

AAUW **American Association of University Women - York Branch**
Information Sheet 2015

There is a LOT to know about.....

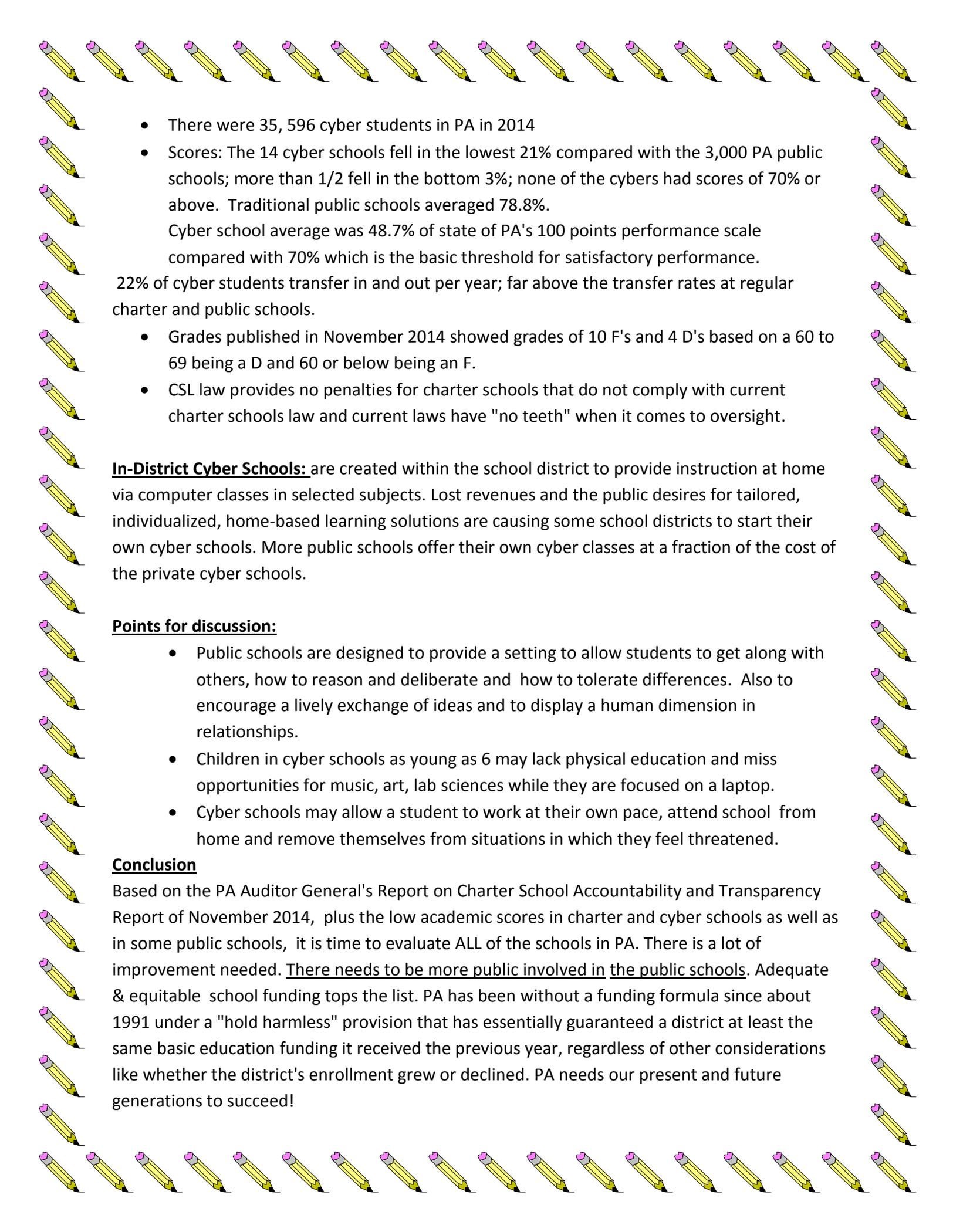
Charter, Cyber Charter and Local Public School Districts

