts including Jefferson County (JeffCo) Public Schools near Denver, Colorado. Initially the JeffCo partnership began with the bus driver shortage. JeffCo has expanded the partnership to ensure students in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, and students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are transported safely to school each day.

School districts have used funds from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund (ESSER), Governor's Emergency Education Relief fund (GEER) and American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth fund (ARP-HCY) to fund alternative school transportation. HopSkipDrive is considered an alternative transportation solution. This means that districts can partner with them to provide services to address learning loss, or the unique needs of low-income students, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care. In addition, ARP-HCY funds can be used for any of the uses permitted by the McKinney-Vento Act. To partner with HopSkipDrive transportation, staff work with their School Educational Agency (SEAs) to use ESSER, GEER, or ARP-HCY funds to address their transportation needs. Utilizing HopSkipDrive, a company that is expanding the use of current technology, has resulted in a safe, viable, and effective solution for many families and schools.



State Policy Innovations:

Utilize policy and grant programs to fund transportation innovation and efficiency solutions.

A 4 Arizona: For years, Arizona has experienced a significant enrollment shift from traditional schools to schools of choice to where now, 1 in 2 students in Arizona are no longer attending their local school. Unfortunately, low income and educationally disadvantaged students were often not a part of this shift, leaving those families in schools that might not best meet their children's needs. Across the state, families were hungry for choice but did not have access because of the need for transportation. Parents, caregivers, and other advocacy groups expressed their concerns regarding transportation challenges. The legislature was keen to respond and find ways for all families to be empowered to make choices for their child's education. Policy makers and elected officials realized that if families had ways to transport their child, they might choose different options. In addition, rural communities were vocal about their struggles with transporting students to schools of choice. It is within this context that Arizona began to utilize policy and grants to fund districts, charters, non-profits, and local governments to implement K-12 transportation innovation and efficiency solutions. Real transportation reform began in 2021 when the legislature passed H.B. 2898 which included two significant transportation reforms: *In Lieu of Transportation Grants* and *Public Schools Transportation Modernization Grant program*.

State grants:

The In Lieu of Transportation Grants gave public schools permission to provide a portion of their transportation funds to parents and families. The funds could be utilized by families to pay for gas costs transporting children directly to their school of choice, carpools costs, K-12 friendly ride sharing options, or public transit. The amounts granted, disbursement cadence, priority guidelines, funding preference and reporting requirements were decided by the participating local educational agency (LEA) at the local level. Repurposing grant funding to provide money directly to families helped personalize transportation solutions across the state and was particularly helpful to rural families.

The Public Schools Transportation Modernization Grant (TMG) program's goal is to explore efficient, safe, cost-effective, and student appropriate options for transporting K-12 students. The grant also focuses on serving students with diverse needs and on ways to incubate and advance ideas that improve access to reliable transportation for students who attend a district school through open enrollment or for those who attend a public charter school. The goal is to accelerate innovation and efficiency solutions in all systems.

Essentially, the program gives seed money directly to charter schools and asks, “What would it look like if we didn’t do the yellow bus anymore?” The TMG programs encouraged charter leaders and advocacy groups to explore ways to address the barriers associated with transportation. Opening the door to entrepreneurial and innovative thinking resulted in solutions such as enabling educators to drive smaller vehicles to transport students to school and/or sporting events without a CDL, sharing smaller vehicles with churches and other organizations to share bus and driver costs, using high efficiency vehicles, rethinking ways to utilize mass transit, employing micro-transit efforts during designated high demand times (6 a.m. -9 a.m. and 3 p.m. -6 p.m.), and developing the ‘walking bus’ program, just to name a few.

Transportation innovation:

To promote this type of innovation with new and existing programs, the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) selected A for Arizona to serve as the Program Administrator. A for Arizona is a non-profit organization with a focus on leveraging best practices from school principals and the business community to scale approaches that benefit K-12 schools. The Arizona State Legislature appropriated $10 million to ADOA and a $10 million match by Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) to spark transit solutions and support those who want to develop and embrace additional options for better transporting K-12 public school students. In the inaugural grant cycle, 24 grants were awarded to seed the recipients’ transportation solutions. Given the success of the first grant cycle, the State Legislature appropriated an additional $20 million to continue the TMG program in fiscal year 2023. In the second year, 15 public school districts, charter schools, and community collaborations were awarded funding to seed their transportation solutions. A list of each awardee can be found in the 2023 Equity Convening toolkit. Solutions ranged from a small rural majority-minority school district’s desire to replace their old broken down bus with an electric bus, and to a district that spreads out across 4,200 square miles whose current capacity leaves nearly 1,000 students without a seat on a bus. Their solution is to support long-distance travelers with direct-to-parent transportation stipends.

