



FOCUS **ANNUAL REPORT** **2015**

Friends of Choice in Urban Schools

FOCUS supports the diverse set of public charter schools in Washington, DC by advocating for and strengthening autonomy, equity, and quality.



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Greetings from the Board Chair

Dear FOCUS Supporters:

2015 was another year of growth for DC's public charter school movement and for FOCUS. After a nation-wide search, FOCUS welcomed Irene Holtzman as its second-ever Executive Director. The board and I are thrilled with the energy and passion Irene brings to the job and look forward to continuing to support her and the FOCUS staff in the crucial work they do advocating for and supporting DC's public charter schools.

In the 2015-2016 school year, over 39,000 students attended a public charter school in the District, comprising nearly 45 percent of all public school students. However, even with the successes of the public charter school movement, as evidenced both by the long waitlists and the academic results of the charter schools, many challenges remain. I am proud to continue supporting FOCUS in its advocacy work to ensure DC's public charter schools have the autonomy, facilities, and funding they need to continue providing a high quality education to their students. I know that the schools also rely on the range of support FOCUS offers schools at every stage of development, from founding groups looking for more information about starting a charter school to high-performing schools thinking about how to serve more students.

I am also proud that for the second year in a row the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools ranked Washington, DC as the healthiest charter school movement in the nation. This accomplishment wouldn't be possible without the efforts of FOCUS, a range of charter school stakeholders and supporters, and, of course, the charter school leaders, staff, and board members.

We deeply appreciate your continued support and your engagement in the work that this organization does, and will continue to do, for the growing number of charter schools in Washington, DC.

Thank You,



Karl Jentoft, Board Chair



Executive Director's Report

Dear Friends:

For the District of Columbia's public charter school movement, 2015 was a year that brought together our past, present, and future. Our past efforts and successes ensured another year of growth and progress in public school choice. We are now entering our 20th year of public charter schools in the District, and see a bright future for our charter school movement. The promise of quality and choice made two decades ago to District families stands strong, while steady progress continues to address barriers to equity and capacity.

In 2015 FOCUS continued to play a key role in collaborating with and educating decision-makers on an intricate web of legislation and oversight. Working with our partners and supporters, FOCUS helped drive outcomes that will best serve the District's charter school movement both now and in the future. Much has been done to consolidate support for charter schools, but a great deal remains to be achieved in improving the environment for the charter school movement in Washington, DC.

Our internal emphasis this year was on building the essential services and partnerships necessary to amplify our efficacy and impact. We welcomed three new schools to the charter school sector, strengthened our advocacy platform, emphasized targeted communications and media relations, and built capacity in serving our schools, leaders, and stakeholders. We also completed a strategic plan, which will guide our work for the next three years (see page 20).

Our commitment remains to improve the quality and foster the growth of the District of Columbia's public charter schools.

We are deeply appreciative of your support in this effort as we look to the future.

Sincerely,



Irene Holtzman, Executive Director



Sonia Gutierrez, President and Founder of Carlos Rosario International PCS, inducted into the DC Charter Hall of Fame by Maquita Alexander, FOCUS Board Member, and Irene Holtzman, FOCUS Executive Director.

Advocacy

FOCUS continued its role as the chief advocate for all 62 DC public charter schools in 2015. FOCUS's expertise in analysis and policymaking enabled collaborative work across the political spectrum that educated key elected officials about Washington, DC's public charter school sector.

Some key measures in 2015 that demonstrate the strength of our advocacy work include:

- FOCUS had a significant media presence in newspapers and news stations across the city, including the *Washington Post*. Over 20 editorials and op-ed pieces, supporting charter school platforms on funding, facilities, and autonomy, helped to shape public opinion and enhance debate on key issues in the charter school community.
- A lawsuit, initiated by FOCUS, led the District's Deputy Mayor of Education to review the process for how Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are funded in the city. A number of changes that will positively affect DC's charter schools will be enacted for the 2016-2017 school year (though substantial inequities remain and the lawsuit continues).
- No less than eight pieces of legislation were altered to be more hospitable to charter schools or buried due to FOCUS's efforts with the Council of the Whole and the Council Education Committee.
- FOCUS continued to facilitate positive relationships between Councilmembers and the charter school sector, in part by organizing a private breakfast for charter school leaders to discuss critical concerns and issues with Education Committee Chairman Grosso, as well as a meet and greet with new Councilmembers.
- By organizing testimonies before Council committees, building coalitions to carry the voice of stakeholders, and providing public comment during hearings, FOCUS' advocacy ensured that the charter school community was represented and engaged.



School Services

FOCUS provides a range of services to DC's public charter schools, from startup through sustainability.

