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CPI: Evaluate "quasi-military" model of charter schools

They allege that they use intensive disciplinary measures.

By CENTER OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Published Wednesday, April 11, 2018







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The high level of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, including Secretary Julia Keleher and its principal advisors, participated in an online seminar in March in which they were introduced to the benefits of a type of charter school that has been implemented in the United States. United, and that is focused on a dynamic that has been described by some experts as quasi-military.

The seminar on charter schools in the United States, entitled "Charter Schools and the Achievement Gap" was conducted by Sarah Cohodes and was organized by Keleher's Chief Evaluation Officer, Nicolás Riveros, confirmed to Yolanda Investigative Journalism Center Rosaly, press spokesman for the Department of Education (DE), who specified that the seminar had no cost.









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"I participated in an online seminar with the Department of Education of Puerto Rico on March 12. Secretary Julia Keleher was there, along with members of her staff. I did not receive any compensation, "Cohodes told the Center for Investigative Journalism (CPI).

On February 1, Cohodes published a study that concluded that schools that have implemented a model known in the United States as No Excuses Charter Schools performed better than other models of charter schools. The Cohodes study is titled just like the seminar that offered to the ED staff: "Charter Schools and the Achievement Gap" (charter schools and the achievement gap).

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The "No Excuses Charter Schools" model, which Cohodes encourages to be adopted by both charter schools and public schools to reduce the achievement gap, is based, as its name suggests, on intensive disciplinary measures.

"The ethnographic and critical descriptions of these schools describe a highly regulated environment in which students are strongly controlled and degraded or even humiliated by small behavioral errors ... In what seems a surprising omission, the (Cohodes) report makes no mention of these practices despite the growing concern expressed in recent years by civil rights advocates, researchers and the media, "says a review of the Cohodes study, published on Tuesday by the National Education Policy Center (NEPC)), a non-profit organization located in the School of Education of the University of Colorado.

"In reference to the recent NEPC report, I welcome the academic debate on research in charter schools. The authors of the NEPC report and I came to similar conclusions about what the research tells us about charter schools, but they have different interpretations of policy recommendations. I encourage everyone to read the research, summarized both in my article in Future of Children and in the NEPC report, and reach their own conclusion, "said Cohodes, assistant professor of educational policy and economics at Teachers College of the University. of Columbia.

The NEPC review was written by A. Chris Torres, professor in the Department of Educational Administration at Michigan State University, and Joanne W. Golann, professor of public policy and education at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee.

The authors of the critical review point out that although the Cohodes study clearly captures and describes the technical merits and disadvantages of existing charter school studies, it fails to recognize the limits and potential problems of the expansion of "No Excuses Charter Schools" "In addition, there is no evidence that the disciplinary practices of this modality are essential for the success of these schools.

One of the techniques used by "No Excuses Charter Schools" is to eliminate any minimal signs of disorder to prevent the occurrence of major "infractions." For this, teachers are encouraged to constantly monitor student behavior, which, if not expected, may face severe consequences. In addition, they use strategies such as "do it again" and "100 percent", which emphasize the repetition of procedures until the teacher perceives that the student meets the behavioral expectations.

WEATHER FORECAST



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Four senators are proposing a law that allows special prosecutors to request judicial review if they are dismissed. Special prosecutors (such as Robert Mueller) would have 10 days to appeal their dismissal in a panel formed by three federal judges. Are you in favor of this law?

\bigcirc	Yes of course. I would give a good compromise.
0	No, special prosecutors should never be dismissed.
\bigcirc	No. The President should be able to dismiss special prosecutors
\bigcirc	Other
\bigcirc	No opinion

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The NEPC review details that in an elementary school in New Orleans, where 93% of the students were African-American, silence was required in the school bus, in morning and evening assemblies, when leaving and entering the buildings, in the last 10 minutes of lunch and, if they did not comply, they would have to keep silent throughout the lunch of the next day. In a middle school in Philadelphia, students have "merit and demerit" blank cards that if teachers fill in six infractions the result is the student's detention for three hours.

"It's an almost military model," observed Ana María García, director of the Instituto Nueva Escuela, on the "No Excuses Charter Schools" model. Garcia is the driving force of the Montessori teaching model in public schools in Puerto Rico, of which the DE recently announced that it intends to close 15 schools.

"What you discover when you dig is that (the models of Charter Schools Without Excuses) has been used to justify practices with children who are mistreat. That model is not good for any child neither here nor there. At Montessori we believe in the discipline that is created through the work environment and that arises from the child from the inside out, "said Garcia in an interview with the CPI.