Charter School: is a bricks and mortar school within a local school district with teachers, classrooms, etc

- A Charter School is authorized & approved by the local school district. It is privately run but publicly funded. It has to be set up as a non-profit; however, charter school organizations get around that by setting up a foundation to file the application and then contracting to companies to run the school. Charter based management companies sometimes run dozens of schools. CEO's seldom reveal their salaries even when requested by the "right to know law."
- A 5 year agreement or contract is signed between the school district & the incorporated non-profit charter school
- Cost: school district pays per-student tuition to charter school.....cost ranges from \$6,752 to \$16,915 per student with average of \$12,657 (2014)
- Cost for special needs students are typically DOUBLE the regular tuition rate
- When? Legalized in 1997 with Act 88...called the PA "Charter School Law". To operate as public, non-profit, nonsectarian kindergarten through 12th grades.
- In 2014 there were 162 Charter Schools in PA with 105,000 students
- Scores released in Nov 2014 show that the School Performance Profiles (SPP'S) are 67.3% as compared with a median of 70% as satisfactory. Public schools scored 78.8.
- 75 % of teachers must be state certified

Cyber Charter School: provides instruction through the internet. Students do most of their school work at home over the computer, sometimes with interaction with a teacher in another location.

- Is authorized by the PA Dep't of Education in Harrisburg
- A 5 year agreement is signed
- Cost: School district pays per-student tuition of \$10,145 to \$12, 657. Provides students with free computers, internet connection and materials. Cyber schools do not maintain expensive buildings, sports fields or transportation. Cyber schools MAY limit admission to a targeted group of "at risk" students.
- Cyber schools spend large amount of funds for lobbying, advertising and marketing, funds public schools do not have. It must operate as a non-profit organization and is governed by an independent board of directors.

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- There were 35, 596 cyber students in PA in 2014
 - Scores: The 14 cyber schools fell in the lowest 21% compared with the 3,000 PA public schools; more than 1/2 fell in the bottom 3%; none of the cybers had scores of 70% or above. Traditional public schools averaged 78.8%.
Cyber school average was 48.7% of state of PA's 100 points performance scale compared with 70% which is the basic threshold for satisfactory performance.

22% of cyber students transfer in and out per year; far above the transfer rates at regular charter and public schools.

- Grades published in November 2014 showed grades of 10 F's and 4 D's based on a 60 to 69 being a D and 60 or below being an F.
- CSL law provides no penalties for charter schools that do not comply with current charter schools law and current laws have "no teeth" when it comes to oversight.

In-District Cyber Schools: are created within the school district to provide instruction at home via computer classes in selected subjects. Lost revenues and the public desires for tailored, individualized, home-based learning solutions are causing some school districts to start their own cyber schools. More public schools offer their own cyber classes at a fraction of the cost of the private cyber schools.

Points for discussion:

- Public schools are designed to provide a setting to allow students to get along with others, how to reason and deliberate and how to tolerate differences. Also to encourage a lively exchange of ideas and to display a human dimension in relationships.
- Children in cyber schools as young as 6 may lack physical education and miss opportunities for music, art, lab sciences while they are focused on a laptop.
- Cyber schools may allow a student to work at their own pace, attend school from home and remove themselves from situations in which they feel threatened.

Conclusion

Based on the PA Auditor General's Report on Charter School Accountability and Transparency Report of November 2014, plus the low academic scores in charter and cyber schools as well as in some public schools, it is time to evaluate ALL of the schools in PA. There is a lot of improvement needed. There needs to be more public involved in the public schools. Adequate & equitable school funding tops the list. PA has been without a funding formula since about 1991 under a "hold harmless" provision that has essentially guaranteed a district at least the same basic education funding it received the previous year, regardless of other considerations like whether the district's enrollment grew or declined. PA needs our present and future generations to succeed!