Highlights from 2015 include:

- Worked intensively with all three of the new charter schools approved to open in 2016, and with three of the four new schools that opened in 2015.
- Through a partnership with Education Pioneers, provided three charter schools with Data Analyst Fellows to develop and improve data processes.
- Placed 17 data interns in charter schools to support school-defined data projects.
- Provided data consulting to 11 individual charter schools, supporting strategy, systems, and assessment data.
- Hosted the 6th annual DC Data Summit, attended by hundreds of DC teachers and administrators representing over half of all DC LEAs.
- Organized monthly data workshops and bootcamps featuring data leaders from the charter community sharing best practices, which were attended by 34 LEAs.



Data

The sector data housed at FOCUS has been used by the PCSB and countless public charter school leaders, shown in testimony before the DC Council, delivered to the Office of the Mayor, and requested by a multitude of public and private institutions dedicated to school reform.



62 Charter schools

114 Campuses



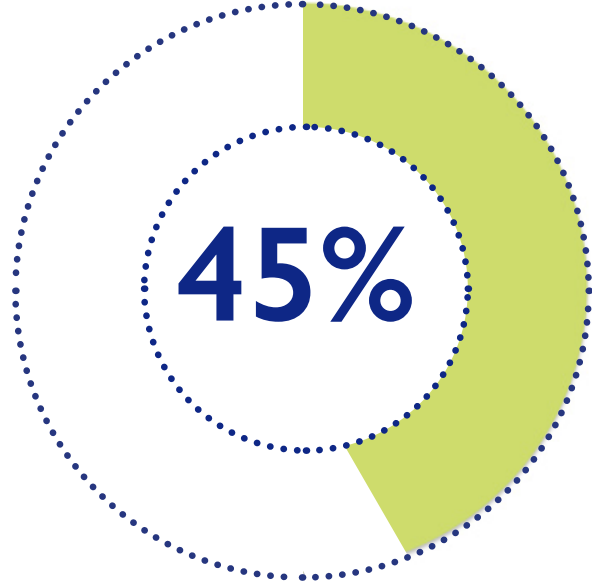
Students enrolled in a charter

39,900



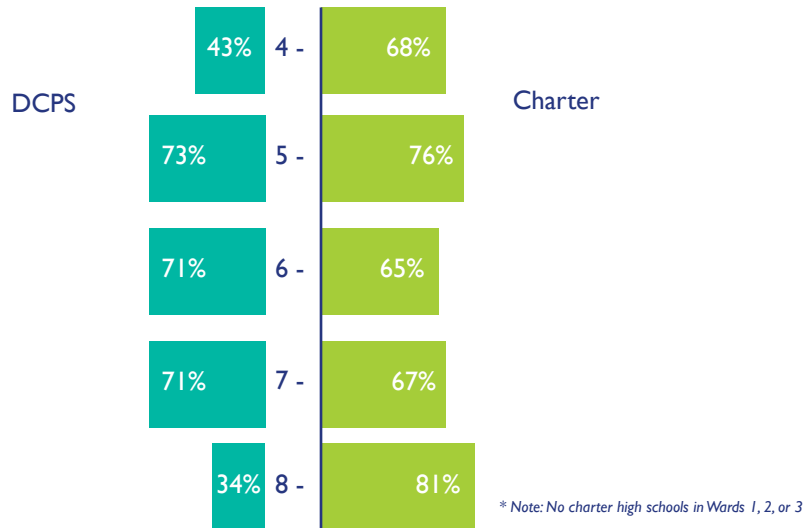
Students enrolled in DCPS

48,400

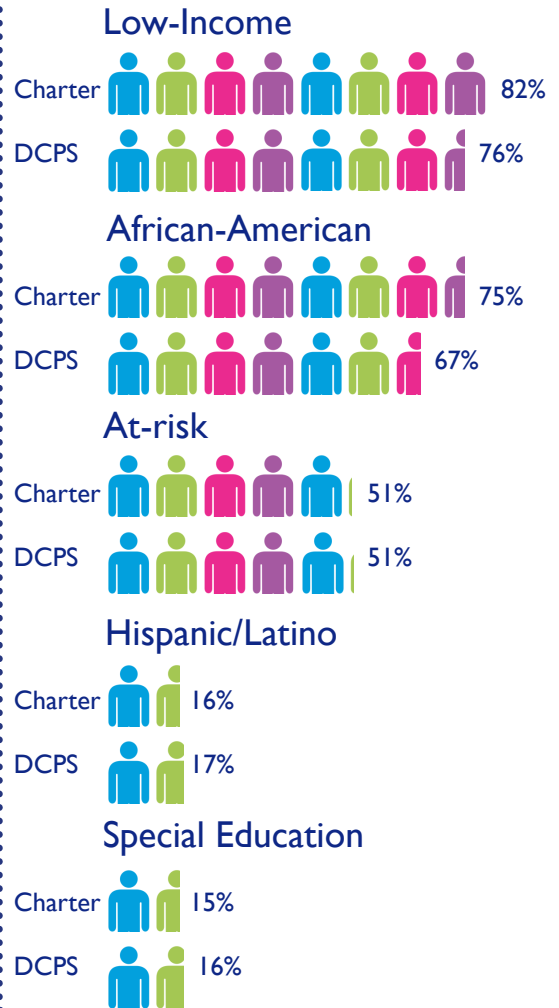


Percent of DC public school students enrolled in a charter