Educating legislative bodies on the barriers created by certain policies increased a shared understanding and promoted new solutions to existing models. In April 2022, State Legislature and former Governor Doug Ducey signed into law SB1630: *Eliminating Barriers to Micro Transit* options. SB1630 gave education providers greater flexibility in utilizing 11-15 passenger vehicles to and from school on a regularly scheduled basis. Those operating the smaller fleets must possess all the safety training requirements prescribed by the Arizona Department of Safety but do not require a CDL which has helped combat the bus driver shortage. SB1630 also provided opportunities for school leaders to collaborate and determine localized and viable solutions. In SB1630, the School Bus Advisory Council was renamed the Student Transportation Advisory Council, and its purpose was expanded to think more broadly about K-12 student transportation needs and to prioritize learning about best practices and innovation in the K-12 transit space. Broadening the purpose to make space for additional voices and input allowed more

stakeholders to advocate for solutions. Adding public charter school representation along with business leaders to the Council was an effort to continue to push the needle on energy-efficient vehicles, optimization technology, and other advancements in the industry.

To date, the Arizona legislature has approved $40 million toward these efforts. While there are still challenges with providing access to all schools, particularly students that are homeless, in foster care, in rural communities, or for those who live in poverty, the programs have made a huge impact by acknowledging that transportation is a barrier and that launching a statewide learning network to look at options beyond the yellow school bus will help move the state toward more equitable solutions.



Implications for Practice

The findings provide four key approaches charter leaders and authorizers can consider as they work to find transportation solutions. The strategies highlighted can be utilized separately or in combination to create conditions and/or solutions for transportation innovation and access to ensure more equitable schools in Colorado.

Inclusive district transportation agreements: Establish collaborative and inclusive partnerships between the charter school(s) and the district to ensure all students have access to their school of choice.	**Change mindsets from "if" to "how":** Make transportation a requirement, not a benefit. When everyone is responsible for ensuring access students and families are better served.
Alternatives to busing: Research ways to transport students beyond the yellow school bus.	**State policy innovations:** Utilize policy and grant programs to fund transportation innovation and efficiency solutions.

Inclusive District Transportation Agreements

Durango & Denver Public Schools, CO

- Establish collaborative and inclusive partnerships between the charter school(s) and the district to ensure all students have access to their school of choice.

Takeaways	Implications for Practice
Partner for mutual gain	• Create strong lines of communication between charter leaders, district superintendent, and cabinet • Determine common interests around public funds • Engage in cross-board collaboration to deepen community ties and mutual understanding of common struggles
Assess current infrastructure	• Audit current systems to understand limitations and potential for innovation • Think creatively about ways to maximize current operational practices • Leverage current staffing and busing routes to manage potential costs
Power of collaborative mindset	• Find ways to collaborate on funding campaigns with parents and community organizers • Take steps to build trust and understanding between charters and district • Mobilize parents' voices to advocate for specific needs of charter families



Changing Mindsets from "if" to "How"

New Orleans, LA

- Make a non-negotiable commitment to transportation. When everyone assumes responsibility for ensuring student access to transportation, students and families are better served.

Takeaways	Implications for Practice
Access to every school	• Codify transportation as a required element of every charter application and budget • Provide a unified transportation toolkit for all charters that includes common efficiencies, compliance, and safety precautions • Develop a cadre of busing vendor options for charter transportation
School controlled transportation	• Allow schools flexibility to develop their own transportation routes, routines, and response policies • Build budgets around transportation costs to ensure adequate sustainable funding • Create dedicated staffing positions that oversee transportation operations so that they run efficiently and effectively
Unified enrollment system	• Centralize processes to ensure all families have equal access to a school of their choice • Educate parents on their transportation rights for accessing their school of choice • Ensure all families know about different transportation options at their preferred schools of choice

NOLA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EVERY CHILD. EVERY SCHOOL. EVERY DAY.

Alternatives to Busing

HopSkipDrive & New Legacy Charter

- Research ways to transport students beyond the yellow school bus.

Takeaways	Implications for Practice
Utilize technology and existing transportation options	• Dedicate time and money to research alternative transportation options beyond the traditional school bus • Tap into existing options to broaden use and access, such as carpooling services, non-CDL transportation options, and expanded access to public transit • Work with SEAs to appropriate state and federal relief funding to address the needs of specific student populations
Personalize and small group transportation solutions	• Review school roster to determine students with transportation needs and address those first • Leverage micro solutions such as carpooling and/or ride-sharing • Leverage community services and families in the creation of new carpool models and family provided transportation



State Policy Innovations

A for Arizona

- Utilize policy and grant programs to fund transportation innovation and efficiency solutions

Takeaways	Implications for Practice
Leverage existing grants	• Expand ways current grants can be used to directly innovate transportation models • Repurpose funding to provide money directly to families to help with personalized transportation solutions • Educate charter leaders and parent groups on the unique and unconventional ways grants can be utilized to specifically address transportation barriers
Promote innovation	• Leverage local entrepreneurial thinking around innovation to current transportation models • Establish a network for sharing learnings, upcoming innovations, and shared problem solving for those who are granted funding • Work with legislative bodies to create a shared understanding of the current landscape and promote new solution models • Activate local community advocacy groups, PTA's, and other stakeholders to lobby legislature for innovative changes to policy and other barriers
Utilize stakeholder expertise and experiences	• Provide opportunity for school leaders to collaborate and determine localized and viable solutions • Create spaces for guardians, caregivers, and students to voice needs and take part in creating and advocating for solutions



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