

1889 INSTITUTE

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1889 INSTITUTE RECOMMENDS SCHOOL DISTRICTS INSTITUTE CONVERSION SCHOOLS

Districts can no longer blame mandates for poor performance

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (March 28, 2018) – The 1889 Institute, an Oklahoma state policy think tank, has published “Conversion Schools: Local Districts Have No Excuse.” This short paper points out that school district boards of trustees in Oklahoma have the power and authority to brush away a good many rules and regulations that they often cite as reasons for excessive spending and poor performance. School boards have the ability to unilaterally designate all or any part of a school that they oversee as a conversion school.

A conversion school is exempted and subject to the same laws as a charter school but it does not have an independent board. This means that even though a conversion school is not a charter school, a great many mandates do not apply to conversion schools that do apply to regular public schools.

“If you have any vision at all, there are just so many opportunities when it comes to Oklahoma’s conversion school law,” said Vance H. Fried, primary author of the report. Fried is also Riata Professor of Entrepreneurship Emeritus at Oklahoma State University and founder of the Edupreneur Academy, an organization that encourages entrepreneurial innovation in education.

Fried mentioned that conversions could be created to pay teachers according to merit, offer individualized learning, offer early-college high school programs, and offer Montessori programs, among other options. Fried is especially excited about the possibility of conversion schools that could allow teachers to truly take control of their own classrooms by establishing their own micro-schools. A district could designate rooms in existing schools as part of a conversion school where and allow qualified teachers to create their own one-room micro-schools with reimbursement by the district on a per-student basis.

“With their own micro-school, a teacher could pay herself and an assistant competitive salaries, cover the costs of facilities, curriculum, and technology, and still have \$20,000 profit,” said Fried.

So far, only two school districts in the state have taken advantage of the conversion school law.

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About the 1889 Institute

The 1889 Institute is an Oklahoma think tank committed to independent, principled state policy fostering limited and responsible government, free enterprise and a robust civil society. The publication, “Conversion Schools: Local Districts Have No Excuse,” can be found on the nonprofit’s website at <http://www.1889institute.org/ed-regulation.html>.