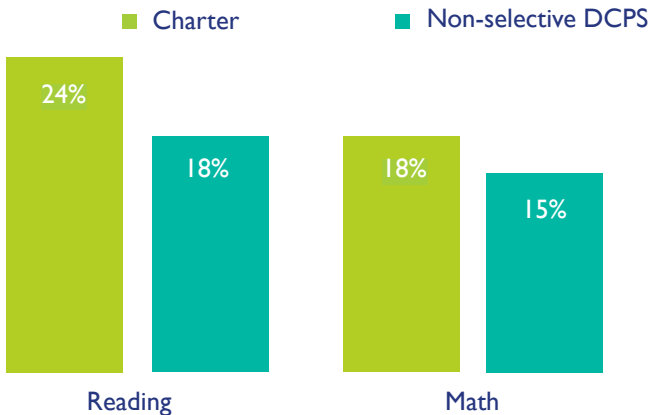
Graduation Rates by Ward *



Demographics



Students Scoring College and Career Ready on PARCC



To view more information on student performance in both charter and traditional schools visit our online Data Center at www.focusdc.org/data

Real Estate Council

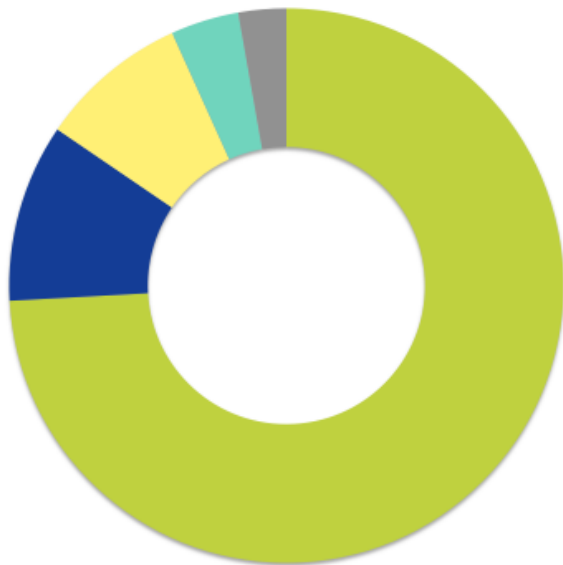
FOCUS's Real Estate Council provides crucial information to DC's public charter schools about the development, construction, and maintenance of school facilities.

Membership dues from the Real Estate Council members in 2015 helped support a half-day facilities summit, where school leaders, operations staff, and board members came together to learn more about facilities projects, as well as an online facilities resource center. The online resource center includes a facilities vendor directory as well as a database of facilities-related RFPs and contracts that charter school staff can access to help inform their own facilities projects.

Building Hope
CSDC
Forrester Construction Company
GCS Inc.
Hord Coplan Macht
Jair Lynch Development Partners
Klein Hornig, LLP
MCN Build
Orrick
Shinberg,Levinas Architects
TenSquare
Turner Construction Company

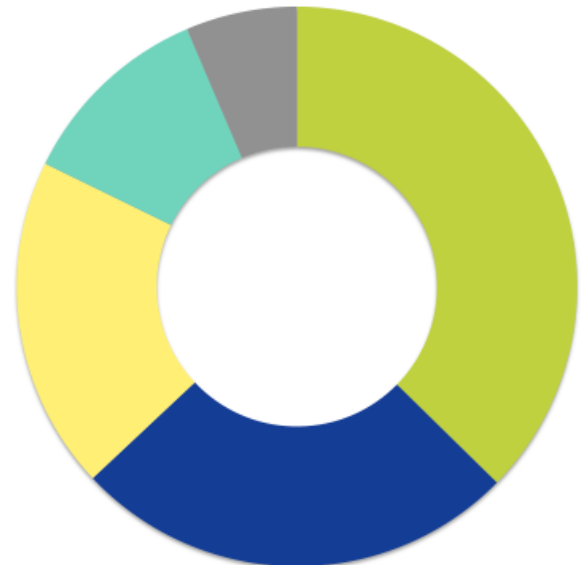
Financial Report

Income



- 74% Grants
- 10% Charter School Payments
- 9% Earned Income
- 4% Corporate Contributions
- 3% Individual Contributions

