A Case Study:
Triumph Charter School Provider:
Inefficient or Incompetent Leadership?

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ABSTRACT
Since the inception of charter school programs, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) has invested more than $3 billion while political leaders and special interest groups continue to express concerns about public charter school providers lacking accountability and delivering poor quality education for our disadvantaged students (2015). In recent years, the DOE continue to offer guidance, revise policies, and federal resources concerning the oversight of public charter schools; however, the harsh criticism surrounding charter school failures across the United States has not diminished (2015). The essence of this journal paper is to present a case study about the female owner’s lawsuits and challenges while operating Triumph Management Company and its Duke, Duchess Technology Centers that are located in Midwest Region of the United States. The author will provide a historical overview and discuss the management structure, leadership styles and other related topics. Discussion questions appear at the end of article.

KEYWORDS
Opportunity Children, Public Charter School, Triumph Management Company/Provider, US Department of Education (DOE)

INTRODUCTION
A public school charter is a legislative contract that empowers local leaders of school districts, the State Department of Education (DOE), parents and other authorized sponsors to govern areas such as curriculum standards, performance measures, governance and finances (State Department of Education, 2015). Public charter schools are designed to address the current state of education and to introduce an alternative model to traditional public education for opportunity (formerly economically disadvantaged) students in the United States (Center for Education, 2013).

In recent years, leaders of the Department of Education have revised policies, offered legal guidance and federal resources concerning the oversight of public charter schools, but they continue to encounter harsh criticism (e.g. teachers’ unions, new reporters, and other concerned citizens) of charter school failures across the United States (DOE, 2015). A number of school choice advocates, public officials, and news reporters argue that a few charter school providers undergo deceptive practices to exploit the system. For example, Mike Petrilli who is the president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, and the author of The Diverse Schools Dilemma: A Parent’s Guide to Socioeconomically Mixed Public Schools (The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2011) has disclosed several offenders of the nation’s largest providers of online and traditional charter schools. David Welker, a member of National Education Association (NEA) - Charter Policy Team, said “…system has been taken over by “grifters” and “cheats” of the for-profit companies” (NEA, 2015). Doug Livingston, a writer for a...
local Journal wrote on September 08, 2015 that the Supreme Court ruled that for-profit management companies are able to take possession of the assets of charter schools that are purchased with public money; and they can charge the public to buy them back.

The purpose of this case study is to provide a historical overview about Triumph Management Company and its Duke and Duchess Technology Centers that are owned by Veronica Walton. Triumph is the service provider responsible for the comprehensive operations of Duke and Duchess Technology Centers. This case study will provide historical overview about Triumph Management Company, the technology centers, organizational structure, the staff and students, products/services, and current issues and challenges. Discussion questions appear at the end of the case study for students to debate.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Charter school leaders who are legal citizens of the United States, have the resources availability and can adhere to rigorous charter school application requirements, can apply for either an individual or organization model. An individual owner(s) model is designed to allow experienced school administrators, teachers, community leaders, or political leaders to have complete ownership and management responsibilities of a school(s). The organization model is designed to allow an offsite administrative team to manage the back-office responsibilities of the school while skilled teachers and support staff manage the students and the schools. For either model, a designated person is responsible for the completion of a comprehensive and rigorous application process. Once the application is completed, it is submitted to the Board of Trustees of a local sponsor (e.g. a university, an educational institution, or a 501C (3) non-profit agency. Once a partnership is established with the local sponsor, and the application process is approved, charter school owners are eligible to receive state and federal funding. The designated owners have the authorization to enroll students while adhering to strict local, state, and federal guidelines.

TRUIMPH MANAGEMENT COMPANY

The popularity of public charter schools commenced in the 1990s when Veronica Walton was promoted to CIO of her father’s technology company, located in the United States. Her father was the President of the company headquartered in India. After settling in the Midwest Region, Veronica became very interested in the public charter schools when she observed that employees who worked for her father’s technology company in the United States lacked basic math and technology skills. She read charter school materials and attended public meetings. Her research disclosed that in the United States 59% of the charter school leaders reported having a waiting list, and averaging 198 students (Center for Education, 2013). From the research gathered, she decided to open a school and create a technology curriculum for her first charter school would vary from other charter schools. The curriculum would be designed to offer general studies courses as well as specific subject matters in technology, math, and science to prepare opportunity students for high school, college, or technology jobs.

At the age of 41, she made a decision to open her own technology center in the lower level of her father’s Midwest regional office building and hire teams of workers to design and implement the technology center. Within two years, she received state approval, established a sponsor partnership, and opened The Duke and Duchess Technology Centers to serve K-8 students. Veronica hosted an “open house” event during the local students’ summer break to allow parents to tour the building and meet the staff. On the first day of school, the center reached 60% enrollment capacity. By the end of week, the center reached 100% capacity. During the same year, Veronica started a charter school organization called The Triumph Management Company. Veronica attributed the successful enrollment process to her innovative computer programs.

With impressive and unexpected student enrollment numbers, she quickly encountered a shortage of teachers in which she decided to use the computers as teachers for the advanced students allowing
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