

Winfree Academy has changed my life in so many ways. If it were not for Winfree I am not sure where I would be if it had not been for Winfree. I am 16 years old and on the verge of graduating within the next month and a half. For the first two years of my high school life, I was homeschooled. Last January I underwent a big change as my family moved to Texas. It was then that we decided that homeschooling was not the best means of education for me. During my first two years of high school, because I was homeschooled I could achieve my dream of graduating early. While I was homeschooled I completed ~~about~~ three years of school in two. Due to some family issues I could not start back in school before the summer. When August rolled around, we realized time was running out to get enrolled in the upcoming school year. We weighed our

options, and called many public schools in the area. Every school I called would not accept any of my Homeschool credits. They told me I was going to have to start over in 9th grade.

That was the worst news I could have heard (considering my plans for years had been to graduate in 07). Hearing that, I decided that I could not waste years of my life repeating school when I did not fail. I decided

to get my B.E.D. within the next few days, as my preparation started, I found Winfree.

My mom and I drove to meet with the registrars and find out more information. After speaking with them, I cried. I realized they would accept my credits and allow me to graduate this year. Not to mention their many opportunities like Honor classes (three of which I am now taking). Winfree has provided me with the opportunity to accomplish my goals. Now, this August I will be attending college, and ~~at~~ beginning on the path to becoming judge.

Nicole Ruben

39705

I've been here at Winfree
circulite in Lewisville for
two years now and since I've
been at Winfree it has taught
me self discipline which I will
very much so need for college.

Majority of the students that graduate
^{a regular} high school and plan on attending
college get caught up in the college
life because its more freedom and you
don't have to worry about being
runny - get the entire time. Winfree
students work at their own
pace to complete the work needed
to circulite.

The Winfree teachers work
their hardest and go out their
way to make sure we're under-
standing what we're doing.

Attending Winfree ~~means~~ benefits
students, because its like having
a personal tutor.

I would recommend Winfree
to any student wanting a better
education.

Jan Derichsweiler

Lewisville, 75067

In my opinion charter schools are great I did horrible in regular school but here I get to work at my own pace and get plenty of one on one help. It is just a better atmosphere here, at my old school it was over populated and if you got behind its like a snowball effectance you get behind you cant catch up but here your at your own pace. I love it here if charter schools get shut down I would just drop out and be a loser.

Wintere has been very good to me I love it here Its been great Ive been getting alot of work done and making friends and getting all A's and staying out of trouble because I need this school to succeed I'm do to start college this summer.

Blake
Highland Village
75077

I came from Marcus High School and was really far behind on credits and wouldn't graduate. When I came to Winfree I started passing my classes and I felt like I was getting something done. I am now about to graduate and maybe I will graduate early. I think charter schools are a good thing for kids like me that mess up really bad the first couple years of high school. I realised I was messing up to late and wouldn't have graduated on time but I came to Winfree and it gave me a second chance.

Elizabeth Smith
75007
LEWISVILLE 75067

What I like about Charter Schools is that it gives me the opportunity to graduate early. Since I have been at Winfree, I have gotten more work done than I would have at my old school. I have had the opportunity to see what the real world is going to be like. To me, charter schools are the best thing that could be invented.

Nicole Carter
Lewisville, 75067

I like charter schools because it helped me get through school at my own speed. The teachers are nice and I can get more of a one-on-one teaching. I can also get through school and get to college faster.

Lewisville 75067

Ivan Hammon

Charter schools are important because it
is the only a student like me can graduate
and have a future.

75056

Rachel Laurent

I'm so glad that I got the chance to come to Winfree this year. It has really got me caught up and able to graduate on time. Since I've been coming here I have made all A's and B's. I also focus and get things done much faster here. I love this school its the perfect school for people losing focus and getting behind. And if you close charter schools down I promise that the drop out rate will raise very high. So please do not shut down Winfree.

Charter Schools

Winfree in the past year or two has been a great success in my life. Eventhough that charter schools are not for everyone, if you have the mind power to get your work done you will succeed with a golden ticket. At first when I came to this school I would procrastinate on doing my work but as time went on I realized that getting a high school diploma is alot better than sitting around all day and chatting with friends. In the end I believe charter schools should be a little more strict on their students. Students tend to take advantage of the school that we are blessed with, we should all learn what is right from wrong in the end because doing what is right because if you figure that out you can accomplish anything that you put your mind too.

WINFREE

~~WINFREE~~

Winfree is the best charter in the USD. The teachers here are very dedicated to making each and every student the best. ~~They~~ To see a student graduate just makes some of the teachers go crazy like me and these kids. One of the teachers up here goes out of his way each and every day to do what he can to help anybody. Why would they close the charter schools. When I went to a regular school I stayed in trouble, grades low, and things of that sort. Now ~~that~~ that I am in a charter school my grades are better and I make better grades, so to chose a place where someone like me ~~is~~ could be on the way to something better would be nonsense.

Kara Caussin
75028

Winfree Academy has done a lot for me. At regular school I tried hard but didn't succeed. I got into some mess, like most teenagers do. I needed a fresh start, that's where Winfree came in, it gave me a chance to catch up. Charter schools are good for kids who want to graduate early and can help those catch up if they fall behind.

Jennifer P.
75077

To whom it may concern:

I personally think that charter schools are a lot of help to students. They help students who choose to work at their own pace. Winfree Academy has helped me catch up on work that I didn't pass in a regular high school. Winfree has helped me accomplish my goals. The teachers always inspire you to graduate and remind you that it's very important to graduate. I hope that charter schools remain open, so that it can help other students as well as myself.

WinFREE high is a great school not only because of the teachers but because it is a great learning environment. This school gives kids a second chance many people here have made mistakes and at winfree it allows students to change there lives. and start fresh. I started going to winfree so I would be able to graduate early, but many people are here because of situations in their life, a handful of people go to win-free so they can have a full time job and help support their families, others maybe pregnant and dont want a baby to stop their education so they choose to come to winfree. I love this school and shutting it down would leave alot of schools out of school without the chance to gain their diploma. so please choose to keep charter schools open because win-free is more than a highschool its a second chance, and every body deserves a second chance.

sincerely, Camille Fulbright

zip: 75010

Jordan B
Jewellville, 75077

I think Winfree should stay open because it has helped me catch up to where I need to be.

The self-pace program gives the kids the opportunity to take control and finish as much work and as soon as possible. The teachers at Winfree help you alot, they make sure that your work gets graded & they work with you individually if you need it. IF WINFREE was to close I dont know what any of the students would do bec most of the students here cant go back to their "home school". So please dont close Winfree down.

Denton Tx 76210

ZACH
CARSON

Winfree is good to me. I have been kicked out of 4 different schools, one time every year. Also I have attended most of the school year because I like it so much instead of missing and not going to all the other schools I have been to. I like no homework, it takes more stress off of me in my home life. If they shut down winfree I would not be allowed to go back to normal school so I would have no school to go to.

Winfree Academy has helped me succeed and get through high school in many ways. I came to Winfree from a public school because I struggled there with my academic performance. I didn't do well in an environment that had teachers constantly harassing me to get busy and do my work. I work better at my own pace and get things done in a mannerly order. Shutting Winfree down could be the worst thing you could possibly do.

Shutting us down ~~causes~~ causes us to lose ~~the~~ hope of graduating. Our teachers here constantly inspire us to do better and push ourselves to the goal of graduating. We've grown to appreciate and respect our teachers and superiors here. Not only does Winfree have outstanding superiors and role models to look up to. ~~Shutting Winfree down would not only hurt lots of students. Where would the women go?~~ What about the kids who just decide high school isn't for them? They're just going to drop out and have no where to go. What about the women who get pregnant and need to graduate because the eight hours of school take too much time away from their babies and jobs to support those babies. Lots of kids who try leave public school come here. Here we are like family, not some piece of paper like in public school. In public school the students are favored by teachers because there are so many of them. They don't get to know a student at all or learn about their personalities. Please don't shut down Winfree because of money

problems. There is too many good things happening to children. We are learning to succeed and ~~we~~ learn on our own. We have made relationships with our teachers and superiors. Those of us that were quiet and ~~not~~ keep to ourselves ~~became~~ become outgoing and develop relationships with friends.

Winfree Academy Charter Schools does too many good things for under privileged children. Please don't look at the numbers on paper. Look at what your doing for all the kids. Too many good things happen here. Please keep Winfree Schools open.

—Taylor B,

Senior student

Winfree has been very helpful to me because in my other school I was behind now I am getting caught up and getting ahead. Winfree is the best because it's self pace you can go very fast or a little slower.

Just Cali

Dear Senate,

Over the past few months I have had the chance to work in and as well with Winfree. On a personal basis with myself I feel Winfree allows me the flexibility to work around 30 hours a week and go to school. I also do not believe in the traditional school system. There have been far too many problems in the past with public schools in my life. I can see how Winfree could be an endangerment if you didn't use it the right way. This is how I see it school is a tool that you have to utilize well, it's like an investment.

Tommy Davis

Tommy Davis

Jose Esquivel

Dear sir/MRS, Here at Winfree academy they provide a safe hardworking environment. A self paced school like Winfree Academy doesn't come around twice. To half of the students here Winfree is a last chance to some it's the only chance to get caught up on credits or just get that certificate. Taking away a school like this is like taking away our hopes and dreams. In my case, I was accepted into Lincoln Technical Institute; I came to Winfree to get caught up in my credits, and because I choose to work to help out. Shutting down Winfree Academy would be a mistake because we come here to get an education so, if it's ok to take away an education then it's right to shut Winfree down.

dear Sir or Miss,

I believe that there should be no concern about charter schools. Charter schools provide more "one on one" help to students than public schools. US students learn alot different than some. We some times ^{are} too fast pace or slow pace, so its hard to go at the same pace as public schools. Another huge fact, some kids cant stand the criticism at public schools from the teachers and students.

I Regina HUSE have been to two charter schools and I have noticed that kids go there to get their work done and avoid nonsense of drugs, popularity and violence that is held at a public school.

I cant stand going to a public school because teachers pick favorites, kids only think your cool if you have alot of friend or if you do drugs or fight.

Going to a charter school feels like a stress release lifting off my shoulders. We actually work as a team even though we own at self pace. We help each other as much as we can. You could put it in a sense that we are like a big family. Public schools cant have that. Charter school students dont even really pick on each other cause we are all going here for the same reasons and we understand each other. The teachers

here also take time to understand
how a student works. For that, we
can get our work done easier, faster
and more correct. Well, ~~also~~ thank
you for your time and I hope you really
took the time to understand this letter.
Well, that's what a charter school
teacher would do.

a happy charter sc. student,
Regina Bluse

To Whom It May Concern,

On the outside looking in, charter schools seem like a way out of conventional rules and to slip through the cracks of the system. This is completely false though in my experience from attending such a school. I'm currently enrolled at Winfree Academy Charter School in Lewisville, Texas, and doors have been opened by going to school here that would have seemed nearly impossible to try to open at a traditional high school.

During the summer before the 2006/2007 school year, my mom and I sat down with an official of the administration office from the college I had intended to attend post-high school. After gathering a good amount of information on how to obtain my goal of attending such a learning establishment, I felt at ease knowing my goal was in sight. He gave me one main objective for the time being - graduate high school a year early.

Going to Winfree and accelerating the pace at which I earn my credits has really benefited me on many levels. I recently discovered that by graduating at the age of 16, I can

receive a grant from the state, which just adds that much more fuel to my motivated pace. I seriously doubt I would be able to succeed at such a goal at any other school other than Winfree. It has allowed me to learn at my own speed in an environment that I feel comfortable in.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter, I appreciate the consideration. I hope that you all will see the large scale of success that a charter school like Winfree allows.

Sincerely,

Kyle Infante

Kyle Infante

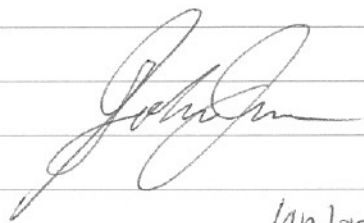
To whom it may concern,
You can not close charter schools because this
would create a list of problems for me as well
as many others.

I am 17 years old, my name is Landon, and Winfree
academy fits with my busy schedule. I'm living
on my own with a 43 hour week job. I am
a chef at Panda Express with many others
counting on me as well.

Winfree gives me an opportunity of working
at a self pace. I can get school out of the
way and graduate early.

I plan to go to college and hope
to get into producing. I'm still young with
many goals that only a charter school
gives me opportunities to.

Thank you,



Landon Ince

Im not originally from Fort Worth , I actually came from the big city of Houston . About a year ago I moved to Azle Texas because my Dad an outstanding job offer . I dropped everything and moved to Azle . My family and I settled into our new house by about the end of Christmas break in 2005 .

At that time I was enrolled in the worst school district ever . Although I haven't had the best grades and behavior in school , that school was terrible . I passed about one semester when I decided during my junior year I was going to drop out of school .

At the time this seemed to be the best decision in my eyes compared staying at Azle and just sitting around and waiting to flunk out of high school . But after I surpassed that idiotic decision of dropping out I came across a friend who had turned me upon a charter school that could help me catch up with my credits . You see growing up my father only had two dreams for me to accomplish , one was to become a fine young man and not to get into drugs and other trouble , the other dream was to graduate from high school and be successful in life . Well until I came to Winfree Academy I did not think that I was going to achieve that last goal of mine and his .

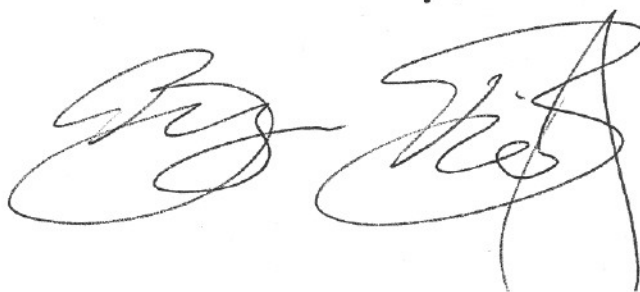
The drive it self should show you the dedication of me trying to graduate , we drive everyday forty-five minutes here and back . It takes much gas and time . But some how we do it and five times a week and we hardly miss school and we live all the way out there . But you know my future is well worth both of those .

You know I just turned nine-teen on February the fifth and being that old and still dedicated to come and still to have motivation to get up every day and come to school should be enough for you to keep this great school open so that not just me but the other kids in here with bad troubled pasts and hopeless back rounds .

So please think of these kids and others to come , because obviously they have been given up on enough and a bunch of us have no were else to go and Winfree Academy is a great school to catch up and go at your own pace , and just have a little more time to do your work . So please consider keeping Winfree open and keep us with hope .

Thank you for your time .

Sincerly ,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink, one on the left and one on the right, both appearing to be stylized and somewhat illegible.

Before Winfree Academy I was attending public schools, constantly trying to play catch up with my school work. Seven classes a day all with homework was making me fall behind. Teachers were responsible for educating 30+ students a class, so trying to receive help was impossible at times. What I enjoy about Winfree Academy is that I'm able to work at my own pace and receive individual one on one attention from the teachers. Winfree is like a second chance. If it wasn't for this school I would of dropped out and got my GED. Winfree is a wonderful school, it saved my life.

Dear Senator Shapiro,

An 18 year old dropout, working at McDonalds making minimum wage, with no chance of making it to college and getting their dream job. That's how I see the future life of me and my peers if charter schools are closed.

Winfree has helped me, as well as so many other kids, stay in school. Pregnant girls would have dropped out without a Winfree. They would have no other choice. Kids who have lost credit, whether for their bad choices or for leaving school for a long period of time for personal reasons now have hope to graduate in their designated year or maybe even earlier. If Winfree were to close down, the dropout rate would increase greatly. I want my kids to have a future and to have hope that there is a school out there that can understand them and their problems, help them work harder and get better grades.

So please, I want to be able to graduate. I want me and my peers to have the opportunity to attend college and get the most out of life. This school has helped me be happier and get better grades. I actually enjoy going to school now. Please think about what you are doing.

Ashley Fisher

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I believe that Charter Schools help many young people in many ways. I know some examples of advantages of Charter Schools.

If we did not have Charter Schools such as Winfree Academy, I would have dropped out of normal high school by now, I believe that Winfree has definitely helped me be a more successful person in life and if all Charter Schools got closed, I would definitely drop out.

Another advantage of a Charter School is that it is a work at your own pace program and that is great for me personally because I have ADHD very bad and I can not focus in the setting of a "normal" high school. As well as that, I also started having panic attacks around the students at normal high schools.

Last but not least reason is that we only have to go four hours a day which is great for me because I have to work to pay for bills, car insurance, and gas and if I went to school for eight hours a day I would not go to work for eight to twelve hours a day after I got out of school. Please take these reasons into consideration.

Brandon Chambers

Kristin Featherston
February 19, 2007

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I'd like to take this time to inform you of how Winfree helped me stay in school and out of trouble. It might not make a difference in your opinion about charters schools but then again it might.

Some of the ways Winfree helped me stay in school was in the environment that it's set in. The work at your own pace environment let you learn what you need to and fly through what you already know. For me being at a regular high school was a drag, I already knew most of the stuff that they were teaching and Winfree gave me the opportunity to go above and beyond.

Also going 7-8 hours a day usually made me skip or not go to class, but Winfree Academy was only 4 hours a day and you have 3 sessions to choose from. Therefore you can still have a fulltime job and support yourself and if you have kids.

Winfree Academy also allows me to be my own individual. We are allowed to wear hats and holy jeans, within good taste and not being too trashy. Some problems I had at my old high school were problems with dress code. I couldn't count how many time I had gotten suspended for wearing holy jeans when it was the only ones I had to wear.

Thanks to Winfree Academy I know I would have dropped out and with no high school diploma I wouldn't be able to get a job and most likely have ended up selling and/or using illegal substances. Winfree showed me that there is a different alternative to one bad decision that I could have made. It has kept me in school and out of trouble and will continue to push me forward to a successful life.

Sincerely,
A Soon To Be Graduate

Jannah Manibusan
2/19/07

Charter Schools Are Worth It

What do students benefit from Charter schools? Are the schools worth continuing? Yes! Charter Schools offer a laid back, safe environment that inspires students to be their best. The self-paced program generates self-motivation and responsibility in the youths of today as well as allows individual personalities to grow and prosper. Charter schools provide an alternate learning program that allows a person to maintain a part-time job and still stay in school. Without these schools, many more students would drop out and lose the chance to get an education.

When I was in standard high school, I struggled constantly with the slow-paced learning environment of the curriculum. I felt leashed to the system like just another dog in the kennel, but then I transferred to Winfree Charter School and I felt that I had been set free. There were no more restrictions or limitations forced on me. I was finally able to learn at my own pace and get all my work done quickly and efficiently.

Charter schools also grant a safe environment where students can be themselves. While there are still some dress code rules, students are given the opportunity to let their own personality shine without fear of judgment or punishment. In my standard high school, students were forbidden from having unique hairstyles and clothing and could not have a hair color that wasn't natural. Here, at Winfree, students don't have to hide their personality. They can do their studies and still maintain their individual styles.

Another benefit of Charter schools is the time frame of the school day. The four-hour school day provides enough time to complete our schoolwork and keep a job. The eight-hour days of standard schools hardly leaves enough time for homework let alone a

job. Charter schools offer the opportunity for students to gain experience in a job while still gaining an education.

I don't know what I would have done without Winfree Charter School. I finally found a program that works for me. Charter schools offer students a different program of learning. It inspires them to work for an education and instills in them the drive to follow their dreams without infringing on their individuality. Charter schools are definitely worth keeping alive.

February 19, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Sara Reagan, and I am 17 years old. I have been attending Winfree Academy Charter Schools in North Richland Hills since August of 2006. I personally think that Winfree is a great school. I had attended Azle High School in Azle, Texas for the first two years of my education. Currently, at Winfree, I have completed classes and have earned credits that would have taken me a year to two to complete at a traditional high school.

I do not think that "TAKS percentages" should be an issue on keeping Winfree open. Throughout the year, the teachers and staff are nothing but helpful and motivate students toward graduation. A student is going to try to pass the TAKS test if he/she wants to. The teachers help prepare students for the tests, and the students take the tests.