Expenses



- 37% School Quality
- 26% Advocacy
- 19% Administration
- 11% Development
- 6% Communications

2015 FOCUS Supporters

Chairman's Circle (\$10,000+)

C. Boyden Gray

Board Circle (\$5,000 - \$9,999)

Louisa Duemling

Robert and Arlene Kogod

Patron's Circle (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

James & Esthy Adler

Malcolm & Pamela Peabody

Heidi and John Theoharis

Choice Circle (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Dana T. Ackerly

Cara and Sekou Biddle

James and Margaret Costan

Terry and Lindsay Eakin

Elinor Farquhar

Stephen A. and Diana Goldberg

Judith D. Jones

Karl Jentoft and Anne Herr

Stephen Kurzman and Patricia Goldman

Don and Gail McGovern

C. Braxton Moncure

Lawrence and Melanie Nussdorf

Mary E. Procter and Bill Matuszeski

Charter Circle (\$1 - \$999)

John and Nancy Barnum

Nora Leake Cameron

Enrique Cruz

Walter and Isabel Cutler

Ann Drummie

Nancy McElroy Folger

Anita Herrick

John Hoskinson and Ana Fabregas

Bryce Jacobs

Sharon Kozey

Max Levasseur

Dan Magder

William and Louisa Newlin

Thomas O'Hara

Nancy Gray Pyne

Deborah Rozell

Richard Rymland

Christopher Siddall

Julieta Simmons

Ahna Smith

Nelson Smith

Alice Stewart

Eileen Shields West

Howard D. Zuckerman

2015 FOCUS Supporters

Foundation Giving

The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
CityBridge Foundation
Clark Charitable Foundation
The deLaski Family Foundation
Fidelity Foundation
The Ludwig Family Foundation
NewSchools Venture Fund
The Diana Davis Spencer Foundation
The Walton Family Foundation



Corporate Donors

American Federation for Children
Ampersand Education
The Black Alliance for Educational Options
Building Hope
Capital One
The Center For Education Reform
Charter School Essentials
Charter Schools Development Corporation
City First Bank of DC
EdOps
Education Reform Now
Forrester Construction Company
GCS-SIGAL, LLC
Hord Coplan Macht, Inc.
HotChalk
J.E. Rice Insurance Agency Inc.
Jair Lynch Development Partners
Klein Hornig, LLP
Littler Mendelson, PC
The Marcus Firm, PLLC
MCN Build
The Meltzer Group
Miller & Long
Shinberg,Levinas Architects
TenSquare
Turner Construction Company
United Bank

Support from Charter Schools

Washington, DC public charter schools have a vested interest in the advocacy work that FOCUS provides. The below-listed schools provided financial support to FOCUS through our 2015 voluntary school payment (VSP) program.

Achievement Preparatory Academy
AppleTree Early Learning
BASIS Washington DC
Bridges
Briya
Capital City
Carlos Rosario International
Center City
Cesar Chavez
The Children's Guild
Community College Prep Academy
Creative Minds International
DC Bilingual
DC International
DC Prep
DC Scholars
E.L. Haynes
Eagle Academy
Early Childhood Academy
Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom
Friendship
Harmony DC
Hope Community
Howard University Middle School
IDEA
Ingenuity Prep
Inspired Teaching Demonstration



KIPP DC
LAMB
LAYC Career Academy
Lee Montessori
Maya Angelou
Meridian
Monument Academy
Mundo Verde Bilingual
National Collegiate Preparatory
The Next Step
Paul
Potomac Lighthouse
Roots
Richard Wright
SEED
Sela
Somerset
St. Coletta Special Education
Thurgood Marshall Academy
Two Rivers
Washington Global
Washington Latin
Washington Mathematics, Science and Technology
Washington Yu Ying
William E. Doar Jr.
YouthBuild

