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research looking hard for answers, especially in trying to understand the actual payoffs of charter schools, which have been touted in many states and on both sides of the aisle in the federal government as effective alternatives to traditional public schools.

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- **Ravitch, Diane.** *Reign of Error.* New York: Vintage, 2013.

Any discussion of the hard questions being asked about the market-based reform movement and the research that supports it has to include the latest book by Ravitch, an education historian and policy scholar at New York University and former assistant U.S. secretary of education. She was initially a supporter of many of the reforms championed by charter and voucher advocates and an early backer of NCLB; however, she has come to question the evidence supporting the effectiveness of such reforms, and this book lays out her case. Long respected on all sides of the education reform debate, Ravitch has rocked the conversation with this book, which is a stinging indictment of many of the market-like reforms she once championed.

- **Henig, Jeffrey.** *The End of Exceptionalism in American Education: The Changing Politics of School Reform.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2013.

Henig is one of the most widely known political scientists studying education policy. His latest book is an analysis of the shift in the focus of education policymaking in the United States over the past 50 years. A half-century ago, education policy was largely the exclusive province of local and state school boards. Today, it is on the agenda of pretty much every branch and level of government—legislatures, courts, and executives at local, state, and federal levels. This shift has led to a big change in how schools are organized, funded, and evaluated, along the way politicizing education in new and different ways. These changes have big implications for how education relates to the social, political, and economic environments in the United States.

- **Betts, Julian R., and Richard C. Atkinson.** “Better Research Needed on the Impact of Charter Schools.” *Science* 335 (2012): 171–172.

This article, published in one of the premier academic research journals, is coauthored by an economist and a former director of the National Science Foundation. Betts and Atkinson argue that although the past two presidential administrations have been enthusiastic supporters of charter schools, the evidence backing that advocacy is thin. They suggest that most studies of charter schools suffer from a range of methodological and sampling problems that make it hard to generalize the results, let alone use those results to reach a consensus on the efficacy of such schools. Betts and Atkinson argue that more randomized field trials—studies in which students are essentially assigned to traditional public or charter schools by lottery—are needed to produce better scientific evidence on the pros and cons of charter schools. They also call on states to make it easier for researchers to access student-level data on test scores. Without access to good data, they argue, researchers cannot arrive at valid and reliable estimates of reform impacts.

- **Imberman, Scott.** “Achievement and Behavior in Charter Schools: Drawing a More Complete Picture.” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 93 (2011): 416–435.

This article reports on a study of the impact of charter schools that is notable for the particularly rich data set employed. It compares student outcome measures from charter and noncharter schools not just on academics—math, reading, and language—but also on a long list of behavioral outcomes, such as attendance rates, substance abuse, and disciplinary infractions. Imberman examined data on dozens of schools from 1994 to 2007, as well as hundreds of thousands of observations from individual students—a very strong foundation for empirical analysis. Imberman’s findings? Charter schools do not seem to improve test scores much, but they do seem to have a positive behavioral impact, promoting increased attendance and better student discipline.