I believe that the teachers and staff at Winfree Academy in North Richland Hills, Texas are helpful and do their jobs well. If it weren't for Charter Schools and their short hours, teachers, resources, and motivation, I would probably not be in school. Charter Schools can give kids advantages, for example, by helping them graduate earlier. This Charter School can truly help students succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sara Reagan".

(Sara Reagan)

February 19, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

Before I came to Winfree Academy I attended Birdville High, and, before that, I attended Richland High. I never like the whole traditional school thing. I always skipped, because it was so easy, or I just didn't do my work.

I had heard about Winfree through "the grapevine" at Birdville, but I didn't know much about it. I'd heard that Winfree was only four hours a day and a self-paced environment.

My boyfriend, David, was having a lot of trouble at Birdville and it would have taken him much longer to graduate. He left Birdville and started to go to Winfree, and, of course, he told me all about it. I looked into it for a couple of months, still debating because I didn't want it to set my graduation day back, and I didn't want to switch schools again. I then decided that I would go to a Winfree orientation so that I could make my decision.

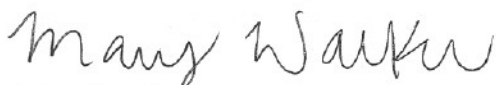
I have now been going to school at Winfree for almost two years now, and I love it now just as much as I did when I started going here. Of course, the best thing about Winfree is that it is only a four-hour day, but everything else just makes it that much better.

The teachers are always there to help at all times if you ever have any questions, which is such a great thing. I love the self-paced environment though, because it makes learning so much easier and enjoyable. When I am able to learn on my own, I am able to accomplish more.

I don't have to have a teacher teaching at me and rushing me to get my papers done, so I actually understand what I am doing. I am glad that I chose to come to Winfree because now I can finally just complete my education.

GO OSPREYS!!

Sincerely,



Mary Walker

February 19, 2007

Senator Shapiro:

The latest bill being passed, which would hold Charter Schools accountable for TAKS testing scores, is a sheer display of the ignorance present in our legislature.

A student goes into a charter school because the public schooling norm has failed them, and, thus, failed the system. To take away charter schooling is insane, as of course TAKS scores are going to be low. The schools the students came from should be held accountable.

If charter schooling is taken away, then our country as a whole will suffer from massive waves of men and women who can't spell e-d-u-c-a-t-i-o-n.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tim Noonan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Timothy Noonan

Age 15

Winfrey Academy North Richland Hills Student

To whom it may concern:

Winfree Academy Charter School in North Richland Hills is the best school I have ever attended. This is the fourth high school in which I have been enrolled.

While attending my previous high schools I encountered personal problems that included: skipping, failing courses, not getting along with the teachers. I was frustrated and decided to give up on my education.

One of my friends realized I was struggling and mentioned Winfree. I never cared about school until I started attending Winfree. I feel that the teachers care about the students. I have earned multiple credits in a short amount of time with the one on one help I receive daily.

If it were not for Winfree Academy I would not be getting my high school diploma. I now have graduation to look forward to in the near future.

Sincerely,


Matthew McGarry

To whom it may concern:

I am currently a student at Winfree Academy Charter Schools and I feel slighted at the thought of Winfree's ability to educate students being hampered in any way. It is not the malpractice of our educators that causes inferior scores on the TAKS. I feel that this test should not establish our comprehensions throughout our learning experiences. For some Winfree is their only hope in life. It is not just some charter school, but a second chance to change. I have made friends here and talked to some on why they chose this school. They want to get their lives aiming into the right direction. Students who attend Winfree aren't just trouble makers but good people that have made bad choices.

I, Tara Reeves, was one of those people that made a bad choice. High School's toughness wasn't what got me, it was attending. Once I didn't make junior year's cheer squad I was devastated. Cheering was my life and I felt like since I didn't make the team, high school ended. I missed most of my junior year and was behind on graduating. I had no plans on returning back to a "regular" high school so I took a chance on Winfree Academy Charter Schools to help me get my life back on track.

TAKS should not be the only measure of Winfree's performance. Together we work to graduate kids that wouldn't have tried at other schools. I hope you reconsider your thoughts and help Winfree Academy Charter Schools keep graduating students.

Tara C. Reeves

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tara C. Reeves', written in a cursive style.

Student Attending Winfree Academy Charter Schools

February 19, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a student at Winfree Academy, and I came here to make up my classes I wasn't able to get credit for because of too many absences. I fear that if we pass legislation that requires students to pass their grade level TAKS tests in order to keep Charter schools open, we'll be closing the doors to the schools that just might allow students to graduate.

I can't speak for everyone, just myself, but since I've been at Winfree I have made it to school more often, made better grades and I have been more motivated to complete my work.

My story isn't an isolated one. I had a lot of attendance issues last year that caused me to get a NC in Algebra. I came to Winfree to get caught up to grade level. Even though I have to repeat Algebra I, I passed my Freshman TAKS test last year. This year, I am going to take the Sophomore TAKS, which, I feel I have been set up to fail. How can I pass my Sophomore TAKS test when I'm in a freshman math class? The expectations set for me by the state are virtually unattainable, and I'm a good student. I try hard. I generally succeed.

Society looks at charter school pupils as students who can't be helped, but, if it wasn't for Winfree, plenty of students wouldn't have an education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Tabitha Martin', written in black ink.

Tabitha Martin

To Whom it may Concern:

I think Winfree Academy Charter School should stay open because it gives people who have made mistakes in life to have a second chance to get a better education and a chance to attend a good college. Winfree allows me to work on my own pace so I always try to work as fast as I can because I want to graduate early. The teachers at Winfree are so caring and they have a real passion for teaching. They are always motivating us to do our best and succeed at whatever we do in life. I really like this school not just because I have to go here but because it has a safe environment and just laid back. If this school closes I would have to go back to regular school where most of the teachers are teaching for the money and don't care about the students. Please allow Winfree to stay open so that students can have a better life.

Thanks,
A Winfree Student
Chamyr Simmons

To whom it may concern:

My name is Jessica Cheek and I am writing on behalf of Winfree Academy Student body at North Richland Hills. IF it were not for Winfree I would be a 19 year old drop out. I came to Winfree in January of 2006 with two credits, it is now February of 2007 and I have 14 credits. By this time next year I will have obtained my High School diploma. There was one point in ~~my~~ time in my life where I thought I would never see the day of my graduation, now I know it's right around the corner. When I first came to Winfree I had no hope but I came because it was my last chance. Once I was here and I realized I could work at my own pace, I was compelled to work harder than ever before. Winfree is a great opportunity for those who are falling behind. For many students like myself, it is a last chance, a last hope.

Thank you
for your time.
Jessica Cheek

Senator Shapiro,

Rumor has it that you are trying to pass a Bill shutting down charter schools that don't pass tests in two years. On a personal note, I want to ask you to reconsider. I can't speak for all students but I'm in the Courage program in Wintfree and no school has been able to help me this much.

My name is Leah Grant and I am a 16 year old recovery Alcoholic/Addict. I use to go to a Public School but it didn't really benefit me because that school was my source of drugs. Now that I'm trying to get my life together I actually want to do something with my life. I want to go to college and major in business. Being in Wintfree is helping me not only get on the right path by helping me academically but the courage program is helping me stay sober. I'm surrounded by other recovering alcoholics who want the same out of life as me. We have groups daily and we have two therapists around to help any one of us. Honestly I wouldn't survive in a public school. Please reconsider

that ridiculous bill. Not only me but alot
of other would so appreciate it.

Sincerely,
Leah Grant

Dear Ms. Shapiro,

My name is Candace Genz. Before attending Winfree, I was messing up my life. I was out doing drugs and other stuff. After attending Winfree, I got my stuff together and started going to school and got a job without Winfree who knows what I would be doing. I wouldn't graduate from school. I would not be able to go to college. For most of the people here this is their last chance. After this they have nothing.

Sincerely,

Candace Genz

Candace Genz

Attn: Ms. Shapiro,

My name is Maria Rodriguez. I come from a very successful and intelligent background. All my family ~~has~~ ^{have} always been the successful ones. Why am I so different? From 1st - 6th grade, I have always been an A, B, C student. When 7th grade hit, failure began. I was at Nativity Catholic school for those 6 childhood years. When I moved from Nativity, ~~the~~ The trouble ~~begin~~ started. From Nativity to Hollywood Christian I went. Hollywood Christian had great teachers but not great people. The kids there pushed me around. Soon, I was experiencing symptoms of depression. It came time that I had to start getting therapy. Come to find, I was a bipolar. And to top it off, "ADD" was another problem. By the time I started taking meds, I failed the 7th grade. I cried because of personal things all the time, never thinking I was bipolar. But I was. I later went to St. Stephens Catholic School, barely - Graduated the 7th grade (again) and 8th.

I got into one of the top high schools.
I thought life was getting better
until I moved to TEXAS. Yes, I enjoy
being here... but because of my
past failure and absences because
of personal issues, I could not be
admitted to ANY school in my district.
In conclusion to my letter / story,
I basically got into Winfree b/c
they, out of all people, gave me a
Second chance @ life.

Im proud to be here at Winfree.
Im proud I got a second chance.
And I will graduate.

please dont shut down our schools.

-Monica

Dear, ms Shapiro

well I ended up here because I got in alot of trouble with the cops and everyone else there. I was getting in to some bad things with some bad people. I came to Wineree because I got in a fight with this kid so I can't really go back. if you'll close down Wineree. I would really have no where to go I will have to get my God. Wineree didn't make me back. It is helping me alot. I never did my work and it helps me get close to my goal in life which is to go to college and study business and mechanics I want to open a business and work on cars and trucks. That is what I want to do with my life

Chris Walker

Congress

Winfree Academy was put here to help the kids get an education that they couldn't perform at a regular school. I came to this school so I can catch up and be in the grade I am supposed to be in. The reason I didn't do well in public school is because I wanted to talk to friends. I never went to class because walking in the halls I would see people and decide not to go. At Winfree you sit in one classroom except when you go to the bathroom. You're not late to school or late to class that often because you only go for 4 hrs. I came here wanting to get through high school and Winfree is helping me get my education and move on. You should keep Winfree open!

-Tracie - Wubs

Jody Mitchell

As a student, Winfree academy has provided me along with tons more students with the education and support we will ever think to need.

Most people look at charter schools as an alternative for the misbehaved students, or in others eyes the teen parents, most don't even give our schools second thoughts... were thought of only to those who are in need of help, give us the justice and respect that we deserve, Winfree is just like any other school facility, we get help, have school events, and learn together.

Most of the students here at Winfree have no where else to go, like my brother, he never got along with teachers, got in fights, went to jail and got tickets like crazy, every school district he went to. Said he would have at least two more years till graduation, he was already 17 and turning 18 the following two months he came to Winfree academy of North Richland Hills and got the help and support he desperately needed and graduated within two months, instead of two years.

Winfree has given people another chance at life, pretty much, lots of people just like my brother need second chances, the only place that gave him one was Winfree.

Winfree isn't just a school to the students and staff, it's our home, and were all a family, we learn, share and help each other every day.

-Jody Mitchell

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Claudia Aleman and I attend Winfree Academy in North Richland Hills, but before that I used to go to Birdville ISD. At Birdville I would always skip school and get bad grades. I would ask the teachers to help me one on one which she really couldn't because she had 20 other hands going up asking for help. And at Winfree I can ask a teacher to sit with me and explain any subject. If it wasn't for Winfree Academy I would have no high school credit or been a drop out. Winfree Academy is a great school and the teachers are great on helping you explaining the material. With this said please look at our point of view and cope with the problems that we deal with when attending regular high school.

- Claudia Aleman -

Senator Shapiro,

Do you have any idea as to what you may be doing to a group of people, larger than you think by proposing this bill? Because of the ~~#~~ Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the hopes + dreams of certain students have been crushed. By proposing that if a rather large percentage of charter students fail twice in a row, then their school will be shut down, ~~it~~ is just ~~irresponsible~~ irresponsible.

The Charter school system is something that should not be taken for granite, and I think that's what is happening. By proposing this Bill you are proposing that a student drops out of school all together.

Fordly,
Colby Wickard



Dear Senator Shapiro,

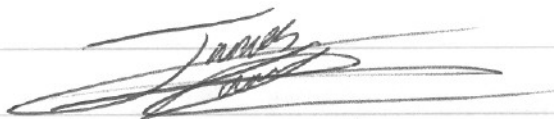
My name is David A. Medlin and I was informed that you were proposing a bill to shut down charter schools if they do not pass the TAKS requirements. If the bill passes it will basically be the end of my highschool education. I have been enrolled in Winfree Academy Charter School roughly 4 months and in that 4 months I have completed more work than I did while I was home school for 3 years. I would deeply appreciate it if you rethought about following through with this bill.

Sincerely,

David A. Medlin

Dear
Congress,

The reason Wintree Academy Charter School means so much to me is because it's a great school. I mean if it wasn't for this school, I would be graduating at the age 20 or I would be getting a GED. That is something I didn't want to do. This school is perfect for me. Because when I found about it I was excited because I been trying for 3 years to catch up to my right grade. My old public school, didn't try to help me out. But when I came to Wintree, they cared and they wanted to help. Now I'm working really hard to graduate with a high school diploma. Because the reason I'm so behind so much is because I was in the hospital most the time because I had seizures when I was little. Now I don't have them anymore. But I do try my best to pass and go to college. Wintree is helping me so much, but at my own pace. And I love this school. I'm so glad to be going to this school. It's done so much for me. And I can't thank them enough. The teachers are so awesome. They give you the help you need. The staff is so great. I love Wintree! Now I can be successful ~~and~~ and go to college. Thanks for your time.



James CarKuff

Senator Shapiro,

Winfree Academy has been the highlight of my learning experience. I have learned so much from Winfree and the educators that teach and instill knowledge in the students. My hope is that I get to be in Winfree until I graduate.

The Courage Program of Winfree has saved my life on numerous occasions. Courage has also shown me life is worth living and you can see ~~that~~ the light at the end of the tunnel sometimes, days even years of our life seem like the walls are closing in and we cannot breathe. The Courage Program can and will uproot your deep-set sorrow and show you the way through the darkness.

Graduating at Winfree will be the biggest joy of my life because I will know I have accomplished something on my own. I have worked so hard at Winfree, please do not take my school away. Regular high school is not the same. I have

been bullied and I cannot find within myself innerpeace.

Thank you for
your time,
Allyson Anderson

Senator Shapiro,

This letter is regarding the ~~bill~~ bill, Senate bill four. I can understand your logic in proposing this bill. However, Winfree Academy Charter School (WACS) has a 70-90% graduation rate. Keep in mind that to graduate one must pass the TAKS test.

WACS's Self-Paced Program allows students who are behind in their school work a chance to catch up. Cutting out the middle man allows for an optimum amount of work. Public schools tend to draw things out, throwing in a bunch of useless time wasters.

Drugs are a major obstacle for today's youth. Peer pressure mixed with availability makes it hard to resist the feeling promised. WACS provides the COURAGE program for addicts getting sober. If WACS is shut down many addicts from the COURAGE program will be thrown back into temptation. Also known as the Public School System.

Please reconsider proposing the Senate bill four. For the sake of those attending Winfree.

Thank you,

Scott, (Student from WACS in the COURAGE program)

Senator Shapiro,

Charter Schools are an absolute gift for people like me. I go to Winfree Academy in Richardson and its a wonderful school to be apart of. If the United States was absent of Charter Schools, where would the millions of kids go that needed to get their education? I made a mistake awhile back causing me to get in trouble with the law and not have the freedom to go to public schools anymore. I thought I was out of luck and then I heard about Winfree. I learned that this school was everything I needed and looked for in a school. I am also apart of the coverage program for drug free students. I have learned alot and gained so much more by being apart of Winfree Academy charter school. I believe that taking away a school for a taks test score that everyone hates is quite unrealistic. I believe you should look more into schools I attend and see how much good they bring for students in Texas.

Sincerely,
Brittany

MILYAR
CARMIC
LEWISVI
TAMPA

2.19.0

To whom it may concern,

We are writing on behalf of our school, Winfree Academy Charter School in Lewisville.

This school is the best thing that's happened to my way is looking at school. I've been in public schools all my life and I was in juvey cause of them I kept fighting I couldn't concentrate. And there was only one teacher to help 30 kids in 45 minutes. I don't fight here. I can work on a pace of what I want. But it does have to eventually get done. The staff help us whenever we need help and they don't stop until you get it completely. I've got more friends and I get along with everyone ~~every~~ it's like there's no differences at this school. We all feel equal. I've failed 7th grade and 9th grade. And by this new year I will be going to 10th and up to 11th grade. And work my way to graduate.

Ashtey Leyna
Lewisville Campus

2-19-07

The reason I came to Winfree Academy was because I was home-schooled for about a year and a half. And I was having problems going back to public school. So they recommended Winfree to me but when I enrolled I saw a lot more opportunities for me. And that helped me know what I wanted to do with my life, so now I want to try in Graduate within two years. Coming to Winfree has really kept me out of trouble.

The teachers and the rest of the staff really treats us like adults. They know how to communicate with us. When we need advice with personal stuff or school work they are always there to help us out. Without Winfree Academy I don't know if I would have been enrolled in a school right now. I would have not known what I wanted to do after high school and I would've been in a lot of trouble.

SO I FEEL LIKE I NEED WINFREE
ACADEMY.

Linda Peaueño
Feb. 19-2006
Lewisville Campus

To whom this may concern, the reason that I Linda Peaueño came to Winfree Academy because I did not want to take the JED test. I want to have a High School diploma, to get a good job to raise my unborn child, my mother, my sister and my baby brother. I dropped out of school when, I was 17 years old because my mother got really sick that she had to stop working. When she stopped working I stepped up and started to take care of my family. Then I got pregnant, I tried to take the JED test but it was too hard so I decided to come to Winfree Academy to get my high school diploma to give my son a better future. I don't know what I will do if Winfree Academy is to close down because I don't want to get my JED I want to graduate with a High School diploma to go to the best college there is to get a good job, about the staff of Winfree Academy, the teachers are great they help me and others when we need it, the assistant principal is the best he let me in roll to Winfree with no credits, but I'm

geting all my work down to
graduate as soon as possible, I
hope you'll dont shut down this
school.

— Tanks you

Sincerely

Linda Pequeno

To Whom It May Concern:

I am an educator with Winfree Academy; I have been an educator with this establishment for six school years. I have seen many students come and go through this program. I have seen students come to Winfree Academy and achieve their many goals. Some students have come and obtained the credits needed to get back on track and return to their home schools and graduate with their class, this could not happen in a traditional school setting because you must work at the pace of everyone else. I have seen countless of students graduate through our program and become successful, productive college students and citizens. Many of the former students take time out of their busy schedules to visit the school and share their success stories and give thanks to the staff for helping them achieve their goals.

Now that I have expressed my feelings about Winfree Academy and the student's success, I would like to express my personal feelings about the Senate Bill 4. I a strong opponent of this bill, I am a product of the 75216 area code, and I could have been a stat for the high school dropout rate or juvenile delinquency rate. I meet students every day that would be classified as At-Risk-Youth and would not be given a second chance to further their education or graduate if it was not for the existence of Winfree Academy. Being reared in a neighborhood that was and is considered At-Risk, **I can relate to my students and their environment, Can you?** Some of the stories the students tell me, I hear the same stories from young men and men who grew up with me. If we had the luxury of a Winfree Academy during my teen years or before my teen's years maybe the dropout rate would be so DAMN high! I strongly suggest that Senator Shapiro talk to the youth before making his decisions.

In closing, Senator Shapiro you have the livelihoods of many people at the point of your pen. I feel by you pressing the issue of closing charter schools you're only creating a monster that you really haven't given much thought to. The bible says God will take care of his children and I hope you take care of our youth and make the right decisions. Give our youth as many **options** as possible, Save the Charter Schools.



Devin Turner
Winfree Academy

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I would like you to imagine life as a high school dropout. Would you be where you are today without a high school diploma? Would you wish for a large group of students to become dropouts?

