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Charters up, BTU stalls

By Boston Herald Editorial Staff | Saturday, September 17, 2011 | **http://www.bostonherald.com** | **Editorials**

With eight new charter schools scheduled to open in Boston over the next four years, charter school enrollment is expected to increase 55 percent, according to a report issued this week by the Boston Municipal Research Bureau.

That, of course, is wonderful news for the 2,600 students who will be accommodated in those new schools. But it should be rather sobering news for the city's traditional public schools and for the members of the Boston Teachers Union now in their *17th month* of contract negotiations.

In releasing its report the Bureau noted that it ought to be a "wake-up call" to the BTU which apparently isn't even close to reaching an agreement with the city on a new wage pact.

Superintendent Carol Johnson, not surprisingly, is making an effort to have the next contract allow the department the kind of flexibility and standards for evaluating teachers that have made charter schools so popular with parents and students alike.

"The Boston Public Schools must improve their competitive advantage in light of the charter school growth," Bureau President Sam Tyler said.

That is, of course, what charter schools were designed to do — to keep the pressure on traditional public schools to try new models, to be more nimble on scheduling and to *compete* for students to make this a genuine race to the top.

Right now, the Bureau report noted, the city already has 4,250 *empty seats* in its traditional public schools. The growth of public charter schools will put the figure well over the 6,000 mark and that should mean the shuttering of more schools and fewer BTU jobs.

The handwriting is on the schoolhouse wall.

Either the Boston Teachers Union can become part of the future or it can remain stuck in the past as parents and students look for other options.

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