FOCUS Gala 2016

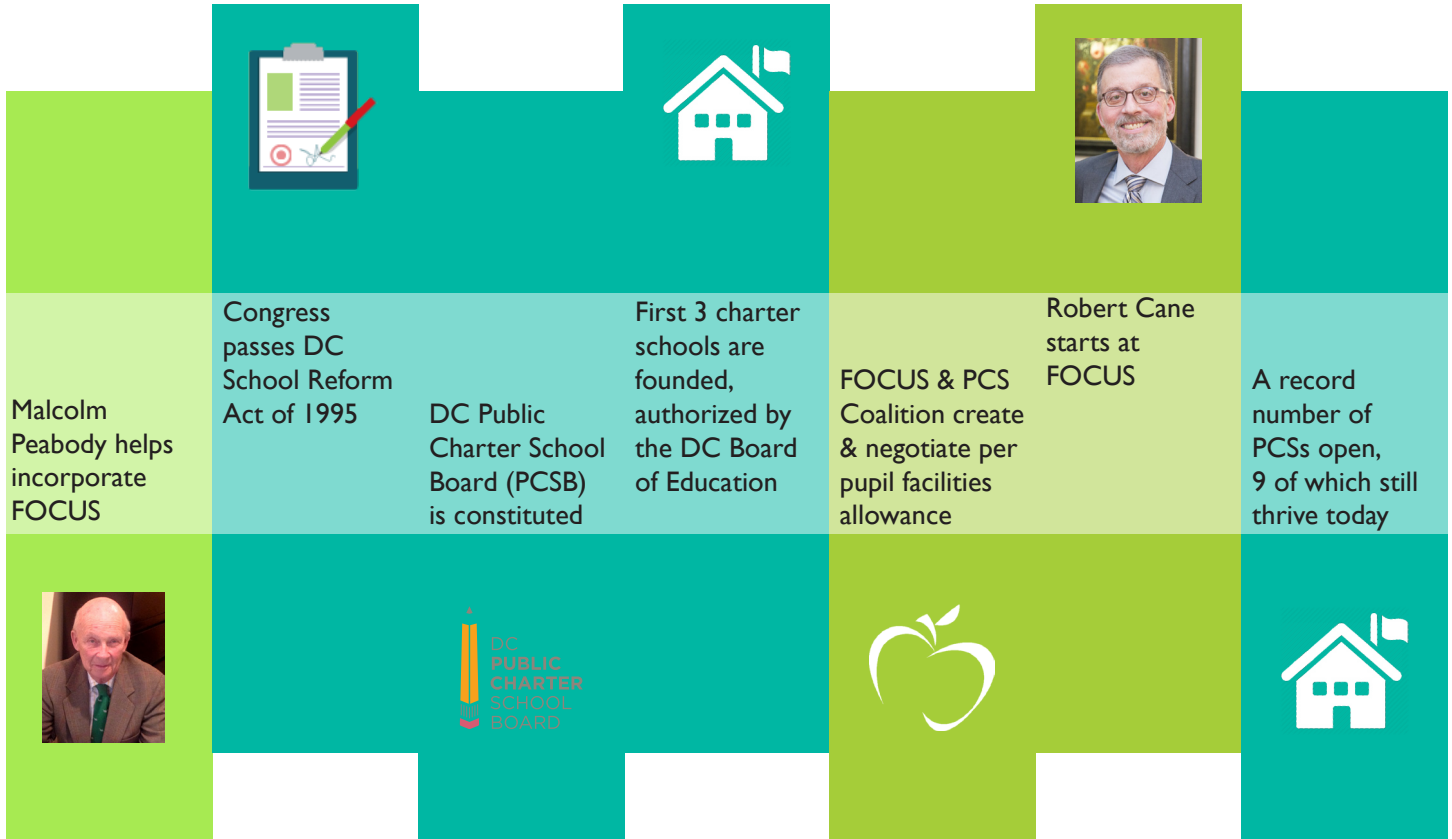


Thanks to everyone who attended FOCUS's Gala and celebrated the 20th anniversary of the public charter school movement in DC.