I am a student at Winfree Academy Charter School in Grapevine, Texas. I know that if something were to happen that caused my school to close, I would be without a diploma. The worst part is that I feel I am not alone. Just from talking casually with students at my school, I get the impression that this school is the last option for at least half of us. Some of the students here have children and, while working full time to support a baby, an eight hour program simply isn't an option.

My experience at a public school was not a pleasant one. There were too many students. It was a very impersonal environment. When I needed help, I couldn't get it. This caused me to fall behind. Even in the classes I did well at I couldn't work any faster than the students around me, so what was the point? Why spend four entire years in school when I could finish in less than that? This stress started to give me panic attacks, and eventually they got so bad I could no longer go to school. I needed a change.

When I came to Winfree Academy, I soon learned that it was the right place for me. It was quiet, so if I understood something I could work all day at my own pace without being disturbed. If I had a problem, I could get help fast and get back to work. The teachers weren't so concerned with things like hair color and body jewelry, like they were at public schools. This would be fine for some students, but not everyone learns the same way. How can we think that one kind of school can serve the needs of such a diverse group of teenagers? I know that if my school were to close, I would be forced to get my GED.

In conclusion, I think that you should consider the consequences of your decision to close charter schools. It could be a decision to force a large group of unique and bright young people into a competitive world without their high school diplomas to help them along.


Sincerely,
Mercedes Reagan

Dear Senator Sharpiro,

Without Winfree Academy, I don't know what I would be doing. This school has been a true blessing for me; it is kind of like a last chance I believe. It is a wonderful school with a wonderful staff and everyone cares about everyone, it seems everyone sticks together. I know this school has helped me. Here, I get the care and attention I need to get work done. I have completed more work at Winfree than I ever did at a regular public high school. Here, I am a better and more driven student.

I like the fact that this school allows me to work on my own and get work done one time. This school is really helpful towards everyone who attends their campus. Attending this school is the best choice I have ever made for myself, it has helped me to do things better and understand how important high school education can be. I have found myself more aware of the world around me and how important life and everything else is. I suppose you could say this school has expanded my mind and opened my eyes to new things. I know for a fact that there are a lot of kids who depend on this school who need it to further their education, as well as myself. Like I said before, without this school, I don't know where I really stand or where I would be. I hope this helps you understand the impact of your decision, and how important Winfree Academy and charter schools alike are to everyone.

Thank you,
Ashley Dodd
Student of Winfree Academy Charter School

Handwritten signature of Ashley Dodd in cursive script.

Leonardo Thomas

Louisville

campus

Dear whom it may concern:

I'm a scholar at winfree who
 just received a message that the
 legislation is gonna terminate winfree
 academy. It has just say winfree
 has helped many of us here. Oh come
 work on computers and still go to
 school. The scheduling it would
 be possible. The system that we have
 here is in high demand. I think
 they don't want schools say student
 to concentrate better. Being
 that winfree is self-paced and
 kind puts us in a college mind
 set, and helps us be responsible.
 That's how I feel about winfree.
 As for myself winfree has
 helped me in every way.

Dear Senator Shapiro

When I came to Winfree I was ready to drop out of school and just give up. I hated school and the teachers so much I hardly ever went to school. When I got to Winfree things changed a lot I decided to stay in school. I started getting help on my work and understanding English.

If I would not have come to Winfree, I would have dropped out of school. I was failing every class I was in and I hated school. Until I came to Winfree now I like school and I do my work I did more work at Winfree in one week then I did in two months at northwest.

When I needed help in class every time I asked the teachers at northwest would just repeat every thing they had already said. They expected me to understand it the second time they said it. When I came to Winfree and asked for help on work the teachers sat down and explained it as many ways as they could think of until I understood it, they never gave up.

When we started English TAKS prep, I did not really understand the stuff the teacher was talking about. But as time went on I understood it more and more. Now I think I am ready for the TAKS.

When I found out about Winfree, I never thought I would come here and like it as much as I do. I am taking the English TAKS tomorrow and I am ready for it. Winfree has made school worth my time and I am lucky to be here.

Chelsea Fredoff

2/19/2007

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Winfrey Academy has helped me keep my life in gear and continue working on goals to a future of success. I have always had a problem concentrating and getting into a lot of trouble. To make a long story short I dropped out of high school in my sophomore year. The entire time I was out of school I didn't have a job and I spent all of my time with friends who were up to no good. Eventually I was sent to a treatment facility in which I was on a path to turn my life around. I attempted to quit using drugs and alcohol and get a General Education Diploma. One day I decided to get back into to school to get a real high school diploma. That is when I turned to Winfrey for a new beginning. I quickly realized how much this school is helping me and the amount of love the staff here shows. I really enjoy this school because I am getting my work done promptly and learning more than I have thought. This school is dedicated to keeping high risk students in school and educating them. Honestly if anyone in this school is high risk it is definitely me. I believe that the reason this school is so successful to me is because there are about twenty to thirty students to a classroom as well as two or three teachers during the course of the session. This school is special to me because I am an A honor role student and I really enjoy coming to school everyday because of the teachers encouraging us to work. The staff here at our school has always done their best in working with students individually. If it wasn't for this school I honestly don't know where I would be at with my goals in life and my standpoint on staying sober.

Sincerely,

Greg Taylor

Growing up I was always told how special I was and how I could do anything that I set my mind to. After life changing discussions and mistakes I found myself with no options and a lot of problems.

At the age of sixteen I found myself troubled. At this point I realized that I have no direction or positive goals for my life, or myself and at the time I had no problem with it. I gave up on myself, and everything that did not have to do with partying. School was a joke to me and I hardly ever went, or found any use for school at all.

Two weeks before my eighteenth birthday I am sitting in a jail cell for failure to attend school. This was my wake up point and found myself saying that I would rather be sitting in school than be sitting in jail. Two weeks later I get a chance to see the sun, the sky, but most of all I see a second chance for myself. A chance to make my life a decent life, a respectable life. Since I was kicked out of school I found myself yet again without options. So I turned to a familiar face, my school counselor. He educated me of many different charter schools that I could attend that would offer me a second chance.

I am now nineteen sitting in school, but this time I am not alone, I am surrounded by people that understand what its like to have it hard and they know what its like to have given up. I am surrounded by people that gave me a second chance to educate myself. Without Winfree academy I would still be sitting in jail, and the only thing I would have around me are four walls, hundreds of dreams and many regrets. Winfree academy has given me the opportunity to better myself, better my mind and better my outlook on life.

Moala Falahola

Charter Schools

Most students enjoy going to a public school because you get to hang out with your friends and be involved in sports. Other students go to school to work and get their high school diploma as soon as they can because they have to work a full-time job, or have to support their family and need to get done with school quick. That is why most students choose to go to a charter school. I decided to go to Winfree Academy Charter School for many reasons.

My family was having some money problems and I had no choice, but to get a job. I found a part-time job at a fast food near my house. I had to go to school from 8am to 4pm, then go and work. When I got my paychecks, it was not enough. So I had no choice but to drop out of school and get my GED and work a full time job. But I didn't want a GED; I wanted a high school diploma. That's when I heard about Winfree. This school was going to allow me to go to school for 4hrs. so I could get my high school diploma and help my family out.

I also enjoy going to Winfree because it is a "self-paced" school. You get to work as fast as you want and not wait on anyone. And this school has a "Zero- violence" rule. And teachers and principal are very strict about this rule. Because they want to assure students that attend this school, have a safe environment to work in.

If we didn't have Winfree, then I would have dropped out of high school and went to work a full-time job and have no high school diploma. When I graduate I going to definitely going to come back and thank teachers for helping me. And for giving me a chance to make my life a differences.

Catherine Dobson

Winfree Charter School has kept me in school, and kept me learning. Drooping out seems like a huge decision for a sophomore, but I was seriously considering it. Public school was really frustrating and I figured an education wasn't worth this kind of stress.

Public schools did nothing but review for the TAKS test, going over and over the same thing, things I learned in middle and elementary school. I got so bored that I didn't even try to do my work at some points. The less interested I was the more my teachers thought I was in need of special tutoring, this made me even less interested in school. By the time we started learning something new, I was too bored to care. Here at Winfree, I can do the work and get it done with out a thirty minute lecture on a ninety degree angle. My work is due when I finish it, no more late papers, or accidentally loosing them over night.

Another thing that has kept me in school is the fact that there aren't so many people. It would take an act of god for me to get my work done over the sounds of thirty some odd students chatting about sports, make up, and what he said she said. Even though I consider myself intelligent, I am easily distracted. Between the students talking and the teachers ignoring us, I couldn't take it. Here the students are few, and those who, like me, wish to get their work done and keep their mouths shut. The teachers do care about my education here at Winfree. However long it takes, they will sit by us and help us understand. The only way we can get that at school is if we are sent to a ALL lab.

Another reason Winfree kept me in school is because of the four hour a day classes, I have pets at home that absolutely need to be taken care of, and both of my parents work long hours, far away from home, this gives me the time to feed them, give them their medication, and take care of anything else this might need. Another good point to getting off early is I now have time to meditate and relax before hanging out with friends. Meditation is very important to me, and now I don't have to cut into my time with friends to do so.

Without Winfree I'd be at the nearest Whataburger with a GED and I'd never get into the career I'd want to be in. No stress, no crowds, and the opportunity to actually learn something while in high school I can actually go onto a college and then onto a career.

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I know you have a lot of essays to read, and they all may be true, but mine I can promise is genuine. When I came to Winfree I thought that I would never get to graduate. I thought this wasn't really going to help me, so why am I here? There are some advantages Winfree has that can help me through life that high school didn't have to offer. For instance, I can express myself and be myself. One of the most controversial topics in high school is the way high school students dress and look. At Winfree, it doesn't matter. If you want a Mohawk and tattoos you can have them. I have found this makes me a better person in all aspects of my life. I can be more accepting. Winfree treats their students like the real world does. You have to earn everything you get and work hard for it. If you mess around, it only affects you and sets you back longer. The self-pace program is something that helps me be a better student and worker. They treat you like an adult instead of a kid, but they are there when you need help. Help, that's exactly what Winfree is for most of the students here. Without Winfree I can promise you OVER half of the student here would be on the streets. This adds to poverty in the future, future crimes, and the loss of what could have been an important leader. You put hope in peoples lives, believe it or not simply because you have kept Winfree going. I just want to say thanks because without Winfree I don't know where I would be.

Sincerely,
Lauren Wilson

Taylor Lewis
Mr. Hill
2/19/2007

The three ways Winfree has helped me stay in school. Only 4 hours a day, self-paced level, and the teachers.

Only going to school for 4 hours a day allows me to have two jobs and work more day hours. It also helps me miss less days of school because I get out at 12. Helps me be able to help out my family and be at home more with them then stuck in my room with hours of homework every night. Being able to work on a self-paced level helps me have enough time to understand the lesson on my own time. This way I can work as fast as I want. The work also helps me be able to explain it to people that need help.

All and all the teachers are what makes me keep coming to Winfree. They may have there days when they have to yell at us but they still keep a good outlook on us. They help us understand that were not all misunderstood that we've all had hard times but making it through high school will better out lives for the years we have ahead of us. The teachers at Winfree encourage us to go to college. Winfree has kept me in school due to the choice they have given me.

Raelee Shaw

Have you ever thought about going to a charter school? There are so many advantages about Winfree. Especially if you are having trouble at your old school, Winfree can give you a second chance.

In my situation it helps me a lot, because I have health issues, and I just got out of the hospital recently. If I went to regular school I probably wouldn't make it through the whole day, better yet week. When I go home I can rest my body, so it works out perfectly. Other people have jobs that they go to. Some even work, because they need to support their family or kids.

When I was in regular high school, I was getting so behind that I was falling back grades. It was crazy and pretty hard to believe! Every time I turned around I was sick or tired, because of my Chronic Fatigue. My mother finally found a place for me to go that would help me catch up on my work, get out early so I can rest, and not be able to deal with as much stress that I was under in public school. Now, after being at Winfree for only a few months, I am trying my hardest to graduate early.

People like me want to graduate early so they can go to college and get a good job so they can make something good of themselves. Winfree has given me a lot of advantages, and kept me from dropping out of school. Thanks to Winfree Academy!!

Reese Patterson
2-19-07

To Whom it may concern,

I started my freshman year of high school in August 2005. Most of my friends were already a year ahead of me, being sophomores. About one-half through the first semester I started to fall behind; not only in my grades, but also attendance.

At the second semester, one of my close friends referred me to check out Winfree Academy. At first I was iffy about enrolling, but I eventually did. I just wanted to get in, catch up to my friend's grade level, then get out.

When I enrolled in March 2006, I did not know what to expect. I knew that there were no class periods and that most of the work was done on computers, but I was very lost and confused at first.

Then, a teacher sat me down and introduced himself and explained everything there was to know about the system.

Hiyela Keylic
Lewisville Camp
02/19/07

Texas State Legislature,

Winfree Academy Charter School provides a unique environment and learning technique for students. My personal decision of enrolling into Winfree was based on the approach Winfree staff uses to provide students with the individual needs of each student to help him or her succeed.

Being here at Winfree Academy has let me experience a lot. This school is overflowing with a very diverse selection of people. Meeting all these people has given me a learning opportunity, teaching me about other peoples' cultures, styles, and characters.

Winfree Academy Charter School is important to me because the staff works with each individual student to succeed in a matter which is easiest for him or her. I believe that if there is one most important factor to operate a school, that would be it.

When I came to Winfree, I was at the point of giving up on my education. My brother and cousins came to Winfree and did very well. At past schools I had a very hard time concentrating and keeping on top of my work cause family problems. Here at Winfree I am able to concentrate on my work and I have made better progress here than I probably would have in a regular school. I am very blessed to be here and very grateful for what Winfree has done for me so far.

If I didn't have Winfree I'm not sure where I would be or how stable I would be in my education. I am very excited to see what the future holds for me and where I'll end up and with the help of Winfree, not fully, I will be very successful. My parents are very proud of me for returning to school and I am also very proud of myself. Thank you for taking your time to read my voice and opinion.

2/19/07

Dear Texas State Legislature...

WACS has helped me and most likely hundreds of other students around the world. I know that there are students that go here and just mess around and don't take it seriously. Honestly though those students are at every school. There are the ones that need this school. Not want, need... This school ~~is~~ dropped so much stress off of my shoulders. I never worry about school anymore, like I used to everyday. I know for a fact if WACS was closed hundreds of students would drop out of school and never graduate.

When I told my mom that I wanted to stop going to public school and start attending Winfree Charter school her immediate response was NO way. I had lost almost half an entire year of credit due to uncontrollable absences. The first meeting I had with Winfree the teachers and administrators cared more about me and my situation than my entire public school combined. With their help I'm now graduating three months early instead of not graduating until June with my public school. Winfree gave me the opportunity to succeed and get ahead in my education. Charter schools may not be for everyone but they give everyone the opportunity for an education suited to their needs. Without Winfree I don't know where I would be.

- Megan
Little

Amber Brazelton

Before I enrolled in Winfree, I bounced around from different schools. I could not find a school I was comfortable in until I came to Winfree. Winfree gives me the comfortable environment of being at home, yet not too much comfort to actually get my work done.

Working at my own pace really helps my stress level. Dealing with a job and being out on your own for the first time is a lot of stress and coming to school and being able to have a relaxed environment where I can work help me in so many ways.

The teachers here hold a teacher relationship but at the same time a friendship. They can talk to us like grown adults without breaking the barrier between teacher and friend.

Winfree means a lot to my daily life because I am able to go to work every day, yet still have time to get my diploma.

To whom it may concern,

Feb. 19, 2007

I enrolled in Winfree Academy because I have to work in order to have a roof over my head and food to eat. ~~When~~ When I was in school my grades were just starting to rise. Then two months before my ~~seventeenth~~^{seventeenth} birthday my ~~no~~ mother wanted nothing to do with me and wanted me out of her house. All of a sudden ^{now} I'm more concerned about how much money I could make to pay for a roof & food. I also was worried because I ~~was~~ needed someone old enough to put their name on a apartment lease because I ~~wasn't~~^{wasn't}. My grades started slipping. I have dyslexia & I worked very hard to get myself better grades, with just a snap off a finger it was all gone. I didn't go to a local school because you have to go the whole eight hours. If I did that I wouldn't ~~be~~ have enough time to make enough money. I tried some home schools I found on-line but they required too much money that I didn't have. I finally found Winfree and I do believe it's a blessing. I could just get my G.E.D. I do plan to go to College but I want my diploma for

①

me. These kind people take time out of their day to help me achive parts of my goals. Now that I come to winfree dosent mean that I dont worry about money any more or how how unstable my jobs is because they dont care that I'm going to school to better myself & the community. It just mean I'm on my way to a diploma, then to nursing school. I was now worried about get enough hours to pay for my needs & still stay in school. ~~Mr.~~ Mr. Brown & Mrs. Ehrke help me find resourses to get a job thats willing to work with me & my goals for education. These people dont just provide an education they provide a sence of safe ness so your able to come to them. This is a huge ~~deal~~ deal to me. I want my education. I like school. I would like the chance to learn. These help me. They give me the one on one attention I need to sucseed & make the grade I ~~was~~ have set for me. These people for me are like the family, I didnt have. They care about my education & my goals like I do.

please understan & give the chance to someone ele too,

Sarah Gonzalez
Sarah Gonzalez

②

The reason why I enrolled in Winfree Academy is mainly because; when I first moved to Dallas. I tried to enroll in the regular high schools that they have here. But, to my luck none of the school's would let me enroll. They said that they wouldn't let me enroll cause I was too old. When they said that I was a little bit confused, concerning that I am only 17 years old. From my understanding high school students are allowed to attend school until they have reached the age of 21. But, since they didn't allow me to enroll I asked if they had any other kind of schools that will allow me to finish my high school education. They mentioned Winfree Academy, as my last resource well; I didn't have much of an option. But, now that I am here I really like this school!! I realize that here I can graduate at my own pace and, they are not denying me my education. When I came to enroll and they asked me how old I was they didn't have a second thought about letting me enroll! As a matter of fact, they let me start school the very next day! The teachers here are great! I rarely know any of them but so far so good, they are there when you are in need of help in any of your subjects. The student's well, I wouldn't be able to tell you much about them; since in don't talk to any of them. But, what I do know is that it is a good school to go to! To me Winfree Academy is very important because, I really need to graduate from high school and go on to college , and if a regular high school won't let me finish then Winfree is the place to be!!!!!!

Okary Brown

Waynetta Chai

I've been attending Winfree Academy Charter School for 4 months now and I've loved everyday of it. I enrolled here because the public school I was previously attending would not allow my red mohawk and punk rock fashion, despite my academic achievements. So when I discovered Winfree, enrolled, and they said my appearance would not be a problem I became enthusiastic about school again. Winfree provides me with a high quality education that will prepare me for college and the future.

The teachers and administration are committed to giving each and every student the help and support they truly need. In other words, they provide the personal attention a public school lacks. For example, I was having some personal issues that were conflicting with my school work, and Ms. Staples was right there, willing to do everything in her power to get me back on track and graduated.

Winfree helps to set personal goals and works with you to achieve them. I've learned that no matter your differences, we all have one common goal here, to get an education.

If Winfree Academy was shut down, I would most likely not finish school because of the environment and experiences at public high schools. Please do not take this opportunity away from me and the other students.

Everyone deserves a chance, and Winfree gives that chance and that hope so many students don't ~~think~~ think they have.

Honorable Gerard Shapiro

I am Mark Adams, a student attending Winfree Academy Charter School. Two years ago I was attending a utmost respected public school. My experience at that school left me dissatisfied and baffled at life. My grades dropped from A's and B's to low C's and failing classes. My parents and I decided I mentally could not conform to a quick paced monotonous system of education formerly known as public schooling.

I was blessed the day my eyes were opened to a choice. (besides dropping out of school) I was told of Winfree. Winfree is a community, a loving educational community. It's a beautiful thing when you don't dread going to school. When teachers actually sit down and work with you.

