

## Background

- School quality is also a topic that has been of relevance amongst scholars.<sup>1</sup>
- School quality is shaped by funding.<sup>3</sup>
- Funding is oftentimes dictated by standardized test scores.<sup>4</sup>
- Scholars have dictated the merits of standardized test scores, but the general consensus is that they are not an adequate marker of school quality.<sup>2</sup>
- Using standardized test scores to measure school quality exacerbates segregation by race and class, as students of lower socioeconomic status are less likely to do well on testing.<sup>5</sup>
- Black American, Latino, and Native American students, as well as students from some Asian groups, disproportionately fail state or local high school graduation exams.<sup>6</sup>
- Private philanthropy has been recognized as influential across multiple disciplines, and has been recognized as an important source of funding.<sup>7</sup>
- Recently, people have been considering the role of private philanthropy in the education sector, and specifically its role in funding schools.<sup>8</sup>
- Foundations currently play an integral role in shaping education, and education policy.
- **This project is specifically analyzing the role of Charter Management Organizations, or CMOs.**
- CMOs are nonprofit organizations operating multiple charter schools.

## Objectives

Code qualitative data from interviews with CMO leaders and funders.  
Using this data:  
Determine how resources get allocated to different programs in the education sector.  
Determine the role of philanthropy, and specifically charter management organizations, in the education landscape.

## Methods

1. Interviews were provided weekly. The interviews were transcribed and recorded.
2. The interviews were both listened to and read.
3. Themes were noted with the first few interviews, and became codes when they were established as relevant across interviews.
4. With each new interview presented, the information was either included as further justification for an old code, or used for a new code.
5. After going through all the available interviews, the codes were consolidated and justified in a memo.

## Coding Process

Codes I noted immediately were:

- the goal appears to be forming a perfect match between donors and schools and began coding for this across interviews.
- gaining funding is largely based on connections and effective networking.
- There is a priority in having clearly stated and defined successes.
- Funders and schools appear to be looking for specific indicators.
- Schools are seeking donors that match their mission

After looking at more interviews, I found that:

- it was apparent that there were specific indicators that both sides look for.
  - maintaining these relationships between funders/CMO leaders and schools was an entirely separate code.
  - Funders were very focused on evaluating school outcomes. This indicator was mentioned so many times that I made it a separate code as well.
  - Failure to include successes can lead to being left out on money.
  - Finding schools that match their mission requires a clearly defined mission and target population.
  - What schools state their target is can be influenced by the political climate.
    - However, this ended up not being mentioned by many interviewees.
- I attempted to code for the accessibility of high status foundations, but it was not mentioned by many interviewees.  
I attempted to code for anti charter school sentiment, but it was also not mentioned by many interviewees.

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## Results

**The goal appears to be forming a perfect match between donors and schools.**

- Both sides do extensive research to ensure that this match exists, oftentimes through the internet.

**There are specific indicators that both sides look for.**

- Indicators that schools oftentimes look at are whether or not an organization supports their type of school.
- They look at "organizational health indicators": governance, leadership, financial health, programs that align with their mission

**Funders are very focused on evaluating school outcomes.**

- Those with the most compelling stories and data points had the most success with obtaining funding

- These outcomes include score evaluation—specifically, standardized test score evaluation

**Schools are seeking donors that match their mission.**

- Schools are not just seeking organizations that will support them, but organizations that are similar to theirs.

**There must be a defined mission and target population from donors.**

- Interviewees identified specific programs or student goals they look for in donors. Examples include college alignment or alternate pathways.

**Finding and gaining funding is based on connections and effective networking.**

- The importance of deepening relationships and asking for support from existing funders was emphasized by several interviewees.

- **Interviewees outlined ways to maintain these relationships, which I coded for separately.** One such way emphasized is maintaining an actual, human relationship.

**Schools must have clearly stated and defined successes.**

- Interviewees state that this is shown through word of mouth or through standardized test scores.

**Failure to include these successes can lead to being left out of money.**

- Those who are less able to produce compelling data points are left out
  - Public neighborhood schools
  - Large charters
  - Low income schools
  - New schools

## Preliminary Conclusions

Determine how resources get allocated to different programs in the education sector.

- It appears that the allocation of resources is largely based on institutions having clear missions and proven success in achieving these missions.
  - Looking for proven success excludes newer schools that don't have a track record.
  - This success appears to be defined by standardized testing, which could potentially be exclusive of lower income, and specifically predominantly Black or Latino, schools based on the background information.

Determine the role of philanthropy, and specifically charter management organizations, in the education landscape.

- Philanthropy appears to perpetuate already existing inequalities by rewarding schools that do well with more funding, and not funding schools that are performing "poorly", but might need the funding.

## Contact

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