For more photos:
www.focusdc.org/gala-album



Years of Innovative Choice



Malcolm Peabody helps incorporate FOCUS

Congress passes DC School Reform Act of 1995

DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) is constituted

First 3 charter schools are founded, authorized by the DC Board of Education

FOCUS & PCS Coalition create & negotiate per pupil facilities allowance

Robert Cane starts at FOCUS

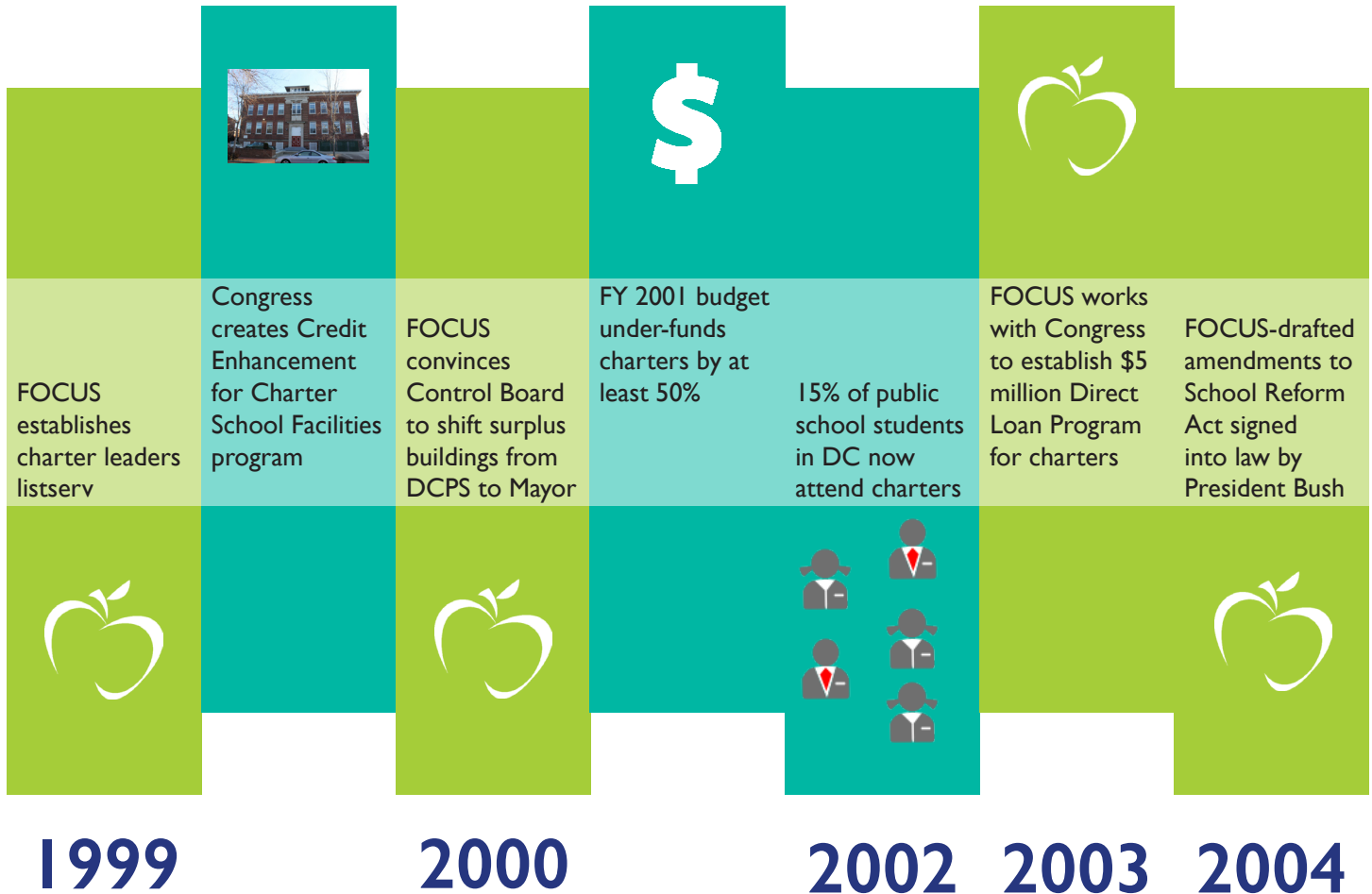
A record number of PCSs open, 9 of which still thrive today