I know "us kids" make alot of mistakes, we make alot of bad choices. We wouldn't quite be human if we didn't. That's why I thank God there are Winfree's, I thank God he blessed me with a wonderful place I could have a second chat at life at.

-Mark Adams-

I came to Winfree Academy because this was my last chance to graduate. I had been a victim of a sex crime when I went to my public high school. Unfortunately, the integrity of my case was questioned and I lost all my friends to it. I was alone, with constant rumors and bullying around me and it started to affect my grades. Not much long after I had just stopped coming; I lost hope in all things and especially myself. I got lost in a world that was not me and I couldn't get out of the hole I dug myself. After some months I transferred to a different public school in hopes that maybe a different environment would help, but it just became the same as before. I would arrive late because I wouldn't sleep at night and couldn't wake up in the morning. I'm not making excuses for myself but I didn't care anymore. Then, I completely dropped out of high school; I became 1 in 4 students who drop out. It took a long time for me to realize that I needed a high school diploma before I could start this life I had ahead of me. Then I looked up Winfree Academy and gained some hope again. They had classes that could fit my needs and work at my own pace. For once I didn't have pressure on me. And now that I'm in Winfree Academy I am doing well and restored my family's faith in me to succeed like they always knew I could. I can graduate the year I am supposed to graduate, 2007. Winfree didn't judge my past. They welcomed me with open arms as well as students who have gone through worse than me. The teachers are helpful and always ready to lend a hand. I am very thankful for Winfree and the hope it has given me. If this is taken away from me, I wouldn't know where to go. I wouldn't know what to do with myself. I can only imagine what the other students would do or where they would go. We can be ourselves here when everyone else seemed to think we didn't care. By us going to Winfree it shows our friends and family we care.

Shaina Hunt

WINFREE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS



Richardson Campus

... Making the world a brighter place

Winfree Academy Charter School
1661 Gateway Blvd
Richardson, Texas 75080

February 19, 2007

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I am an advocate for the contribution charter schools make in the educational system and I'm also an Academic/Vocational Counselor for Winfree Academy Charter Schools. I have worked at Winfree Academy since August 2004. I have seen first hand the positive educational and social impact Winfree Academy has on our students. Students choose Winfree Academy for various reasons, which includes; a four-hour school day, credit recovery, accelerated graduation and individualized academic guidance. I am in daily contact with distressed parents who are seeking an academic alternative to motivate their child. Many of our students have lost interest in their education and are often truant. After enrolling at Winfree Academy, a number of our students have gained a renewed outlook on their education. Winfree Academy Charter Schools are imperative as a public school alternative for students and parents in the Dallas/Ft Worth area. Students between the 9th and 12th grades are being served through goal setting, strong instructor guidance, and self-paced curriculum .

While in attendance at a workshop a few years ago, I heard this quote from a presenter. "Not every child has equal talent or equal ability or equal motivation, but every child should have an equal right to develop his/her talent, ability and motivation." This is a quote from President John F. Kennedy, a leader who challenged all of us to consistently do more, give more and expect more. Where best can you find this quality of educating children than in the charter school setting?

In closing, we must work together with the conviction for educating children to instill a love of learning that every child will succeed and become productive citizens.

Sincerely,

Sylvia L. Newhouse

Dear Sir or Madam,

There are so many reasons Charter schools should be concrete. Charter schools have helped so many people in the past and present.

For example, I have recently met a 28 year old named Dave. He graduated from Winfree Academy in Lewisville. He has a bright future. Dave has gone to college and received a four year degree and now opened his own business. This is a factual example.

In Charter schools we, the students, are able to work at their own pace and not be pushed to have work done on a certain date. And there aren't any lectures. Some people, like myself, are visual learners and don't remember what they just listened to but they do remember what they just saw.

There are so many different people in these schools, and nobody judges each other about their appearance, because everyone knows people can be who they want to be and there is no "cliques," everyone talks to everyone. Everyone is accepted in Charter schools.

The teachers can help students one on one with their own problems, and no distractions from others. Students also benefit more from self motivation, rather than a teacher pushing them. This could be very helpful for the student's future, and to be more independent.

These Charter schools have helped and still help so many teenagers it's unbelievable. Shutting us down could be the worst thing because many students in charter schools did not "fit in" in public schools because they wanted to be different or because they could not keep up with the other students.

Please don't put me back where the drama and distractions are.

Thank You,
Melissa Macy

to whom it may concern

My name is Mick Williams I am 16 years old & I have been attending Winfree Academy Charter school since May of 2006. I came to this school because in my 9th grade year I had failed a half of semester of one of my classes & I needed to make it up. And when I came here the registrar told me there is even a possibility of graduating early if you work hard enough. So I have been here for about 10 months and I like how simple it is to come in & have your work & be able to work on a certain class for a certain hour of the day then switch. And just the environment around me. There's different types of kids from a lot of different places. The teachers show a special connection to all the kids & help us out with a lot of different things as far as schoolwork, personal problems, and give good advice. Since I've been at this school I have made lots of friends. I have a lot of respect for my teachers as do they for me. I come in and get straight to work every day & turn in

quarters at least every two weeks I have decided to stay here until I finish the ITR which should be during summer school. This school also has a good schedule because I am in morning session. I go to school from 7:50 a.m. till 12:00 p.m. and right after school I go to work. I work to pay for my car & insurance. And also help my mom pay bills. If this school were to close down I wouldn't be able to work and I only work to help support my single parent mother. I would be stuck with an incorrect amount of credits & if I went back to my regular high school I might not be able to get back in. There's a lot of kids here who are going through the same things. And coming here helps us with our schedule & school, work. We need this school & so do a lot of other kids. Let's keep it here for the kids that really need this. Plus charter schools sometimes are the last resort for some people you wouldn't want to stop that would you?

Sincerely,

Michael Williams a charter school student

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I think that Winfree should stay open because this school gives the kids who are behind a chance to catch up. Most of the students that attend Winfree either got kicked out of other schools or haven't even attended a school in a while. Winfree is the school that takes in the bad eggs and gives us a second chance. Without this school, most likely the kids here wouldn't even attend any other schools. They would stay out there doing their drugs and not really having a future.

The Courage Program is a really encouraging place, without the program I would still be on the streets doing the drugs, and I might even be dead. This program gives me something to look forward to each day. Also, I was really behind in school, but when I came here they helped me catch up. If this school closes, I won't have another school to go to.

That's probably the same situation
all the other kids here are in.

Yes, this school might have not
met the standards, but the kids
here are trying the hardest.

Closing the doors of this school is
really closing the doors to these
kids future. This school is a big
part of kids life.

Sincerely,

Cliff

Cody Crofford

Dear Texas Legislature

I greatly appreciate the fact that you have allowed Charter schools to remain open as long as you have, It has been a last resort for me and thousands of other students. My school is very Good for many kids, who have been in trouble or have fallen behind, or Just cant quite Cut it in a normal School. When I first came to this school, I was a smart ASS, Loser, whose only path was failure. But thanks to the kindness, and ~~Cooperation~~ Cooperation of the faculty, I am Getting Caught up, and hope to Graduate soon. If it were not for schools such as mine, I would have ~~dropped~~ dropped out and become a criminal, or drug user/dealer, But now that I am able to have an alternative to regular school, I am able to go to school and work at the same time, which makes me more responsible. Only Going to school ~~for~~ for 4 hours a day allows me to Be a lot more available to employers, which helps the economy. If you were to remove the funding to Charter Schools, thousands of teachers would become unemployed, and millions of students would no longer have schools to attend, and with that many students returning to public schools at once

would cost more money to add onto
the schools and hire new teachers
than it would just to leave the
current schools alone? So is it worth
worth effecting so many lives by taking away
thousands of schools, millions of jobs
and students, and all the jobs the
student had? Take these thoughts
into consideration.

student
Cady Crofford

Dear Senator Shapiro

Winfree is not only for those who can not keep up in regular schools or are pregnant, but it is also here to help the youth with their drug addiction. The courage program has kept me clean and sober since January 9th of 2007. Being sober is the first step in my education, but the learning experience here at Winfree Academy is one of a kind. I do not only learn more at Winfree Academy compared to a regular school, but I also have fun learning. The teachers here are genuinely concerned with whether or not we succeed. They help me tremendously and make sure that I understand what is put in front of me. This school has been a life saver for me because if it wasn't

for this school, I probably
would not be in school.

Please consider these letters
as not a bribe, but a plea
to keep our courage program
open. For most of us it is our
last chance at a good education.

Sincerely,
Ashleigh Lealan.

BRITTANY WALLACE
LEWISVILLE

DEAR LEGISLATURE,

MY NAME IS BRITTANY WALLACE AND I CURRENTLY ATTEND WINFREE ACADEMY AT THE LEWISVILLE CAMPUS. TO GIVE AN IDEA OF WHAT WINFREE MEANS TO ME I CAN ONLY SPEAK FROM EXPERIENCE. I CAME TO WINFREE A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO WITH ALMOST NO CREDITS, BASED ON THE DECISIONS IN MY LIFE AT THE TIME YOU COULD EASILY TELL I DIDNT CARE ABOUT MY FUTURE AND WHERE I WAS GOING. WINFREE HAS BEEN NOT ONLY AN INSPIRATION BUT A SECOND CHANCE MORE THAN ANYTHING. I NEVER REALLY TOOK MY TALENTS BY THE HORNS AND REALLY FOCUSED ON WHAT DIRECTION I WANT MY LIFE TO GO IN. I KNOW I WILL BE SUCCESSFUL ONE DAY BECAUSE OF WINFREE. IF I WERE TO REATTEND MY OLD HIGH SCHOOL, GIVEN MY SITUATION I PROBABLY WOULD END UP DROPPING OUT BECAUSE I WAS SO FAR BEHIND. I ENROLLED AT WINFREE TO GET MY SELF BACK IN RIGHT STANDING WITH WHERE I NEED TO BE IN MY EDUCATION. I DO PLAN ON GRADUATING AND THEN ATTENDING THE ART INSTITUTE OF DALLAS TO MAJOR IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND INTERIOR DESIGNING, IF WINFREE ACADEMY WAS NOT HERE I COULD NOT TELL YOU WHERE I WOULD BE GOING

TO SCHOOL OR WHAT I WOULD BE DOING.

THE TEACHERS AT WINFREE ARE LIKE FAMILY TO ME. ~~ALOT OF TIMES YOU~~ THEY ARE ALWAYS PUSHING AND ENCOURAGING TO GET THE WORK DONE AND TO OUR BEST ABILITY. ANOTHER WONDERFUL THING ABOUT WINFREE TO ME IS THAT BECAUSE THIS SCHOOL DOESNT HAVE THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND FRIENDSHIPS ARE ON A MORE PERSONAL LEVEL. THE STAFF HERE ARE ALWAYS SETTING TIME APART TO TALK TO THE CLASS ABOUT LIFE ALTERING DECISIONS. WHY WE WANNA GRADUATE? HOW MUCH WE SHOULD DEFINITELY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SUCH A GREAT OPPORTUNITY LIKE WINFREE. HERE AT THIS SCHOOL IT FEELS LIKE YOU HAVE A SUPPORT GROUP THAT WANTS YOU TO DO GOOD AT EVERYTHING YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO.

I HAVE HAD SOME OF THE MOST DEFINING EXPERIENCES HERE AT WINFREE AND EVEN THOUGH I HAVEN'T ALWAYS MADE THE GREATEST CHOICES I ~~DO~~ NOW KNOW THAT I HAVE GOTTEN MYSELF BACK ON THAT ROAD TO SUCCESS. ALL THANKS TO THE STAFF AT WINFREE AND MORE THAN ANYTHING THE CHANCE GIVEN TO ME TO ATTEND WINFREE CHARTER SCHOOLS.

Dear Texas State Legislature,

Our teachers asked us to write a letter concerning why we attend Winfree, our educational experiences, and the meaning of ~~our~~ ~~our~~ Winfree.

Two years back, I was struggling with living in my parents' house. I was consistently sneaking out, doing drugs, and other juvenile acts. My parents were at a loss, and unenrolled me from Flower Mound High School to be home schooled. Of course, not being able to provide me with curriculum and both working day jobs, my home schooling did not last long. Eventually, and regretfully, my parents placed me back into Flower Mound.

A lot of people say that 16 yr olds have phases. A friend told my parents once that when I turned 17 or 18 I would have grown out of all my troubled times. A few months after my parents re enrolled me, I was sneaking out again. My drug tests kept showing up positive, and my parents finally unenrolled me for the last time.

I brought up the idea to attend Winfree, and my parents were hesitant but agreed. Since then, I have a steady job, my own apartment, the trust of my parents, and ~~the~~ the pride of being drug-free.

Winfree's self paced program helped me to realize that no one is going to accomplish things for me, that I have to work to get rewards.

Unfortunately, I am eighteen and I have not graduated yet. However, I am working on it very hard and I know I will graduate. I may have messed up my education before, but its never too late to fix.

~~Dear~~ Laura Sides

Feb. 19, 07

Sara Sneed

To whom it may concern:

I believe that charter schools are the necessary balance in today's school system. Charter schools are there to help you personally, rather than leaving you behind in confusion. These types of schools help those trying to keep up and need to go at their own pace, as well as those who want to graduate early. Charter schools are kind of the hope for teenagers, I believe the drop-out rate would increase drastically if they weren't there to help you find your way. There is no prejudice in charter schools either. Everyone there seems to fit in and understand one another. Many kids are less fortunate and have to work a lot to help support their families, so the four hour school day is perfect. I believe charter schools really help us get ready for the real world because at

charter schools we take the initiative to do our work, we learn about ourselves and our work pace, so when we do get out there we're ready to go for our dreams at full speed.

MARISOL FLORES

Here at WACS, it's a great opportunity for all kinds of students. They give you chances that other people and schools don't give you. I enrolled to WACS to catch up and do it on my own pace. I like coming for 4 hrs and setting a goal for myself to see how much I can get done during that time without rushing or having a teacher get frustrated because I don't get it right the first time. I like how after I get out at 12:00 I can go to work so that's nice. It gives me time and I can go to work!! My experiences here at WACS have been fun! The teachers are exciting and the teachers are cool to talk to. If you have a problem it's easy for anyone to talk to. You can have a friendship and they understand you and help you out. I've caught up a lot. Set a lot of goals I achieved and it's great for students that need one on one help and well it's great for all kinds of students. The teachers worry and get on us so that we can get on the right path and graduate, so we can prove so many people wrong and show

DEAR SIR,

I came to Winfree Academy last year because i had almost no credits. During the time that I have been here ive brought myself up to just a credit away from where i should be. I find it alot ~~easy~~ easier to work in a charter school, most teens have trouble giving their full attention to a full day of school. At Winfree the four hour school day is just enough time for us kids to focus on the work we need to do without getting tired and bored. Also the freedom we get makes it a much more comfortable enviroment to work in. We get the enjoyment of listening to our ipods and eating which makes the class more fun. The work we get here is not that hard but i do find

myself remembering the
material unlike I did in
a regular school.

Sincerely,
Ashli Asweiler.

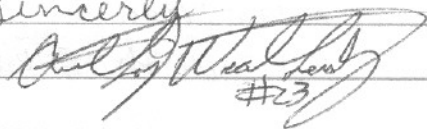
Anthony Weathersby

To whom it may concern:

Charter schools in my opinion are extremely needed. A charter school is more than just an alternative school. Any kid who needs extra help in a subject should try a charter school. In a charter school a teacher is able to give you more attention than a teacher could in a public school. Everyone will have their own reason for the need of a charter school. My reason is much different than others. When I moved to Texas from New Orleans ~~my~~ my head was not in the right place. While I was thinking about friends and family I had to start a new beginning at a new school with different type of people. After a few months I was still missing my home. As a result of me missing my home I began to go downhill in my school work. So I decided to move in with a friend in New Orleans and go back to playing sports. When I left my Texas school I never withdrew I just left. As a result of me not withdrawing they wouldn't transfer my grades to my other school and they were counting me absent everyday. So I moved back in with my parents and was going to attend the school I was attending before I left. With me doing that they told me I would fail my whole first semester. They told to go this charter school where I would be able to catch up faster. So I did go to the charter school and I think it was the best move ever. The charter

School gave me so much time to sit back and take a good look at life. All my teachers supported me and showed me so much love. In a public school a teacher teaches and that's it. In a charter school the teachers there for you anytime you need them. They make you feel comfortable and they teach you the outside world. Since I have started a charter school I have got a job and I have become President of student council. I ~~had~~ had never had a job and I always thought student council was for geeks. The charter school help me to realize so much and put me back on my feet. So please don't shut down the charter schools there kids looking for that one school where they don't have to worry about drama and things related to that matter and a charter school is that school.

Sincerely


Anthony Woodley
#23

Wintfree

This school has helped me to get closer to graduating. At public school the teachers tell you when you need to turn in your work, and I'm not very in tune with Authority figures. At this school I can do my work at my own pace, and get it done faster then someone being on my butt about it everyday. As they say here at wintfree you have to work the wintfree system or it will work you.

Once your givin the work they do have deadlines but they give you more time to do your work instead of asking for your work back in a day or so. I need this school for myself and my future.

When I was a public school I would always get mixed in with wrong people and ~~settee~~ since there are more people at public school its alot ~~is~~ easier to do. At wintfree I mind my own and get work done, which I couldent do in public school. If I didnt need wintfree I wouldent be here.

If I go back to public school I dont think I will graduate

as fast or on time. Also winfree
makes it to where I can have
enough time to work after school
so I can have money to go to
collage.

To conclude, I need winfree and
hopefully you can see that because
if you can't, and you take this
school away your also taking away
my future.

Jane
Paige Becknauld

To whom it may concern

The reason I came to Winfree Academy charter school, was to get ahead; get ahead in life and my school work. At Winfree you could do both. That's one of the upside of attending Winfree. You could walk in Winfree with no credits and walk out a graduate student. I ~~do~~ have never been to a school were you could get so much work done at one time. I think that it would be alot of students that will not be attending school if Winfree was to get close down. Nobody has to go to Winfree the students chose to and the students really appreciate the staffs letting him or her attend. Winfree is just as good as ~~the~~ any of the other High Schools out there. You still get a diploma that's could get you in any college you want to go to. I think you can learn more from the teachers here because they can sit down

And explain things more clearly
to you. So if you can find it in
your hearts and let Winkfree
Academy charter remain open
we the students will really appreciate.
Please & thank you.

JT

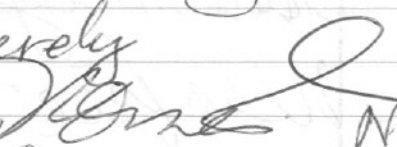
I enjoy ^{being here.} ~~beginning~~ ~~begin~~
at Winfree because the school
is steady paced (actually, it's
really based on how far the student
is really going to commit) Any-
way. I like Winfree because
of the environment, curriculum
and staff. Everyone's very
understanding + helpful. I
came to this school to catch-
up and graduate early. (In
my case I fell behind - my
fault.) ~~Don't~~ think Winfree
I ~~also~~ should of took the
advantage and did the work.
Winfree to me, is a great -

school, but only for people who are going to be dedicated.

~~But~~ So it isn't for everyone, I also like Winfree because the hours are short and your school schedule can be

flexible; they have three ^{sessions} ~~sections~~ if you have a job.

Also this school is great because of the work. I think I can finish a credit in less time I would in regular high school. This school changed my life because I feel like I have a second and last chance to really finish.

sincerely
Nancy 
No. 100

Dear Sir or Madam,

I beg of you not to shut down charter schools. Before I can elaborate on why we need this school open I feel I must first explain how I got here. Please keep an open mind when reading the following selection.

I live in Carrollton, TX and go to Winfree high school in Lewisville TX. I live with my dad, and have lived with him for three-four years now. I lived with my alcoholic mother and her abusive husband. That wasn't so bad, and by ten years old I was completely used to their bull sh**. Anyway in eighth grade I got into a lot of things I shouldn't have, and was completely traumatized by someone I thought I could trust. That is beside the point though, and all I am trying to get across is that I was really depressed, I did not care much about anything, and I did not get along with many people.