The law that makes it possible to create charter schools in Puerto Rico establishes that entities that administer a charter will be subject to uniform evaluation and accountability requirements for all ED schools. However, a charter school "may establish additional measures to the Department's requirements for the evaluation of a student," says the Puerto Rico Education Reform Law. Therefore, a charter school in Puerto Rico could adopt the parameters of the "No Excuses Charter Schools" with the authorization of the DE.

"The law leaves the door open for many things that are going to be defined through regulations. In states where those regulations have been left wide open, measures that are punitive are given. Here, who is going to watch, who is going to monitor those behaviors? "Garcia asked.

Samuel Abrams, a professor at Columbia University and author of the book Education and the Commercial Mindset, where he dedicates two chapters to the "No Excuses Charter Schools", commented that one of the problems of the Cohodes study is that it is based only on math scores and reading, and does not address the social and emotional status of students.

"There are many problems with the social and emotional development of students in this type of 'No Excuses' environment. For many children this is not healthy ... There is evidence that they are not good for social and emotional development, "Abrams said in an interview with the CPI.

"The study (of Cohodes) looks at a small number of charter schools that have high scores in math and reading. The criticism (of the National Education Center Policy) points out three things: one, which is a very small sample. Two, that reading and math scores do not solve all the problems of education. Three, because it is a small sample, we have to bear in mind that scaling this up and replicating it in an effective way is very difficult to do, because it depends a lot on extra money, on teachers who work really hard. These schools tend to lose teachers, because they have to work long hours and they do not last long, they have a high number of wear and lose them. And third, these schools work for a small number of students, "observed Abrams.

The professor explained that the National Education Center Policy publishes criticisms about research that has not gone through the peer review process. "For

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an academic publication to be considered bona fide it must be reviewed through a formal process by two anonymous individuals. In that sense, the study (of Cohodes) is not a valid study. For the study to be complete, it must do what the review says, (be reviewed by peers) and if it had, it would have very different conclusions. I would not have had a recommendation to expand 'Charter Schools without Excuses', "Abrams said.

A better way to evaluate "No Excuses Charter Schools," the teacher said, is to see if students and teachers stay in the program and if students learn more than reading and math.

"In Houston, it failed, and that is what I say in my book. Sarah Cohodes says that experiment, called Apollo 20, was a success. But it was not a success. The only thing that worked in that experiment was the extra tutoring in math after school. But that has also worked in other schools that are public, that is not a product of 'No Excuses Charter Schools'. We should have extra tutoring and extra assistance, but that is not what defines the philosophy of charter schools No Excuses, it is not what defines their environment. So the extra tutorials in Houston worked, but the tutorials also worked in regular public schools in Chicago, where they had the same effect, "Abrams noted.

Some of the non-profit organizations that manage networks of charter schools that use the "No Excuses" model are KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program), Achievement First, Uncommon Schools, Success Academies, and YES Prep. These organizations generally share a common vision and instructional model that is based on high academic and behavioral expectations, longer school days and school years, frequent feedback from teachers to give feedback, intensive tutoring, and the recurrent use of student data. evaluation of students.

Torres and Golann, authors of the critical review, acknowledge that the Cohodes report is useful to help the general public understand the nuances of advanced statistical designs and the studies used to measure the impact of charter schools on academic performance. However, they criticize the "leap from the understanding of the state of research to the recommendation of policies and programs".

"The report leaves the reader without a sufficient understanding of the 'No Excuses' model that he recommends replicating, particularly the disciplinary approach. Policymakers, practitioners and researchers must do much more to understand and address the potential costs of the 'No Excuses' model before thinking about expanding these practices, whether in the charter sector or in the traditional school sector ", The researchers add.

The invitation to the online seminar offered by Cohodes in Puerto Rico, which was shared with the CPI by the DE press spokesperson, highlights that the teacher's work "focuses on the use of quantitative methods to make an impact evaluation of educational policies and programs." The invitation adds that: "Through the webinar you will be able to see first-hand the results of the most recent research on the effectiveness of charter schools. It is a unique opportunity to be informed and understand what the specialized literature says. They will be able to interact with a professional who knows very well the results observed in different jurisdictions and who has a weighted position on the subject".

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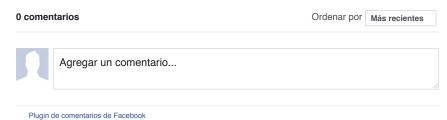
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