1996

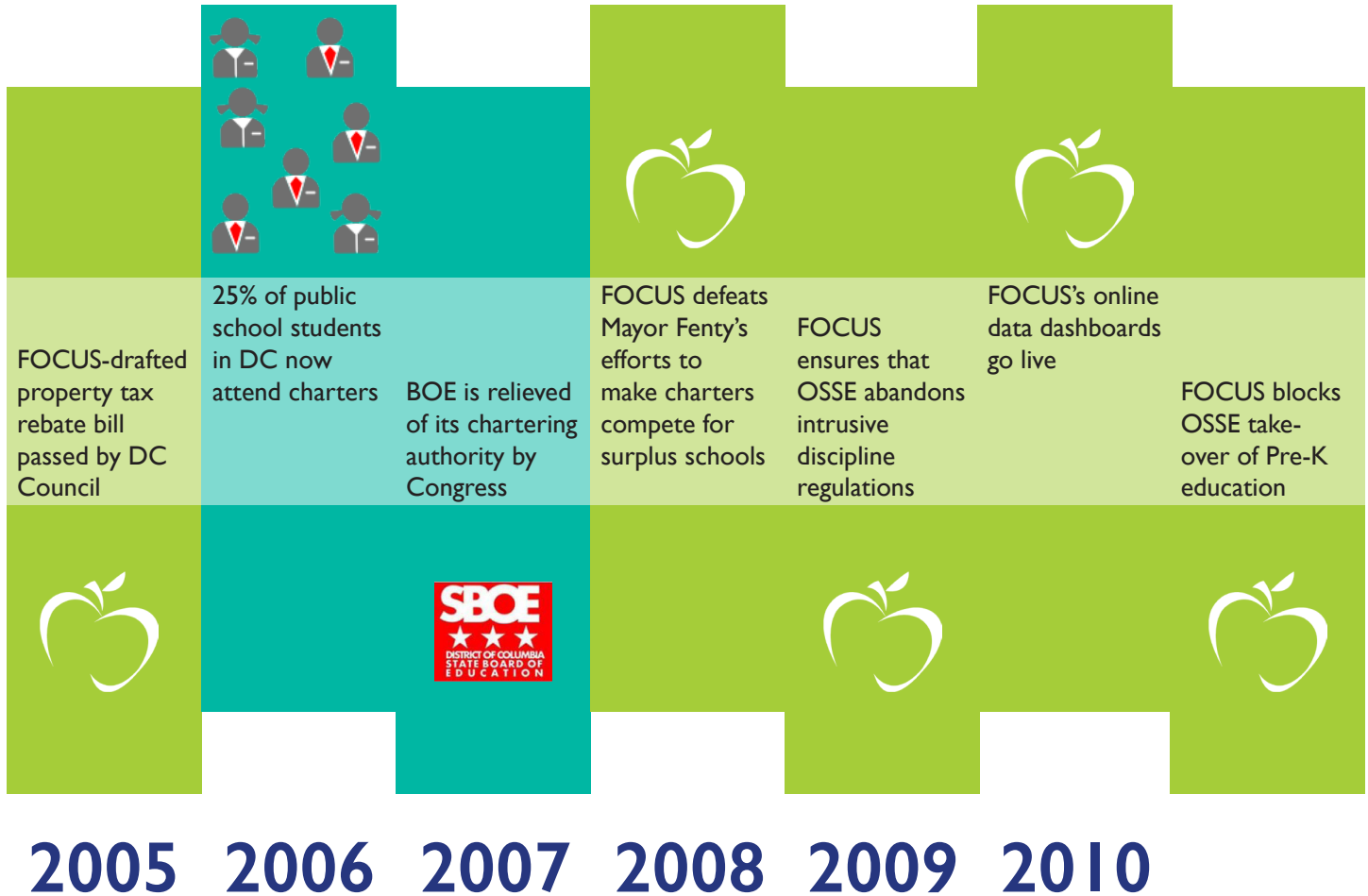
1997 1998

DC's Charter School Movement

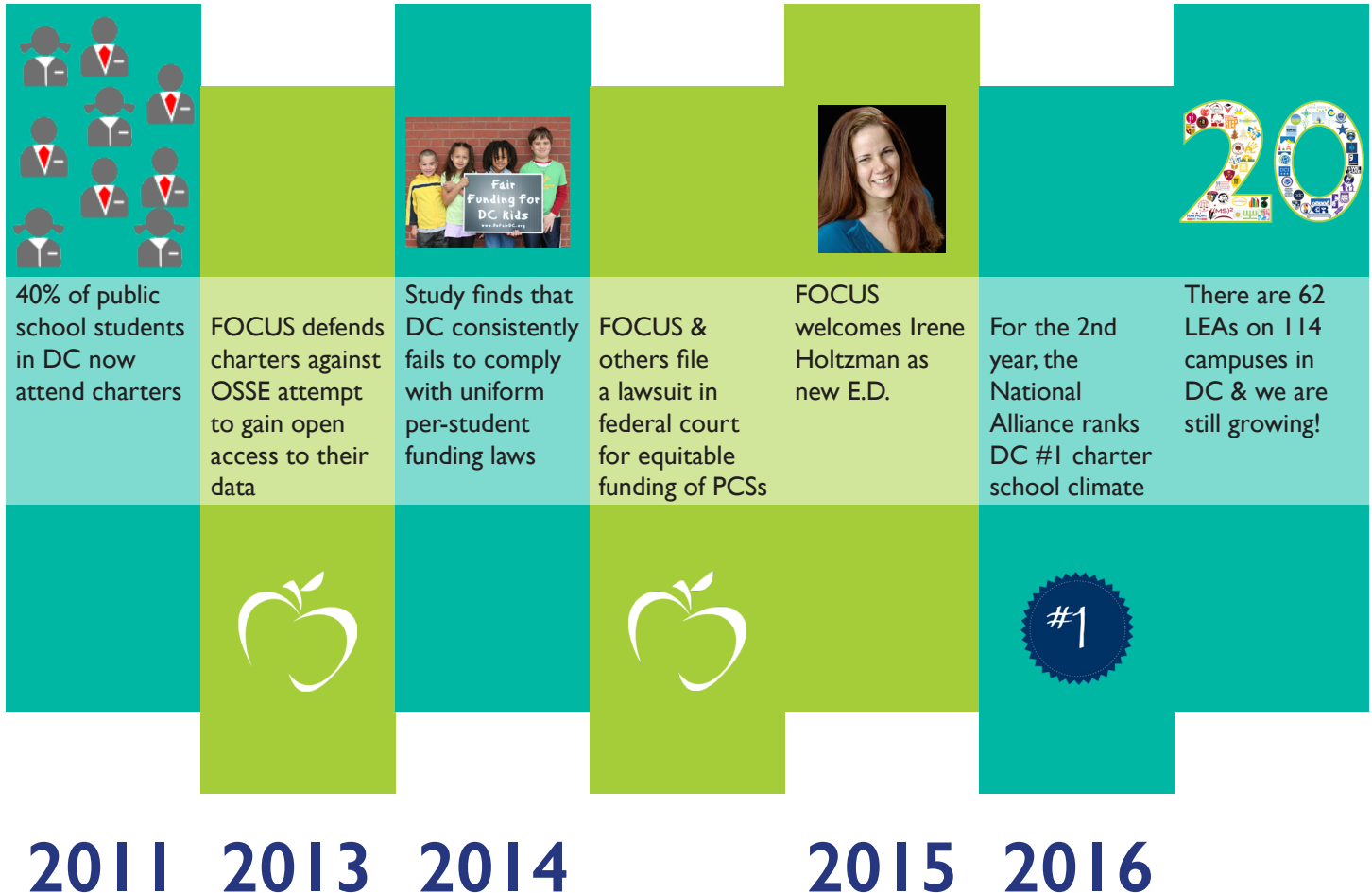




Years of Innovative Choice



DC's Charter School Movement



Strategic Plan 2016 - 2018

In 2015 FOCUS underwent a strategic planning process to map out the next three years of our work. We engaged Brighter Strategies to facilitate the process and engage our myriad stakeholders through in depth interviews, focus group discussions, an online survey, and facilitated working sessions. The result of this process was a new vision and mission statement, a renewed emphasis on our current advocacy and school quality work, and the following five strategic goals for 2016 – 2018.

Advocacy

Serve as an advocacy convener for charter schools, collaborating with other organizations to ensure a consistent voice and develop a proactive advocacy agenda. Continue to serve as the primary advocate for DC's charter school sector, providing timely information and guidance to the schools and representing the sector with elected officials and government agencies.

Communications

Develop a strong external communications strategy that engages others and highlights successful, innovative practices of charter schools in Washington, DC. Continue working with reporters and the media to ensure an accurate representation of the positive effect of DC's charter school sector and to highlight the ongoing challenges charter schools face.

Charter Support

Consolidate and curate resources for DC public charter schools through a new online resource center and school leaders portal. Continue to provide a variety of school services to support schools from startup to opening, as they continuously improve, and through possible replication or expansion.