After staying at Creekview HS for a year I could not take it. Left and right I would hear some new B.S. rumor about me. I hated that school so much that I never went. I knew I was going to absence fail so before the second semester of my sophomore year I decided to enroll into the school where just about my only friend subsided. I thought I would have a blast not doing anything. Yet, after a couple weeks of not doing anything I figured out that it wasn't working and I got

my act together.

I love Winfree for so many reasons. First, the staff. Mrs. Ehrke (our principal) was a counselor and a friend to me. Not to mention how awesome so many of the other teachers are. Even though some people don't do any work, this school is worth being open for the large portion of people that do. A lot of these kids have background stories, but it doesn't make us bad people. I'm going to get out of HS and go to college, and Winfree has helped me not only figure that out, but also it helped me find myself. I don't know about you but if I help someone the way this school has helped me I will have done pretty well. Please consider what I have said, and please keep us open.

Thank You,
Emily O'Leary

Dear Sir,

I personally don't think charter schools should be shut down because all of the personal help and time that each teacher takes with us. Winfree is a place where it will help you when you want to help yourself. Working in a quiet self-paced environment is what a lot of people need. It has so many teachers that care, and the joy that I see on the teachers' faces makes me want to get out of school so that they will be proud of me as well. Coming to Winfree has put me in a better place. I am graduating two years early. I am being helped to find a college that will pursue the career in barber school that I have wanted for so long. All the fighting and chaos that's going on in public schools does not happen here. To me all schools should be more like charter schools, then maybe more students would stop dropping out. My plan after coming to summer school at Winfree was to get my credits from a

school I went to then I moved.
I was out of school for two
months and was unable to stay
here, but when I saw how
the staff really cared about
me I wanted to stay. So I
have been here since, and I think
that was the best choice I
have ever made

Sincerely
Kendrick James

Kendrick James

Whitney
Justice

2/19/07

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Winfree has made schooling so much easier for me. Before I came here to Winfree in Grapevine I was at Keller High School in Keller Texas I have been going to Keller K - through 11th grade. Schooling has always been difficult for me especially math at Keller I never really understood in a Senior still doing 10th grade geometry. I started Keller again my senior year I left Keller Nov. 1st 2006 not because they made me because I wanted to go to Winfree to understand school because the rate I was going at Keller I wasn't going to graduate in May. I started Winfree on 11/03/06 and now its 2/19/07 and ~~I~~ only have English 4 and Economics 4th quarter left to do for school. I finished all geometry in 7 months in 3 days and at Keller it was taking me 2 years to do. At Keller I only passed English TAKS. Since I have been at Winfree I have been doing TAKS prep for over a month

I have learned more helping tools for TAKS here than I ever have at Wheller last Thursday and Friday I took a practice test for my teacher for the History TAKS I only missed 11 out of 55 that the best I have ever done all because of WinFree I plan on beeing done with TAKS this week because I feel so good about it with all the help I have had here. I never want to go back to a public school because I feel so comfortable here with the teachers helping me thanks to the teachers here I plan on gradeuating less than 2 months with the rate im going here. Please give the charter schools more credit because they really do help people in many ways.

From, Whitney Justice

Sincerely

Dear Senator Shapiro,

The big question is why keep charter schools open? The bill dealing with shutting down charter schools is Senate bill 4. I see a charter school as a place for me to come for a second chance. I am able to work at my own pace in a quiet environment with not all the distractions a public ~~has~~ school has. Working at my own pace, ~~yet~~ having a reasonable dead line, has really lead me to fully understand, specifically, my algebra 2. I don't feel the need to have pressure to do work at a fast pace and not fully comprehend it all. As well as working at my own pace, I also really enjoy the smaller, more one-on-one, classrooms. Since going to a charter school I have been able to really interact with my teacher's and classmates.

Winfrey Academy, a charter school, has really been a eye-opener. It has showed many students that no matter the obstacles they face there will always be a second chance to fulfill a dream of graduating high school. Many kids today have

been told they will never graduate high school, but Winfree and many other charter schools have opened their doors giving students another opportunity that was never thought to come again.

Shutting down charter schools will cause bright, young-minded, intelligent students to find a public school where they might not be able to cope. Therefore, causing a high drop out rate taking a dream from many. Overall, Winfree Academy has opened more doors, furthering my education,

since I have attended Winfree. I am a senior this year at Winfree, graduating on time. If it wasn't for a charter school I really couldn't begin to tell when or if I would have graduated. Please take my voice and other students' voices in consideration before passing Senate bill 4.

Sincerely,
Elisha Korbe
Elisha Korbe

to whom it may concern,

Before you decide to shut WINFREE charter schools day please listen to some of our stories. For many of us WINFREE is an escape. For many its the last place for us.

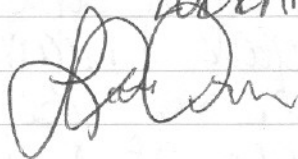
~~The reason I came to WINFREE is~~
~~because~~

With out WINFREE I would be a high school drop out. I'm a senior this year. My 9th grade year I became very sick with a very serious case of mono. I was un able to get out of bed for over a month. Once I got a little better I was still only able to go to school half days. I almost failed that year. Because of that year I've had to take extra classes which causes me a course over load. At the beginning of this year I was attending Piano East. I got very sick again, this time for only a week. I was very behind in school again. After a while I just stoped caring about school. One day a friend told me I needed to get my act straight. So I decided it was time to ~~do~~ do some thing. That's when I enrolled at WINFREE. Thanks to WINFREE I may graduate ~~with~~ with my class.

In stead of shutting down charter schools, why can't Texas spend more time helping the kids pass tanks?

there are a lot of people who are here for a second chance. Some that haven't been to school in years. What will happen to them? So please think twice before you shut us down, this may be our only chance for success.

Sincerely,
LARRAINE TEETER



To Whom It may concern

I'm NOT sure why you wish to close down charter schools, they are very helpful to youth such as me. I am 18, I had a very rough high school search and ended up at Winfree where I was 15, it was my only hope. I am finishing high school late but at least I am finishing. It has been my goal to prove to my parents and myself I am able to take care of myself. Winfree does the best it can for us with what they have.

Winfree has helped me throughout my youth, I never learned anywhere else as I do at Winfree. At the moment Winfree is my last chance at graduating

and going to college.
I refuse to get a GED,
to me that's a easy way
of life, I've fought and
worked to get a diploma
and i need it. I made a
choice to stay in high
school cause i would
love to know what it feels
like when i finally get
my diploma. I beg you
from my heart, a lot of
people are depending
on Wintree to graduate
dont close us down.

Thank you,

Aimee B. B.

Dear Senator Shapiro
attn: Senate Bill 4.

As a student of Winfree Charter School I know how helpful it is to kids like me. I started at Winfree last October, I came to Winfree because I was planning to graduate a year early at my regular high school. If I would have continued at RHS I would be graduated at the end of July. I plan to go to Austin Community College next year so I wanted to be out before I was to start at ACC.

At Winfree we can go to school at the time we wished either morning, afternoon or night. By allowing us to pick what time we go to school we may also work. I choose to go to school from 8-12 then work from 1-9. While I might only be 16 I still have bills I want to pay and need to pay.

I did not come to Winfree because of my behavior or because I was made. I came to Winfree so that I could get ahead and be in college when I am 17. Some kids do have those problems though and this is their last chance to be given a high school education. The kids I go to school with just want to be able to go college, and live a good life.

I don't think you should shut the charter schools down for some of us it's our last chance to graduate. For some people it may seem pointless but to the students it's our one chance to show the world we can succeed.

Sincerely,
Julia Steinbring

2/19/07

Senator Shapiro,

In response to your proposed Bill to close Charter Schools that have not accomplished the minimum TAKS Scores:

Have you really taken into count what will happen to the students currently enrolled in Charter Schools. They will be either forced back into the mainstream ISD, which does not work for them, or they will just quit school altogether.

Charter Schools serve a purpose within Texas for these students. Not all students learn the same, either in their pace of work completed, or the ability to absorb the information.

Teaching at a Charter school is a challenge for teachers, as a lot of students are way off grade level and you are struggling to get them back on track. But then again it is a rewarding job to assist these students and to see them achieve.

I have talked with several of my students, and they say they will not go back to a regular IEP, they will just quit school. Now how does that benefit these students or society?

Politicians should look at the big picture of a situation and not just a possible quick fix scenario. Until you have worked as a teacher, especially with "at risk" students, you can not understand the things they have been thru in their short lives. Broken homes, abuse, physical and sexual, harassment by peers, the list could continue for many more pages.

I urge you, for the sake of not only my students I work with every day, but for students state wide - reconsider the details of this proposed Bill.

Sincerely

Craig C. Grazidi

CTE Instructor

Winfree Academy Charter Schools
Richardson, Texas

To whom it may concern,

Just recently the students at Winfree Academy and I were informed that a bill is trying to be past to close down charter schools. Winfree Academy is a great environment for students who lost their way and would like to get back on track. TAKS Testing became a big deal for me once I entered high school. This form of testing is great to judge what we prof in over the year, but not to shut a whole school down. Staff and teachers at this school have and still provided a positive working atmosphere and build an educational relationship. From my own personal experience this school open a door for me and gave me another chance to recieve my high school education. Being from a home with divorced parents this school helps me maintain a job to support myself as also for many other students. Now not trying to beat around the bush I think what your doing might be wrong for the whole point of your punishing those who are working hard. Please don't pass this bill you will help many if you do not pass it. Thank

you for you time I hope this but some
thought in your head.

Sincerely
Brady Wakefield
A student at Winfree
Academy Charter
High school
Richardson, Texas

The reason why you should keep the schools open is because I think it's a better way of learning for me. Why? It helps me understand it better because I thought myself. I am not saying that the teachers didn't help me; they did when they seen that I did need help. This school did help me understand one thing else to that is life, but everyone to me is like family when I am not at home. This is my home. I think that you would want kids after me to get the same chance as this school give me. So before you just close the door to our school, won't you please think about it. Where will all the kids go to back there? Old school. That's why they come here cause they don't make them. Just like I did so before you do that think about it. If you was a student.

here how would you feel not
to happy about. So I hope
you do think about before
you do that for good. Thank
you for read my letter to
whom every I + went to ~~to~~

Thank you
Jonathan
Guerrero

Kenneth
Taylor

The reason why I go to Wintree is because it's the only place I can go to get away from teachers that make you feel stupid and make you an example to the whole class. I guess people don't realize that a lot of pressure put on someone especially me, along with a teacher that doesn't have a lot of patience and turns her attitude into anger doesn't really help a student like me get anything done. At Wintree more of the teachers act like that. Also this was the only way I could get caught up quickly so that I could graduate on time. When I was younger I got into a lot of trouble in school and out of school and I failed a couple of grades. When I finally wanted to get my life turned around I found it would be hard to do at a normal school then I found out about Wintree and it sounded great so I tried it out and knew I love it. I can actually work and make money and

do good in school.

MARIA MARTINEZ
Lewisville

2/19/07

Dear, Legislators

While here at Winfree, I learned the meaning of responsibility. How no one else but yourself is responsible for your actions. It's up to us to graduate. Not the teachers, or principals, but yourself. Here at Winfree you do your work at your own pace. You don't have to deal with teachers yelling at you for not having work done on time. Or having to worry about not catching up to the class, because you don't understand something.

Coming to Winfree is a very big opportunity to a lot of people. I came here because I was tired of being at my high school. Having my teachers and principals judge me for something I did three years ago. I hated them saying I was a gangster, and everything I ever did to them was gang related. All because I wouldn't let people talk down on me.

My other option other than coming here to Winfree was dropping out. I was so tired of that school that I was willing to let my education go. But then I heard about Winfree, and I decided

to give it a chance. I'm really glad I did, because I really do want my education.

Coming here is a second chance to allot of people. Because they get kicked out. But I didn't. Coming here was my choice. Not anyone else's but mine. High Schools aren't for everyone, and I know it aint for me. So I'm really thankful that I found a school like Winfree, because now I get a second chance on my education. And I'm really glad I did.

Thanks to schools like Winfree theres a little less dropouts. Not allot but a little, but every one less makes a difference. And I'm glad that I'm not a statistic, that out of 2 mexicans one drops out. I'm glad I ended up being the one out of those two that got the chance to graduate. And all thanks to schools like Winfree.

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Winfree Academy Charter Schools have been beneficial for thousands of kids, and could be for a lot more students. Winfree gives students a second chance for school. All the students here are hard working and are very thankful for Winfree Academy. Students are able to graduate early, and learn the same curriculum from their old school. Winfree is a self pace school, which helps me, and other students to concentrate.

I think the TAKS test is very unbeneficial, and should not be used in Texas schools. Winfree students may take a couple times to pass the test, but we still pass. If

Winfree Academy Charter
Schools get shut down,
where does that leave the
people who want to get
away from peer pressure
(The Courage program) and
the people who need to
work full time, for living
expenses, and want to
go to a school, to get
a high school education?

Stephanie Vanstone

Winfree Academy is a GREAT PLACE
BECAUSE SOME STUDENTS CANNOT WORK
AT THE REGULAR PUBLIC SCHOOL PACE,
AND AT WINFREE THEY LET US WORK
AT OUR OWN PACE, I KNOW FOR A
FACT IF WINFREE WAS TO GET SHUT
DOWN ABOUT HALF THE KIDS WOULD PROBABLY
HAVE TO DROP OUT BECAUSE THEY CANT
GO TO PUBLIC SCHOOL.

Sincerely



John Calaf
John Calaf

02/19/07

Dear whom it may concern,

Winfree must stay open. This charter school opens many doors to students future. Whether you are looking for a second chance, or courage for support or to graduate early, Winfree is the place. I came here with 2 credits left to graduate. I was going to get my G.E.D, but my dad said he wouldn't pay for my college. College is my future, Winfree was the only place I could go to graduate. Without Winfree I wouldn't get the future that I've been working so hard towards. On behalf of students in my position please consider this before you make your decision. Thank you for your time and concern.

Sincerely,
Jessica Grosnay

Hello, my name is Vanessa Lozano. I'm one of the many students who attend Winfree Academy Charter School in Richardson. I personally think that this is one of the best charter schools open in Texas. Many people chose Winfree because it's convenient for them, since we're only here for 4 hours a day. This allows them to work and if they have children, it gives them time to spend quality time with them. By keeping this school open, it will give students the opportunity to finish their education. For many of us, this is the only school we can attend, and plus a school like this gives us a better hope of graduating. Please reconsider your bill to close down Winfree Academy Charter School in Richardson.

Thank you,
VANESSA LOZANO

Hi, my name is Nikeisha Barrett, and I am one of the many students who attend Winfree Academy in Richardson. Winfree is one of the top best academy charter schools there are. If you close this school, you'll be taking away our educational needs. The reason I say this is because, over half of the students who attend this particular school have no other school that meets our needs. Another reason is because, half of us who go here, chose to attend Winfree because we either have children and/or a job, so by us attending this school for only 4 hours, we're able to spend more time with our kids and still work at the same time. Plus, we have great teachers who help push us to achieve our goals. Without them, we probably wouldn't be trying as hard as we are today to get our diploma so that we can make something of ourselves, and get a great job in doing so. So please reconsider your options and keep Winfree Academy Charter School open, because without this school, our education is limited.

Thank You,
Nikeisha Barrett

2-19-07

To whom it may concern,

The reason why I think that Winfree Academy should stay open is because it has helped me and a lot of other students get ahead and graduate early and, some that were behind, get caught up to the grade they are suppose to be in. This is a good learning environment for fast learning students that are being held back when they can be past something. For slow pace students it is better for them because they are not rushed through something, they can do it as many times as they need. ~~as many~~

If charter schools close down then the students will be forced to go back to an ISD school.

Some of the students that were having problems at a public school will just have the urge to drop out. Especially the students that are above the age 18 would not be able to go to a public school.

At Winfree you can be in school until you turn 21, and that helps a lot of people graduate.

Stephanie Victory

2-19-07

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,
Attending Wintree
Academy benefits me greatly. Not
only has it helped me catch up on
all of my school work, but coming
to school for four hours takes a
tremendous amount of stress ~~off~~
off my shoulders. I don't get tired,
or bored. I can do a months
worth of work in a week, where as
attending a public school, it takes
a month to do a chapter. My
goal was to always be on task, and
try to graduate as fast as I can,
and I'm coming along greatly,
and I know coming another year
I will graduate early. The teachers
here are very openly willing to
help us out anyway they can.
That's very helpful. I'm very
thankful for charter schools,
and I'm very appreciative of
them. I believe they help a lot
of people, and are a great idea.

Sincerely,

Mary Bruce

Senator Shapiro,

Winfree academy is my last resort for graduating. Not because I was a troublemaker and got kicked out of regular school, I am a good student. And further more am dejected you want to take these schools away. It is not fair. ~~AA~~ this is all I am going to say because you, Mr. Shapiro, probably will not read this.

Taylor Ward.
Taylor Ward

Winfree is a charter school, and your saying charter schools dont meet the standards. At winfree we have the best teachers, teachers that take the time and give individual attention. Since we have been aware of winfree being possibly shut down because of task, we have been working very hard, everyday on getting our task scores up. And I have seen kids putting the effort forth to raise their scores up. People at winfree care! I need this school it is my last option and if I dont have winfree I probably wont get my highschool diploma, and I want it! And no-one should be able to take my education away because of a test! I have friends that dropped out, and I know people who dont care and quit school, I didnt I am in school not like those other bums, I'm at school getting stuff done not out committing felonies. No-one will take my education from me, it's my diploma and I want it who are you to take it away. You can try but you arent going to. Winfree has ~~gave~~ given me hope to graduate with a good education. Winfree is ~~is~~ great.

-Nathan McLean/
-WinFree

Dear Congress

I believe you should keep all charter ~~at~~ schools open because they are very positive environments. You get your work done, you work at your own pace. Very quiet and peaceful, you get one on one help. Smaller class rooms, very far from being a public school. Charter schools help people that don't do good in regular school.

Joshua Law

Shapiro

I really need this school because I have no where else to go. An I'm really trying to graduate this year. If yall take this school away then I'm just going to be another drop out on the streets. A lot of people don't like this school cause they think it's not helping us. but who are you to say whats best for my learning? People learn in different ways. I can't be in a classroom when a teacher is teaching because I get sidetracked, but when I'm just reading the book by myself I learn better and quicker. An if I need help I can just ask the teacher. This school is easy. You can't fail this school, the only way you can is if you don't do your work an fail yourself

sincerely

Ashley
Costa

Chris Pierson

To who this may concern,

The government of Texas is trying to pass a bill that will shutdown charter schools but by doing so there will be many students that won't be able to return to a high school due to the fact that it just alot harder. Shutting down these school will accomplish nothing but have alot of students that won't be able to graduate which means no school after school. This means for the students that plan to go to a College, University, or even a tech school, won't be able to which means no good jobs to start there life. Please take what I say under consideration and not let this bill pass for the future of the students of Texas.

Christopher Pierson

Senator Shapiro,

This is my last chance at graduating I am
done with tasks, I have never fail any
Tasks test. If the school was to close down
I will have nowhere to go this is a
safe place for ~~me~~ me to finish up my
School and further my education.

Shandell Cayling

To whom it may concern,

I came to Winfree because I have heard many good things about the charter school program. It offers wonderful and endless opportunities for all students. I have never been to a school where I can get so much work done in such a small amount of time. At Winfree Academy I get much more one-on-one time with the teachers. I get my work done at a self pace time and I am able to really apply myself and set goals.

The teachers and staff are very motivating and really show they care about each one of us. If I could have things my way, I would not eliminate charter schools, but build more schools. Winfree has put a whole new meaning to education!

Amber

* Winfree *

Chasidi Morgan

Winfree Charter helped me. I'm so many ways this paper that I'm writing on will not have enough space to fill in!

As a young child I major problems with my health which caused me to miss a lot of school days, which resulted in me getting behind in school. And might have been me not graduating at all. But I came to Winfree with the knowledge I had, and they took me as I was! And now believe or not I will be graduating not only on time, but actually before time! :)

Winfree Charter
School is the Best
place. You have so
many opportunities here
the staff is great! And I
felt so much comfort here!

Sincerely, Chasidi Morgan
Chasidi Morgan

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

TO Whom It may Concern:

The reason I think charter schools are good is because, people who are behind in public schools ~~there~~ should go to a charter school too catch up. Charter schools help out a lot of students. It helps them in many ways, also the teacher in charter schools help out a lot individually and some people work better like that. If you were to close down charter schools a lot of people or students would drop out because they wouldn't have a chance in their public schools again. Like for example me I ~~got~~ had got real behind in my regular school and there was no way I can catch up, so my mom brought me here to Winfree and ever since I came to Winfree it has helped me a lot I came in with no credits and now I have more than enough. I don't want them to close charter schools because a lot of students will just give up in public schools.

Sincerely,

Melanie Lopez

~~David~~
David Lafond

Dear Sir,

I greatly appreciate Winfree
cause of the hours that I come. I can
come to school in the mornings and do work, then
after school I go to work until about seven.
This school is helping me because it is a
self paced school so I don't get easily frustrated
like I do at regular school. Also here at
Winfree you can get one on one time with
the teachers, so a student like myself can
get the full extent of help so I can fully
understand an assignment. This is why Sir
I believe you should keep charter schools
open because I can come to school and be
able to keep a full time job.

Sincerely,

David Lafond

Dear Sir.

This school is by the best school I have ever been to. I have gone to a lot of schools. Nothing has changed in my learning, just that now I understand things a little easier.

Going to school for four hours is nice because some weeks I work forty hours. To still get two quarters a week finished is nice too.

I really am thankful for what this school has done for me.

Alex Carrozzella

Dear Senate

I need this school in order to graduate on time. I fell behind really bad freshman and sophomore year. When I came here I still didn't have my head on straight. But since I've been here this year my life has finally come together. I'm getting my grades up and a job and everything. Charter schools are giving kids hope that they can make it in this world even when they messed up in the past. This is a second chance to get back on top of things. So please do not shut down those schools. Some of us have nothing else.

Sincerely,
Tyler Fraser

Dear SIR or Madam,

I came to Winfree Academy, because the school gives me a chance to get my highschool diploma guaranteed. I can keep a job and go to school and still have time to do other things. I can focus on my education when I'm here and get closer to success. Winfree has helped me keep everything in my life organized. Winfree gives encouragement to ~~get~~ a higher education and become more successful in school.

I love to be here at Winfree Academy and I know other people will also in the future.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Ingram

Kelsey Ingram

Dear Sir or Madam

The reason I like Winfrey is because the teachers don't push you all the time to do this and that. Winfrey takes a lot of stress off the reality of school and life. I like coming here because it's a place where the teachers are more like your friends and not your enemies but can be strict when needed, it also is a place where I can come and get my work done and not have to worry about homework as well but I can take stuff home when I need to get something done. There are only a few of many good reasons you should keep Winfrey and all charter schools.

sincerely

Kevin Andrusick

Kevin Andrusick

Phillip C. Aught
vs.
The State of Texas

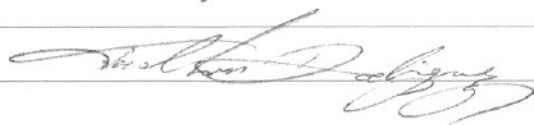
Winfree is a great charter school. It allows ~~star~~ students who may have children, work fulltime, or have any other "real-world" burden time to provide for them and their own. At the Lewisville location, which I attend, school is just like being at any other public school. The staff here at Winfree are more caring and loving than ANY other school I've ever been to. If the government closes Winfree down kids who already feel there's no hope can possibly turn to a life of crime and/or gangs for support. Winfree has helped me personally. Mr. Brown has coached me through three years of Winfree and made sure I'd be on my way to a diploma in May 07.

Thanks for your time,
- a concerned student.

Dear State Senate,

This isn't my first time ~~be~~ here at Winfree. If it wasn't for this school, I wouldn't have come back to school, I had given up on school before (twice), once because I didn't think I could graduate. And another time prior to my back injury, it put a lot of stress on me. I'm still waiting on back surgery, but in the mean time, I'm trying to get as much work done as I can. I know I can do it, and so do my teachers. But without Winfree, I don't know what I would be doing right now. Think about how many lives would be affected without Winfree.

Sincerely



Dear State Senate

If you choose to shut us down you will only be adding more problems to our every day lives. This is the only school where I ~~can~~ feel comfortable and relaxed to do my work. When I first came to Wintree I doubted what they had to offer, but as the first semester went by I noticed that this school is actually helping me out alot. I'm only seventeen and I'm graduating a year early. That's a great accomplishment in my eyes and many others. If you choose to shut down all the charter schools you will only make us stronger. Remember that the decisions that you make that one little decision is going to affect hundreds of lives.

Sincerely
Jenny Brown

Dear Sir or Madam

Winfree Academy isn't just a charter school but a school that helps you get to your goal of graduating. Winfree Academy allows you to take your main core classes that you need to take in order to graduate instead of giving you all elective classes that hold you back. At Winfree the teachers give you all the help and attention you need and require to get out of school and on to college. Winfree gives you special help if needed by that I mean, if you are having trouble with a single subject the teacher that teaches that subject will come sit next to you and give you all the help you need. To myself Winfree is the place to be in order to graduate with full credits and a high school diploma. The teachers and staff at Winfree always encourage you to do your best and they make sure you always stay on top of everything, your classes, credits, and attendance. So if you want to be treated like a person and not just a student and still get all your credits done with and graduate than Winfree is the place.

Sincerely

Ruandrick Oliver

To Whom it may concern,

As a student at Winfree Academy Charter School I have had the opportunity to benefit from this school. In public school, I fell too far behind to graduate on the year I am suppose to, but by coming here it helped me catch up with my credits. Now next year I will be able to return to my home school, for my senior year, and graduate with my class. The one-on-one attention from teachers help us get a better understanding on the subject. Attending school for four hours a day, allowed me to get a good job to pay for my college classes I'm enrolled in at Brook Haven College. I'm getting a headstart on my career in business. Many teenage mothers also benefit from charter schools to help them stay on track and achieve their goals of being a successful woman and not give up and drop out of school. When it comes down to it, Charter Schools are the only hope and encouragement that many need to persue their education.

Sincerely,
Alisha Meneses

To whom it may concern,

I think that charter schools are very important and that many students can benefit from these type of schools. If we didn't have charter schools alot more students would have dropped out. When students fall behind in mainstream schools Winfree and other charter schools give them a chance to catch up or graduate faster. It is self-paced so if you don't understand something a teacher can work with you one on one and you can take the time to learn and understand your material. Unlike mainstream schools where they move on and you can fall behind easily. Charter schools are also good for people that need to work or that are teen parents, because it is four hours a day so they can come to school and do work but they can also take care of things that they need to. In charter schools you get alot more one on one attention instead of one teacher teaching a whole class at one time. Some people learn differently or at different paces and if you're teaching a whole class not everybody learns the material. The teachers care alot more than at mainstream schools. Some people make alot more progress and get a better education at charter schools. If they shut down charter schools then there will alot more dropouts.

Sincerely,
DANIELLE MCCARTER

Doug McAllister

Dear Sir,

I think Charter schools like Winfree Academy should be allowed because it is very helpful. It allows you to maintain a job and go to school at the same time. At this school I get the help I need, there is a class you want to do you can work at your own pace. The teachers sit down with you and help you to understand your work. They are very helpful and I appreciate the hard work all the teachers do and how they help you understand all your work. That you couldn't get at regular schools. A lot of people wouldn't be able to go to school because of work. At Winfree you get all of that. It is very important to me that this school and schools alike should remain an option for those who qualify.

Please don't make us stop going to this school it is very helpful to me.

Thank You

Doug
McAllister

Dear Sir or Madam,

Winfree has helped me more than you can know. I was struggling at my school and I needed to catch up. Summer school was not taking care of all the classes I needed. Coming to Winfree has helped me relax and get a better outlook on life.

It has allowed me to catch up so I can return to my school later in the year. I am grateful to have a opportunity ~~like~~ like this knowing I could still be at my school. Its a ~~privilege~~ privilege to be able to come to this school.

Sincerely,
John Morison

Dear Sir or madam,

Moving from a public school to a charter school has changed my perspective on school, in a good way. I don't have a problem realizing I have school on Monday. I don't have a problem waking up and dreading the thought of school every morning. I can honestly say moving to a Charter School was one of the best choices I've made. I'm completely stress-free. The main reason I moved to Winfree was because I worked at a slower pace and I couldn't keep up at public school. Since I've been going to Winfree I've already seen friends graduate. They're already in college now and I look up to that. It's just really nice to know that there are other ways to graduate than from public school. At Winfree there are no such thing as cliques, everyone's different and their own person. That's always a problem at public school. The freedom I have at Winfree is a blessing compared to public schools. I talk to all my friends at my previous public school, and they tell me how much they hate it, when I'm all bragging about my school. I don't know what getting rid of charter schools will do other than upset a lot of kids and maybe not give kids a chance to get their high school diploma. Thank you for listening,

Logan Karwowski

Yesca 75056

Dear State Representative,

I am a senior who is currently attending Winfree Academy Charter School. It has come to my attention that a bill might be passed that will affect charter schools.

I know many people that have done much better and have graduated early from a charter school.

I have completed more work here in Winfree and have been more focused in my school work than I ever have in any school. Charter schools have always been a place where young mothers could and can come to finish high school because they couldn't in public school. It is also a good school to go to if you're on your own and also have a job to go to. I know you can in public school but here it's just four hours you need to dedicate to school which I can finish a lot more work than I can in public school. This gives me the rest of the day to work which I really need to because I live on my own.

It is a very good school and I hope you think about these things first before it is passed.

Wini Parn
Farmers Branch
75234

I feel that Winfree has helped me alot because of how the self-pace has gotten me to turn in work faster, as well as understand what the teacher is saying to me, then what a public school teacher would try to do.

Charter Schools to me have been as well have been a good help as well to the student around me.

When new students come in to Winfree, they come in excited and willing to get the work done. as well as graduate.

Charter Schools as well as Winfree have given second chances. Charter Schools are the best thing that has happened to me and that is why I have a second chance at graduating when I was told I couldn't.

Charter Schools as well have made it possible for other kids with disabilities, that will have a better chance at graduating, and a good chance to learn.

I'm very grateful for Winfree for being here for me as well as other students that want to graduate.

Though the teachers and staff are funny, they do care about our futures.

Winfree has given me a second chance, and I'm very grateful for that.

David McAllister

Dear Texas State Legislature,

I enrolled at Winfree Academy because I was withdrawn from Flower Mound High School. I came to Winfree about two years ago and was about three credits behind. I should graduate next year on time if things go as planned.

I've had many experiences here at Winfree. From fights to kids setting trash cans on fire. Overall Winfree is my favorite school, I get to work at my own pace, and only have to go half a day. If there were no Winfree, I don't know where I would go. Winfree has taught me to respect people more, because I see what they have to go through everyday. Keep Winfree a running school.

David McAllister

Amanda Yessica
Winfree Academy Charter
School of Jewisville

Dear Texas State Legislature,

I first came to Winfree because I was behind at my other high school, Coppell High School. I came here to catch up and potentially get ahead. Throughout being at Winfree I have been less stressed. The environment here has helped me achieve my academic goals without the regular pressures. I have met some of the most real people here. Friends in which have helped me throughout the hard times. The staff here has given me very close personal help with anything I have asked for. Winfree has taught me to be more self-sufficient + more self-dependant, rather than dependant on others for my success.

Erika Preciado
02-19-07
Lewisville

Letter to the Texas State Legislature

I enrolled in Winfree because I know that this is the school for me. In the other school I was not doing that good. I would skip school with my friends & boyfriend, because I was not getting enough help from the teachers at Lewisville High school.

Then I talked to my mom & told her that I think its better for me to come to Winfree, because I was going to repeat the same grade at my other school, & in this school I know I could do good, so Winfree is a nice school to be in well for me because her I get all the help I needed, & I know that if I keep doing all my work & turn it in on time that I set my goal too. I now that I could graduate this year, some of my friends are here, but what I say to my self "friendship come last & school comes first". Because if I paid attention to them then I wouldn't be nothing in life. The teachers her are great because when you need help they help you & when you need some thing they will bring it to you, well this is my meaning at Winfree.

Dear: State Legislature

I chose to come to Winfree Academy Charter school because I could not make it in regular school. You see WACS has given me a great environment to work. plus the friends I have made are great. See I came to WACS to graduate and go to college. WACS is helping me achieve that goal. The staff is also great, all the teachers ~~hear~~ try to connect with you at your level so they can teach you and help you understand. WACS is very important to me not just to graduate but as a cool environment to learn. This is why I came to WACS.

by: William Alexander
Herr

TO whome it may concern,

2.19.07

I go to Wintree because I have a daughter and ~~the~~ the schedule is great and the teachers are wonderful. I hope to graduate soon so I can make a good living for my little girl. Wintree is the only ~~the~~ school I have been to that will help you with your work and really try to encourage you to do good. I like how you can talk to your teachers. Like they are family and talking to your friends and doing work. Wintree gave me the opportunity to get my credit back and faster. Wintree is a great school I would not go to any other school if Wintree was gone. It's a lot easier to work here. There is not so much pressure on you as there is in regular high school. I love Wintree.

Vinceren
Angie

Javier Hernandez
02/14/06

Whats up Texas State legislature, I was asked to write a letter to you guys to explain my feeling about my school, I'm going to write about why I choose to insce in this school, and why this school is so important to me.

Well before anything else let me introduce myself. My name is Javier Hernandez in 17 years old and im a student at Winfree academy!! I have been coming here since the beginning of the 2006-2007 year. I decided to fall into Winfree because first of all I was not doing good in my last school. Well not horrible either, but just put it this way I'm not your "A or B" student. What I mostly ever got was C, C, C and maybe one B some f. too. I don't know, I just couldn't get myself to concentrate. Well ever since winfree ive been passing all my classes with all A's.

Katie Mejia.

Dear Texas State Legislature,

I enrolled into WACS because i was behind and WACS was the school that gave me the opportunity to catch up with my class. Everyone thinks that kids that come to WACS are kids that have no future. Thats what i thought at the begining but thats not now it is. I actually gave everyone and myself a chance to meet people here. It was great because now i have friends that go to winfree. Teachers at winfree actually care about you graduating and if you need help with something they will sit all day and explain it to you if they have to. WACS also lets me reach my goal and i know i will reach my goal here if i really want to graduate. WACS means a lot to me because i know i will be able to graduate with my class.

I got out of jail, and I want to start a new life. Going to winfree I have learn to make goals and push myself to get there. Even when its hard to push myself to get there my teacher will make sure that I do. I learn something new everyday at school about life and my goals in school. When I want to give up and drop out winfree is there to let me know what's up with me and I keep going on with my goals and pushing myself to get there.

Shaqueel Rice

Arlendis
Paige

My name is arlendis Paige I came to winter because if I would have stayed at IHS, I would have graduated when I was 20, and going here I have the opportunity to graduate earlier than that. So that I will be able to establish my self and finish on time or earlier

Dear TEXAS,

I have had a great experience at Winfree, I have made a total turn around because of Winfree. The whole staff is nice. This is my last ~~chance~~ chance and if you shut this school down I'll quit school.

Sincerely

Emmet Bolder

Dear

The reason I enrolled in WACS was because it's ~~was~~ ^{self} paced school the teachers are great the students are ^{great} and I can graduate now in 10 months and from Winfree I do all my work cause of Winfree academy and because it's self paced school I can graduate alot quicker, ~~and~~ ^{it's} a great school to be in and I can see myself anywhere else besides Winfree I think more people should come to Winfree before I came to Winfree I didn't do my work or anything and now I'm here at Winfree I make ~~all~~ ^{good grades} and do all my work, ~~because~~ ^{it's} alot more freedom at Winfree cause it's self paced and I can get alot more work done

Jason Hood

Gabriel Obregon
Lewisville

Letter to the Texas State Legislature

I enrolled at Wintree so that I can accomplish my goals in life. I want to graduate fast so that I can be out of school and not worry about nothing. And then maybe think about going to college. which is mostly a yes so that I can become a good mechanic working on old school cars.

At Wintree I met many friends some I still talk too others I dont. Some teachers ~~have~~ help me out alot on work and thers stuff.

Wintree is important to me because of my future. Is not like other regular schools were they tell you what to do for you to be able to graduate. here if you want to graduate you get to do your own work.

Dear Texas legislature,

I enrolled here to get caught up in school. I have many friends in Winfree well every one is friends in Winfree, The Teacher's staff is really helpfull and do a lot for me. Winfree helps many students get on with their lives and helps keep us out of trouble in keeps many from dropping out,

Thanks,

Timothy Roth

Brandon
P.

Dear , Texas State Legislature

I am a student of Winfree Ac. Charter School, I enrolled in Winfree because I wanted to get out of school 4 hours early but also to get my education and ~~get out of~~ be done with school so I can get a job and be on my feet.

My experiences at Winfree is fun. I get to hang with my friends and do my work at the same time. Also the staff help me complete my work.

I think Winfree is very important because it is a place that helps kids get on the right path.

Dear Whom it may Concern,

My name is Rian Armani McGriff
I enrolled in Winfree because it
was a great opportunity to get
ahead. Winfree has allowed
me to get ~~for~~ credits. I plan
to go to college in the
fall so I can move on.

Sincerely
Armani

Amanda Tannert
Lewisville Texas
2/19/07

When I moved here from California, I lost most of my credits. Winfree was the Only Option for me. At Winfree I can catch up on my credits and get back on track. I've never heard of a Charter School before, I'm really lucky that I found out about Winfree. Without Winfree, I would have to go to school for another 4 years, when I should of been a Senior this year. Winfree is looked down upon by some people, but without Winfree there would be alot of drop outs. For some students Winfree is their last hope. I myself think Winfree is a great school, you actually learn alot more, you get the one on one help that you need, and if you want to you can teach yourself. There's no limit of what you can finish. The staff here are very friendly and we are their motivation to teach. They actually believe in us, they ~~and~~ make us feel worth something, and proud of ourselves. If Winfree ever shut down, there would be alot of teenage drop outs without a school that will except them. They want get the education they desire, you won't ~~find~~ find the teachers we have here, anywhere ~~else~~ ~~there~~ ~~is~~ ~~no~~ ~~place~~ ~~like~~ ~~that~~.

Dear Texas legislative

The reason I came to Winfree was because it's a small school less people than a regular school it's better and Winfree has zero gang activity it's a safe place the teachers are very helpful especially the ESL teacher she is fun to work with and she is very helpful to everybody too. I had found Homeboy and Homegirls if it wasn't for Winfree I don't know where I would be right now this school should be approved by everybody or ask the people that graduated from Winfree they would tell you so this school shouldn't be criticized by nobody because Winfree is the best school to be and if not Winfree no other school.

Thanks for taking the time to read my letter.

by:

Jesus Zarate
(Lucky)

Dear Congress

A charter school helps students who don't do well in a regular high school environment. At Winfree we go on a steady but well moved pace. We still learn the same things but the work is easier, the classrooms are much smaller and more organized. A lot of students like the individual work plan when you don't have homework and dead lines. Yes, we think TAKS is important but some students don't realize you have to pass to graduate. If they see that charter schools are going to close maybe they'll try harder.

Whitney Wynn

To whom ever this my concern:

I, TyMeka "T.J" Jackson has always seen myself as some what of a troubled child with poor decision-making skills. However deciding to obtain the proper education with WinFree Academy Charter school has been one of the ^{most} satisfying decisions I've made. "WAC" provides a positive environment, appreciated by hard working & responsible pre-adults striving to become successful.

I initially came to WinFree because I was behind in my academics. Not only have I caught up but I will be graduating this year with my class, Class of 2007. WinFree's self-paced environment allowed me to finish courses in half the time then a traditional settings. The staff is extremely helpful and really care about your success. Coming to WinFree Academy was not only a good decision, it has given me a solid foundation to succeed in life.