Unity

Facilitate the unity of the DC charter school community by providing opportunities for meaningful collaboration between charter schools. Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with other charter support organizations and connect them with the charter schools.

Sustainability

Ensure the long-term sustainability of FOCUS by engaging in purposeful organizational development. Continue to strengthen internal operations and actively seek diverse funding sources.

*FOCUS's vision is to see a fairly funded,
quality public school for every DC student.*



FOCUS Board of Trustees



Maquita Alexander



Sekou Biddle



S. Joseph Bruno



James Costan



Karl Jentoft



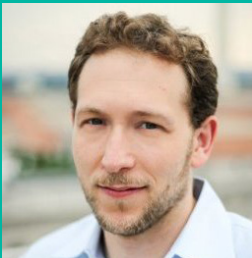
Judith Denton Jones



Joshua Kern



Dan Magder



Dan Mindus



Mary Procter



Jessica Wodatch



Shantelle Wright

FOCUS Staff



Irene Holtzman
Executive Director



Dawn Cohea
Data Analyst



Alison Collier
Chief Operating Officer



Anne Herr
Director of School Quality



TJ Jansma
Director of Information
Technology



Shaun Lane
Director of Communications



Mandy Leiter
Operations and Programs
Associate



Michael Musante
Senior Director of
Government Relations



Sarah Samuel
Education Pioneers
Graduate Fellow



Stine Riis Svenningsen
Development and External
Affairs Coordinator



Cherrelle Swain
Associate Director
of Development



Lindsay Templeton
Associate Director of
School Quality



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