Sincerely TyMeka ~~Phill~~ Jackson

TyMeka S. Jackson

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Winfrey Academy should stay open because it helps lots of students graduate faster and it gives kids another chance to turn their life around. The Courage Program also helps kids change their life. They can be in a sober environment and still do their school work.

I know I would not be where I am in life if it wasn't for Winfrey and the Courage Program. If it's closed down then there will be nowhere for a lot of kids to go to school.

You can go at your own pace so it's not as stressful as a normal public school. It gives people second chances and a brighter future.

Without Courage I know I would still be doing drugs.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Christian

February 19, 2007

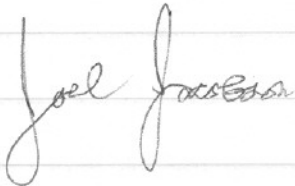
Dear Senator Shapiro,

I am writing to you as a student from Winfree Academy and would like to ask you to cancel the bill on closing Winfree. As an addition to my request, I will give you my thoughts and opinions about this school. It truly is a good a school and for the people who are actually trying to get somewhere in life (such as myself) this program has taken them one step closer. Although some students attend Winfree as an easier way out, many others come to finish work and fulfill their dreams of graduating highschool. I also take consideration of the teachers who are here constantly putting up with the headaches all because they want to help kids learn. When I first came to Winfree in October of 2005 I was far behind and still considered a freshman. Now I am proud to say that I will soon be able to finish school and walk the stage. All that I ask is that you please consider the ones who really are working for a better future and trying to get all the benefits they can. Thank you for taking time to read my letter.

Sincerely,

MariOrana

Dear Senator Shapiro,
Winfree Academy Charter School has significantly
bestowed a great deal of facilitation to my
endeavor to acquire an accurate itinerary
to life. I currently subsist a mind-set of
gratitude in support of Winfree Academy being
the faultless substratum to numerous
student's resurgence.

Sincerely,

Joel Jacobson

The Reason why we should keep charter schools

In 2006 I attended Winfree for summer school and thought that it was a pretty good school, so I decided to attend next year for school and I was right. Not only is it a good school, but it also gives young hard working people like me an opportunity to work and also presents me with opportunities to graduate early. It also gives young teenage mothers another shot to receive their ~~the~~ diploma and ~~not~~ take care of the children as well. That just proves that not only Winfree charter schools, but other charter schools can give other students like myself the opportunity to walk across the stage. You can do anything you put your mind to.

Sincerely,
Mackia W

Dear Mr. or Ms. State Senator,

This is why you shouldn't shut down the charter schools. If you close them down a lot of us don't like our old public schools. So what will we do then, well let me tell you, most of us will drop out! Then most of us won't be able to be nothing in life. (Charter schools are really good. ~~When~~ I have learned more here than I did at my regular school. I have also caught up on my credits. When I came here I had no credits. Now I have six. It also helps parents who have newborns at home to go and spend time with their children. There is also a lot of ex changed students from other countries trying to get an education.

Sincerely, Yours Truly

CV
A

Dear Sir or Madam,
Wintree Academy is a great school because it lets you catch up on your work from regular school that you didn't finish or that you are behind on.

At Wintree you work at your own pace so you know what you're working on and what you want to work on more. This school has given a lot of students an opportunity to work harder and accomplish their goals to graduate.

Without Wintree I don't think any student in regular school that was behind would have a chance to graduate with all their credits.

In conclusion, Wintree Academy Charter School is a chance for students to graduate and go to college and be some one in life. Every student ~~can~~ should have an opportunity like I'm having to accomplish their goals.

Sincerely,
Rebecca

8-19-07

Dear Sir / Mam,

THIS IS JUST MY FIRST YEAR AT WINFREE AS FAR AS I BEEN HERE THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST GREAT PLACES TO BE ABLE TO LEARN, AS YOU CAN SEE WHEN WE ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOL THE TEACHERS ARE ALWAYS HOLDING BACK STUDENTS FROM BEING ABLE TO LEARN BECAUSE THEY ARE IN A RUSH OR THEY FEEL BEHIND IN THEIR LESSON PLAN, THE TEACHERS WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND YOU MOST OF THE TIME NOR EVEN BOTHER TO ASK IF ANYBODY NEEDED HELP AND IF WE DID ASK SHE WILL MAKE US COME EARLY IN MORNING OR LATE AFTERNOON FOR TUTORING.

HERE AT WINFREE I AM ABLE TO WORK AND LEARN AT THE SAME TIME WITH A COMPUTER TEACHING ME AND TEACHERS SURROUNDING ME WITH GREAT SUPPORT TO HELP ME BE ABLE TO GRADUATE SOONER WINFREE IS A GREAT PLACE TO LEARN IF YOU JUST TAKE THE TIME TO LEARN AND SET A GOAL THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH.

THIS ISN'T MUCH TO TELL ABOUT WINFREE BUT A LITTLE BIT I LEARNED I HOPE ANY OTHER KID HAS THE SAME WORDS TO EXPRESS

Sincerely
Edith Preciado

Murphy

Yates

Why I go to Winfree is because so that I can graduate early. Winfree is one of the best schools I've been in.

Chris Pennington

Dear Texas legislature,

Winfree Academy is a great place for me. I love the environment. I came to Winfree last year during the second semester. I think the teachers here are very nice. They treat most kids equal. The teachers are always there to help me. I like this school over a regular public school because I am not put on the spot. This school is self-paced and I love that. I feel I work better with packets than just ask for help when it is needed. It takes off a lot of pressure. I feel like I am where I need to be Winfree Academy. The school is very clean and very organized. When going to this school at first I jumped right in and got the hang of it. The teachers were all there ready to lend a helping hand. Although the school is self-paced there still are teachers like Mr. Wright who push me to finish quarters faster. All over all Winfree is the perfect school for me. Without it I have no clue where I would be now. By the time I graduate this year ~~is~~ early next year I will be attending Full Sail in Orlando Florida to study music business. Winfree has me set on that path now.

Jason Jester

During my time at Wintree I have been able to do more things with my life, like now I can attend school and also get a job and have more time to work and make money. And now that I am able to earn money and still have time to do my own things I don't mind attending school. That is why I enjoy attending Wintree.

Raymond Nelson
Lewisville

I came to winfree i got kicked out of my public school. winfree decided to give me a second chance. my goal when i came to winfree was to graduate as quickly as possible and since its self-paced it was easier to attempt to finish my goal.

Its a very diverse environment, and the teachers are very helpful. I think if winfree got closed i would drop-out of school because, winfree schedule works with my schedule.

CHRIS Fuentes

Texas State Legislature.

My name is Chris Fuentes & I enrolled at WACS because I had only 6 credits and I was supposed to have 14. Right now I've earned 3 credits since I've been at WACS & I have to say this school has helped me a lot. Especially since I have a child it has helped to only go for 4 hrs so I could get a stable job after school.

Jared Henderson

Texas state legislature

I enrolled at Wacs because I wasn't good at regular school and the work was too hard. Winfred gave me another chance to get a diploma and have a chance at life.

Dear Texas Legislatures,

I enrolled into Winfree Academy so that I could graduate early and so that I could get a job and work more hours. I have a lot of good experiences at this school. When we work hard we get rewarded, and I have met a lot of cool people since I have been here. I have got closer with some of the students and staff. I like the self-paced environment because I am the kind of person that likes to do a lot of hands on work by myself as much as possible, but if I need the teachers, they are always here to help me. I personally think that self-paced is the only way to go, because I have learned a lot more since I have been here than I did at my old High School. IF I had never come to Winfree Academy then I probably would have dropped out. But since I have been here I have grown up a lot and once I graduate I plan on joining the Air Force. I have realized that there is a lot more to life than partying. The Winfree experience has helped me settle down and focus on what is important.

Sincerely,
Brandon Smith

Dear, Senter Shapiro

My name is Johnathan Speakman I havent been to Winfree very long but i have felt a kind of connection to this place it has helped me to like school work again and their courage program is helping me to get through my Drug and Alcohol ADDICTION I have recently learned that if most of the school Doesnt Pass TAKS then you will shut the school down but that would be bad for alot of the kids here including me this is the only place that I can go and learn to be safe also to be safe by learning. I know this letter might not be much But it's my only hope and to pass the TAKS
Wink *Wink*

Sincerely,
Johnathan Trei Speakman

Senator Shapiro

My name is Jameson Greiner. I heard that a bill is being proposed that would not allow Winfree to stay open. I am a student here so that's not good for me. I am not a regular student though, I am a 17 year old sophomore. 1 year ago I went to rehab for cocaine.

When I came home I was way behind in school. Winfree has given me another chance to catch up. The courage program has even given me a sober environment. Please don't let Winfree get closed it would cost me either my education or my sobriety.

Thank you,
Jameson Greiner

Senator Shapiro,

I heard you are closing down Charter schools. This school, Winfree Academy, gives me many opportunities other schools can't. Before I came to Winfree I had problems with behavior and doing my school work. I know this is cliché but, this school has really opened up doors for me. They just focus on the work aspect of school. At my campus, Richardson, there is the Courage program. I spent a year and a half watching young adults that were clean and sober work by wishing I could be like them. One day I put myself together and asked the director if I could join. I did and nothing has been the same since. I now get work done everyday, I have stayed free of drugs in the Courage program, and leaving for the Army in May. I truly turned around with this school.

Sincerely,

Brooke Hubbard

Senator Shapiro,

I heard you were shutting down charter schools due to TAKS testing. I believe you should keep charter schools open because for some of us, it's all we have left. Winfree Academy has given me a second chance and the Courage program in Winfree Academy has kept me away from drugs and peer pressure.

For some of us, public schools aren't cut out for us. Charter schools are perfect for us. Also, if you come to Winfree Academy and wanting to graduate early, it's possible. At Winfree you can graduate within two years if you put forth the effort to do so.

Winfree Academy has given me a second chance at school. If you shut down Winfree Academy, then you're throwing away some of our futures. We won't have anywhere else to go. I would appreciate it along with a numerous amount of people if you didn't shut down charter schools.

Thank You,
Chris Reed

Dear Senator Shapiro,

WinFree academy has helped me a great deal if it wasn't for WinFree academy I would have had to drop out so WinFree academy has helped me further my education and if it shuts down I will be in a bind and I will not be able to further my education and the Courage Program has helped me stay sober and sober up when I first joined I did not know what it meant to be sober and now I do I know why it is good to be sober so on behalf of me and other students please do not shut WinFree academy based on their TAKS scores
Thank you

Corey Reed

Dear Senator Shapiro,
Winfree Academy has been very beneficial to me in my school work, and my recovery. If it wasn't for Winfree I probably would still have a problem with using drugs. When I got out of rehab I wasn't strong enough to go back to my old school and hang out with my same friends. Winfree provided me with a drug free environment where I could concentrate on my school work. It gives kids a second chance at getting their high school diploma. We have all made mistakes in our lives, and Winfree just didn't kick me out like a public school did. It's very important to me to get my high school diploma, and Winfree Academy is the only place that I can do this. Please do not shut us down based on the TAKS test. Thank you

Aed Soffel

Dear Sir,

Charter schools are a great and wonderful way for students to go at self pace. Personally I came to Wintree because I was behind on my credits and needed to graduate by the end of this year. By attending Wintree I have gotten a lot accomplished. Going to a charter school has gotten me further than if I would have started off at a mainstream school. I recommend charter schools to anyone that wants to get ahead or to get where you needed to be. The teachers here are wonderful they are extremely helpful and cater to your needs. Whatever they may be. I wouldn't change anything about charter schools.

Jory.

The reason why I went to Winfree is because I have a job that I have keep up with, and Winfree gave me a second chance to graduate and also ~~again~~ get caught up on my credits. That was lost, some that was never finished. I would like take this time out to thank Winfree for giving a second chance not only to me but other students. If wasn't Winfree anymore the students that are here, ~~where~~ where would we go?

Sincerely,
Blay P...

-kimberly tyler
-lewisville

Dear Texas Legislative,

The reason I decided to come to WinFree because, I had planned on graduating early. WinFree does everything they can to help you accomplish your goals, and there is one on one help from the teachers.

If WinFree were to be closed during my attendance I would more than likely drop-out and get my ged. I honestly don't think I would even consider going back to a regular high school. Another good thing about WinFree is that there are three different sessions that I can go to so my availability for my job works out perfectly. Thank you I hope all your confidence in WinFree's students will shine when you give us a chance.

Sincerely,

Kimberly,

Texas State Legislature.

I enrolled in Winfree Carter school for many reasons. This school was a chance for me to start over and forget about all the other stuff that took place at my other schools. I didn't like my other school and their teaching so this was here for me to self pace myself and teach myself and let teachers teach me also. I have met people here that just accept you for you even if you have made some not so good choices. If this school was closed down there would be lots of kids that don't finish school and at least here they do finish on their own time. I love this school cause it gives me a chance to not only catch up but also get a head and complete high school quicker.

I enrolled in to Wintree because at my old school I got into a lot of trouble and was suspended probably more than half the time I was there. So I figured if I came to Wintree I could graduate alot quick since everything's self paced. If I would of tried hard enough I could of already been graduated. Since I've been at Wintree I have met alot of cool people. The staff have been nice as long as I do what I'm suppose to and don't get into trouble. Wintree is real important to alot of students because this is the only school they can go to. I know if Wintree wasn't here I would just drop out because I couldn't want to go back to a public school. Wintree is really important to some students because they get in, do there work, and don't mess ~~and~~ around, and graduate early.

Chelsee McMahon.
Lewisville.

Experiences at WACS for me is so meaningful. First when coming here I thought it would be hard. Here I was 16 and pregnant. Not many people give teens the time of day when pregnant. But coming here I was welcome with open arms, and not just by staff but by my peers who are all now my friends. This meant so much to me. Growing up was hard never was I good enough for my mother I was always making mistake and never doing anything right I was a mistake in her eyes. It wasn't long before I came here that my mother had left me. Where she is now I will never know. She would be proud to know I'm a mother to a beautiful little boy. As well as a full time student, and graduating this December. As of now the staff is working with me to get into a good college to be a medical assist. WACS was the only place to give me a chance to change my life around. Making a new beginning, and a life for my son and I.

Dear Sir or Maddame,

I came to winfree so I could get away from my public school. When I was there I felt like I was not part of the school but more of just a number to them. The teachers did not even care about our problems or concerns. Even when I was in my classroom I felt like I could never learn anything because the teachers would be talking too fast. When I came to Winfree I realized that there really are teachers out there that care about you. I think I work better ~~on~~ on my own pace and not when I have a time limit on my mind. I have learned a lot from all the teachers here too, Mr. Brown and Mrs. Raney; two of the councilers here; are like a second parents to me. They help me on anything. I know that winfree is a better school because it either helps kids catch upon things they are behind on or to graduate earlier. I really do not want to have to go back to my public school and graduate, I want graduate from Winfree Academy.

Thank You,
Rachael

Geia Farris

Winfree is the best school that I know of. It allows students to do their work at a steady pace and get it done. I was told by a friend about Winfree because I was with child. Winfree gave me an opportunity to go to school with my son and be able to do my work. They have a great staff that tends to your needs and gives you that extra push that every student needs.

Winfree Academy

What I like about

Winfree Academy is it's self-paced, we go 4 hours a day, and we get more one on one help with the teachers. The teachers have more time to work with each student independently, than regular schools. In order to be here at Winfree you really have to be self-disciplined - because you can't just come here and not do anything. You have to be dedicated to do the work.

Veronica Almerquez
02/19/07
23

I like Winfree Academy
because I have to do work and
I can graduate more earlier. This
school is just four hours, that's
what I like about Winfree.

I like Winfree because I
would like to graduate early and
I have more time in the morning
and the afternoon ~~for~~^{to} take my
little sister to school and pick
her up there.

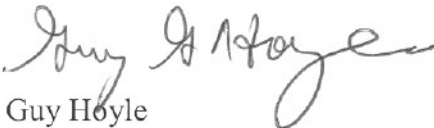
Dear Senator Shapiro,

My name is Guy Hoyle, and I have been teaching Social Studies at Winfree Academy Charter School for five years now. In that time, I have taught many students; some are exemplary, while others have many problems with attendance, grades, and other problems that interfere with their schoolwork. These are students who have not been served well with the public school system; they arrive without basic math and reading skills, having somehow been promoted through the school system without acquiring them. Many of them have been encouraged to attend Winfree Academy for this very reason, so that their poor performance will not reflect badly on their home schools. If Winfree students perform poorly on their TAKS tests, one needs to examine their performance at other stages in their education to see a history of such performance. A few months at a charter school will not undo years worth of educational neglect in the public school system.

If charter schools such as Winfree must serve as "dumping grounds" for educationally troubled students, then naturally their students' performance on the TAKS test will naturally reflect this. At public schools, these children have the discouraging option of failing the same classes over and over, or enduring social promotions to keep them with their age groups (though this practice has been much curtailed in recent years). At Winfree, if they do not achieve a passing grade, they are allowed to redo the assignment until they pass, which is less time-consuming and less discouraging. If schools such as Winfree are closed, these students will be returned to the same schools where they performed so poorly in the past, dooming them to failure.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider your position on Senate Bill 4. Since traditional schools have failed many of the students that charter schools have taken in, it is imperative that they have an alternative place where they can make progress outside of the usual strictures of the public school system.

Sincerely,



Guy Hoyle
Winfree Academy Richardson
February 19, 2007

Kari Black

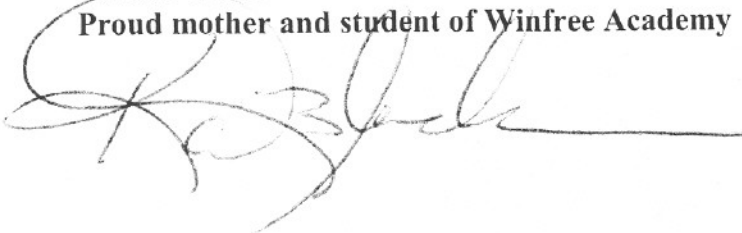
Why Winfree Academy Should Stay Open

Why I think Winfree Academy should stay open is because it really has helped me in the long run. When I was in Plano Senior High School I never wanted to do my work because my teachers down graded me. It made it to where I didn't have enough credits to graduate. After enrolling into Winfree Academy my entire world has changed. I got pregnant, now I'm 7 months in on my pregnancy and because of the teachers here I am going to finish. Ms. DeSquire, Mr. Walker, Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Perry have really helped me in the long run. Ms. DeSquire has taught me a lot about math that use to be my worse subject, she would explain it to me now I'm doing math that I thought I would never be able to achieve. Mr. Sheppard helped me with my keyboarding and my principals of marketing, though I might never use it is very helpful to me to know. History with Mr. Hoyle, this is a class I have always had troubles in at my other schools because I never understood them properly. With Mr. Hoyle showing me where to look and finding easier ways to approach them I have come to love history. Winfree Academy has really helped a lot of people in the long run. Without Winfree Academy all these teenagers that go here would be out on the streets either selling or doing drugs and the girls would be prostituting because they never got the proper education. A lot of families use this school because it is affordable. There are a lot of families that can't afford a public school in Richardson or Plano. This school is here for the children that truly need the school's education. I am proud to be part of the Winfree Academy Roster. With out this school I would be out of school because Plano Senior High School will not accept pregnant teenage women. I really would do anything to keep this school open, because it has helped me just like it has with my older brother Kory Black who is graduated and going to College. My Sister who has been into drugs and she still got a chance at school. They never look at our past and only look at our futures. My past at my other schools were just awful, running into the law and getting in all kinds of trouble. Winfree Academy never looked at my past and only saw the future that I want to carry. With this school I can achieve my goal and go to a great college and get a great job to properly care for my little girl. Evolution has a 6-9 month waiting list. A lot of people are not able to wait that long just to get a diploma. Please, don't shut Winfree Academy down, you don't know what may happen to all these teenagers that go here. I request that Winfree Academy Charter School Stay open for others to achieve their goals just as well. Thank you for listening to everything that I have to say.

Sincerely,

Kari A. Black

Proud mother and student of Winfree Academy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kari Black', written over a horizontal line.

2/19/07

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a student of Winfree Academy, and let me be one of the many to rise in disapproval of Senate Bill 4.

This place is not my last chance to pass high school. I could have stayed in the normal program, but I would have suffered there under the constraint of periodic breaks and homework and other assignments and projects that interrupt the flow of my education. The self-paced program is perfect for many others besides me as well, and I am not even obligated to take the TAKS test. This makes Senate Bill 4 unfair to me, and others who simply prefer a self-paced program over normal class-based curriculum, and I urge you to cease your actions against those schools immediately.

Do not think this to be a demand, or a threat; it is a statement that Senate Bill 4 is an unfair action against me and my future, possibly damaging my potential to graduate in time severely. Personally, I am indifferent to the TAKS, and to many of the other students who work alongside me. I'll tell you immediately that I am in this for myself, but that I am still conscious of the way this will affect me and other students who will be unable to continue their education if and when Senate Bill 4 is passed.

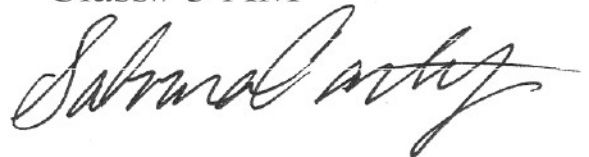
Sincerely,
Dustin Angus Zimmerman

To whom it may concern:

What can I say, I love Winfree. This school honestly changed my life. I attended Eastern Hills High School In Fort Worth my freshman, sophomore, and a small portion of my junior year. I only had 9.5 credits when I came to Winfree academy. I now have 14.5 credits and am currently in DCP which upon completion I will receive 3 whole credits. I have a 9 month old Daughter, and work at least 35 Hours every week so only coming to school for 4 hours is very helpful. I am actually learning new things unlike I did at Eastern Hills. For once in a very long time my parents are proud of me. I appreciate Winfree academy and all the caring Administration, and teachers. I love being around a positive environment with people that want me to succeed in life. The teachers constantly encourage us to believe in ourselves, and to be responsible for our own actions. Winfree Academy is preparing its students for real life situations, and teaching us how to cope around different diversities, religion, and most importantly race. I feel I am more prepared for the real world, which contains all different types of people opposed to being around only my race. I appreciate learning how to have conversations, and be friends with everybody, and I feel that we are all here because we want to graduate and move in to bigger and better things. I personally want to live my life to the best of my ability, and I love being at Winfree Academy (NRH) so please don't let TAKS score percentages close our school. Winfree Academy saves so many lives mentally and

physically and without this school it would be a lot more lost souls walking around not going to school nor caring about education. Education is the most important key to life here at Winfree the Administration and Teachers instill that in us not because they have to because they want to. I appreciate Winfree Academy for everything it has done for me and don't feel it should be held accountable for something that is our home schools fault. Please reconsider your decisions because Winfree is truly a lifesaver.

Thanks For your time
Sabrina Canty
Class# 3 AM

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sabrina Canty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'S' and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

February 19, 2007

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to inform you about my school, Winfree Academy High School (North Richland Hills Campus). Winfree Academy is a charter school and has turned my life around. I had many problems at the traditional high school setting.

The teachers here do not yell at me and care about me being successful in life. It is easier for me to complete my assignments with the one-on-one help I receive daily. The self-paced environment also helps me to complete my assignments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Josh Lewis

February 19, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Gerardo. I came from Fossil Ridge High School for many reasons. I was put into alternative school for selling drugs at school, and then I dropped out of school in the last part of the year. I found Winfree a good place where I could catch up and get ahead of where I was at. My girlfriend found out she was pregnant and so I want to graduate early to get a good job and take care of my kid and her. I think to shut down a place like this because some kids are not on the level that they need to be on. Why put those kids back out, and not help them.

Please take into consideration those kinds of kids, because I am one of those kids. I am working hard to get on the level that I need to be on.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerardo Bencomo". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Gerardo Bencomo

To whom it may concern

2-19-07

I've learned more in this school in a few months then I have in a few years in a traditional school. We have the opportunity for more one on one help with the teachers. In a regular school the teachers only explain thing once or twice and tell you come back next year if you don't understand. Here the ability to work at your own pace. I haven't accomplished as much in a traditional school as I have in Winfree academy. All I am saying is I am lucky to attend Winfree academy.

Sincerely,

Lance Tyree

Lance Tyree

Chance Pettey

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Winfree is a great school. I'm excited to tell you about Winfree Academy Charter Schools. Winfree has fantastic teachers. This program is set up to succeed not fail. There isn't a better school to go to.

Winfree has kept me in school. If it wasn't for Winfree I would've dropped out. Regular high school wasn't for me. I couldn't deal with all the kids. I like working on my own.

The curriculum is great. The way the program is set up is excellent. Working on our own pace is amazing because you can graduate sooner. It can help students who want to start there life sooner like me.

Being at Winfree has helped me keep a full-time job. Regular high school can not do that. Working a full-time job and going to Winfree has helped me move out. Winfree makes me want to go to school, because I can get done quicker.

Winfree overall is an excellent program in curriculum and teachers. This program is good for many students like me. If it wasn't for Winfree I would have dropped out. With my high school diploma I can achieve anything.

Sincerely,
Chance Pettey

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Winfree Academy has helped me immensely. Without this school, I am not sure where I would be right now. Before enrolling at this school, I had withdrawn twice from my local high school because of personal reasons. Essentially the simple version is as follows: my parents had divorced, we lost our house, and I was forced to attend a new school all within a six month period. I did not respond favorably to these events and spiraled into a deep depression. At my lowest point, my mother involuntarily checked me into a rehab clinic. There I learned humility and what true hell was like. The people I met there showed me that my problems, in comparison to theirs, were trivial. I was not a drug abuser, I had not been molested as a child, and my mother had not been shot in the head in front of me when I was young. This was the beginning of the end of my depression. Although it would take me quite a bit longer to fully get my life on track my views on the world and subsequently my life had changed.

During this time I had my first experiences with Winfree. I was instructed to attend the school, briefly, as a way to finish out the school year. At this point, attending the school full time was not on my mind. After the summer, I returned back to my local high school in Coppell. Things went well for the first few months, but ultimately I was still unhappy. One day I went to my mother and told her I no longer wished to attend Coppell High School. She was upset and over the next few months and was patient in trying to get me to go back to school. During this time she did not become angered with me and did her best to try and help with the situation. This time off gave me the time I needed to really think over my life, where I was, where I was going, and what I needed to do. I could not be a high school dropout. This was simply NOT an option. I came to the conclusion that perhaps attending Winfree full time would be a beneficial option. I believed that the self paced environment would remove the stress factor from school, giving me the time and space I needed to attack my problems head on, kill off this depression (whether it was situational or medically caused), and get my life back on track. The self paced structure would also allow me overcome the time I had lost and work as fast as I could, making sure I graduated within a reasonable time frame.

My predictions were right. Winfree gave me the tools I needed to turn things around. Going into the school year I had a new, clear, mindset: I could not allow myself to be dragged down and the only person capable of changing my life for the better was ME. I fully took advantage of the self paced environment and worked as hard as I could every day. Since, at Winfree, there are no deadlines or homework, a significant source of tension and stress was removed. I focused on improving myself and getting things back on track. During my first full year at Winfree I lost 40 pounds, met my current girlfriend (we are still together), focused myself academically and once and for all killed the depression that was causing me so much trouble. Without the relatively stress free environment offered by Winfree, I sincerely doubt my turn around would have been as quick, or whether it would have happened at all.

It is now my second year at Winfree. I am doing well academically and have opened myself up more. Before this charter school, I was very closed off and quiet around others. I have come out of my shell and become much more social. This year I joined the Winfree Student Council. Something I can now do that I didn't think I could do before is talk in front of many people. I now can do this regularly. I am head of the Newspaper Committee and a member the Winfree Academy Goodworks Team. This year we have gone to Special Olympics, organized a Christmas party for a former student on leave from a tour in Iraq, and volunteered at the North Texas Food Bank. We are planning three more trips back to Special Olympics.

I understand the reasoning behind wanting to close down charter schools. I understand that many believe they are a drain on state resources. In Winfree's case, however, this could not be further from the truth. Yes, there are those that choose to come here take the opportunities offered by this school for granted. These people waste their time here, and in wasting their time they are wasting state resources. However these students do not last long. Just like any other school, if you fail to attend or fail to do work, you will have a very brief stay. However, there are also those that view Winfree as an opportunity. These people see this school as a way to get their high school diploma, despite whatever setbacks they have faced. For these people Winfree is a fresh start.

To shut down this school would be to turn your backs on these students. For these students, Winfree is their last chance. We are aware of the crusade against our school and others like it and we are simply angry and disappointed that our political servicemen down in Austin would be so short sighted. I have talked with many of my friends about what they would do if the school was shut down. Every time I got this response, "I would drop out". These are good students, smart students, people intent on graduating and becoming functional members of society. Shutting down Winfree and other schools like it would be the equivalent of throwing these kids future's under the bus to save a few bucks. It is wrong, absolutely wrong. Please do not make the rash, ignorance-fueled decision that shutting this school down would be. The school symbol of Winfree is a lighthouse. It is so for a reason. This school offers students a way out of whatever current darkness they mind find themselves in. It offers students a second chance to get their diplomas and not become another statistic. Don't take it away from them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zach Eckert", written in a cursive style.

Zach Eckert

Joe Mitchell
Winfree Academy Student
2-19-07

Wow can you imagine life as a drop out in the crazy world today? Well today I am going to give you three advantages to a charter school, and also three reasons how Winfree has helped me want to stay in school and get my high school diploma.

Well, to start out with the first advantage to a charter school is. 1. You can complete your work faster in a charter school then you could in a regular high school, 2. The teacher's are dedicated to helping you complete high school and get your diploma, 3. The students that first start out in a charter school are welcomed by the other students that attend a charter school.

So, now I will tell you three reasons how Winfree Academy, has helped me stay in school. 1. Like I said in the first paragraph the dedication of the teacher's wanting to see me stay in school and graduate from high school, 2. If not for Winfree I would have just got my G.E.D, and 3. Because of Winfree I can graduate and get my high school diploma, so that I can go into the U.S Army and start my career.

So, in closing I will leave you with this, Sen. Shapiro, please don't close down charter schools, especially not Winfree Academy, because for some of us this is are last chance at getting are high school diploma, and moving on with are lives. Thank you for your time and busy schedule to read what I have to say.

Noe Amaya

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Winfree Academy Charter School is a school where everybody is welcome and can finish their high school education. Life would not be the same without Winfree, a legend of charter schools .

Charter Schools have been a big part of the education for people who needed to finish high school education. Winfree is one of the Charter Schools that has helped kids to finish their high school education .

Here in Winfree you see all kinds of people, they are attending Winfree for many reasons that they could not finish school. In my case I had lost my credits and I was falling behind but, when I heard about Winfree I tried all the possible to attend. When I finally attended Winfree I felt good because of the environment.

The environment is great because you get to work at you r own pace and everything is handy for your benefit. Winfree also has help me personally with my education, getting work done faster, and moving forward to my graduation. I do not know if I would stayed in school if I would not attended Winfree.

In conclusion, Winfree is a big part of education, without Winfree there would be many kids without a high school education.

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Let me tell you a tale of a magical land; a land nestled between a humble craft store and a mystical pet shop. This kingdom of learning is better known as Winfree. It is a charter school. To some, charter schools are a cop-out, but to others it is a beacon of hope for a better life. When these poor souls have been exiled from public schools or life has dealt them a bad hand, it seems as though they will never earn high school diploma and lead a productive life. To these students we say "Nay." We invite them to join us on our quest for higher education. Winfree, and other schools like it, have a lot to offer students and I would like to tell you how Winfree has helped me, and thousands of others in similar situations, stay in school.

Students at Winfree only go to school four hours a day. This leaves plenty of time to work more hours at their jobs. When my parents got a divorce, I was forced to get a job and work 30-40 hours a week. Since I was also going to school full time, this seemed to be nearly impossible. Winfree allowed me to keep my hours without making the huge mistake of dropping out.

Another way Winfree has helped me is with its self-paced program. I can work faster on subjects I am really good at instead of having to go at the same pace as every single other person in my grade. On the other end of that, I can go slower on subjects that I really struggle with. At my old high school I ended up with a 23 in Algebra 2 because I have a very hard time with math. My teacher was too busy helping everyone else in addition to trying to keep up with our block schedule. If I asked a question in class, I would get a very short, vague answer that only left me more confused. If I came in for tutoring it was no different. It was only offered on some mornings for about half an hour, and was just as crowded, if not more so, than my regular class. At Winfree I now I have a 96 in Algebra 2 because I have the chance to slow down and have it explained to me one-on-one. Thanks to the self-paced program, if I work really hard, I can graduate early and get a head start on college.

In addition to the accommodating hours and self-paced environment, Winfree also has the advantage of a more accepting attitude overall. Public high schools seem to expect students to be one way. The kids who have learning styles, backgrounds, or personalities that differ from the norm tend to be called out as "weird" or "freaks." As shocking as it sounds, sometimes adolescents don't always make the right choices. Sometimes things happen and girls end up pregnant when they are very young or someone lands in rehab. Instead of dropping out of school and crawling into a hole to hide from society's eye of ultimate judgment, they can get their life back on track and finish school in a place like Winfree that won't make them feel like they have messed things up beyond repair. Charter schools can be a place for second chances, and second chances can make a world of difference in a teenager's life when it seems that everyone else has given up on them.

All in all, charter schools aren't everybody's cup of tea, but to the ones who seek out that environment whether it be to graduate early or get a second lease on life, it can change their life for the better. Education is priceless, and to take that opportunity away from someone just because of their varying situations is to rob them of their potential. A high school education can make a life; dropping out can break it. Charter schools give kids the chance to make their lives great.

JORDAN CONLER

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Quite recently it has come to my attention that a noticeable amount of possible regret is in consideration for my current educational facility, better known as, Winfree Academy Charter School. By regret, of course I mean, mainly that each year charter schools are viewed with ridicule, and angst, simply because the average person feels that it's not an acceptable and beneficial way to receive the "proper" amount of educational skills for the business world. Personally, the creation of such schools is an opportunity for the students who are dealing with issues at their publicly educated school such as, frustration, lack of motivational encouragement, or the will to continue on. An educational environment filled with a positive outlook on life and its many obstacles, as well as the cooperation, and one-on-one attention from teachers provides the necessary confidence boost, and guidance towards the right direction, while providing us with the comfort of taking in the required learning at our own pace.

This version of self-perseverance is a rare tale to tell, because occasionally, those who aren't cut-out for the work load necessary to graduate at the average pace, will eventually discover that the constant nagging, limitless amounts of distractions, multiple hours of homework, and wretched school lunches is more their style. Considering the fact that credits from Winfree are acceptable nationwide, there is no problem in situations such as those. The fact that 4,000 plus students are currently attending Winfree Academy's in the greater Dallas/Ft. Worth area should be a very significant amount of reasoning behind why students come to appreciate, and even rely on this specific charter school as a means of hope to still graduate with an accredited diploma. When someone is offering you a future on a platter, it most definitely should be taken full advantage of! The specific privileges offered here such as, being allowed to have a portable music player, a daily 10-minute break, including the use of snack machines, providing various foods, and drinks, are the reasons I, and numerous others are so intrigued by this academy, it was an environment unlike any other I've ever experienced, and still this school tends to surprise me, due to how much it's beginning to operate, and act as if it were a typically educated high school.

Since I began my high school life, I've had dreams of doing great things, being an innovator, with plans on changing the world of financial business forever, but due to my earlier publicly educated high school, I got involved in a serious amount of neglect when it came to attending, and caring for school in general. I ended up getting temporarily suspended, then proceeding to continue to play "hooky" and then ending up in court for truancy. I came to the realization that I needed to clean up my act, and get my life together, and quick, because otherwise my dreams of endless success could be hastily taken from me without hesitation. I learned of this place called Winfree Academy, which most of my friends basically frowned upon, due to its' reputation through parental influence. Obviously it seemed like the last place I wanted to be, but I then came to be informed on there being various campuses around my city of Flower Mound. I decided to do my homework, and a bit of light research on this so-called, "academy", and it turns out, I discovered it was an accredited high school, that only required four hours a day attendance, and offered several different times for classes. This immediately got my attention, and convinced me that this was my chance to rehabilitate my continuously dropping GPA, and motivational hope of graduating the same time as my other classmates. I enrolled here the beginning of the 06-07 school year, and since then it has been nothing but the "promise land" before my eyes, my opportunity of a proper graduation has been reconsidered by Winfree, as well as the self-paced program offered to students here, has in fact become the most beneficial program I've ever taken part in, quite literally in my life!

I'm very proud of the corrections I've made in my life since I began attending school here, they offered me a final chance to make things right, and did so in such an enthusiastic and promising way, that no single person could be turned away from its continuously broadening horizons, and overall ambitions to grow from a once sought, disgrace to the educational programs in this great state of Texas, to a well known, and commendable educational facility! If I have made such an incredibly successful change in my life with a bit of motivation, a dash of courage, coated in some serious ambition and drive, then whose to say that Winfree Academy isn't the perfect recipe for a wonderfully well-rounded educated scholar? I hope my opinions can be of assistance in this crucial decision involving not only my education, but my peers future as well, and I would like to thank you for your time.

Cordially, Stefan Myers

(A student, with a promising future, coming from the little Charter school who could!)

CHRIS BOETTCHER

Well Winfree is a great alternative for a high school education, because there is not as much drama as other schools. Besides that there are other ways it has helped me stay in school, and they are the ways they teach which is much easier, because you learn at your own pace, which is an advantage to most students that learn slower than others. Another advantage is there aren't any boring teachers jabbering on and on about the lesson which gets boring and puts you to sleep. Instead of that you get to learn the way you learn best in a self-paced environment and since there are no boring teachers talking on and on you get to listen to music while you work ,which sometimes helps people work, because you have a rhythm to work to. I know that this is a short essay, but these were the small things that helped make a difference and helped me stay in high school and get my education that I needed.

To Whom It May Concern:

Winfree Academy Charter School has been my savior. I had a lot of social problems at my public high school, and since coming here I'm able to cope with the things that used to keep me from going to school.

Before I came to Winfree I attended Central High School. I always had problems with my self-esteem and at Central I always felt that people were making fun of me. I felt trapped and I had no friends to help me get over being made fun of. I was admitted into a mental hospital after a suicidal attempt in January, 2005. I didn't want to go to school and deal with the whispers behind my back. At the beginning of the 05-06 school year I enrolled into Winfree Academy. Right away I knew this was the place for me. I wasn't person who couldn't cope with public high school and nobody judged me for my past or present. Everyone had problems and it was great to be among other people who had similar feelings about school.

I made friends quickly among the students. I was a shy 15 year old girl who didn't like to get into trouble. My friends speedily took away my shy personality when they started talking about why they were at Winfree. I was able to talk to people who understood what I had been through and in some cases had even been through it themselves. They didn't judge me for the things I had done in my past and I was able to develop really close friendships. The friends I've made always give me support and I look forward to seeing them everyday.

I was able to make friends when I thought that I wouldn't and it made my self-esteem go through the roof. I am a proud part of Student Council and the Goodworks

Team here at Winfree. I am able to show my true flamboyant self now, when I used to be shy and timid. Everyday I come to school and I feel so great. My teachers and the other staff always say hello to me. Knowing that they care enough to say "Hi" and ask how things are going make me feel like I'm cared about. I'm not afraid to tell them about my personal life and I'm not afraid to try and make them laugh. I know that a simple smile can brighten everyone's day and I know that the teachers appreciate it.

Winfree academy has changed my life. I don't go through depression phases, I don't have to take medication, I have more friends than I have ever had, and I am overall just a happy person. If I hadn't enrolled at Winfree last school year I would probably be in another hospital or dead. I owe all my happiness to Winfree and its staff and students.

A Happy Girl,

Katy Kinder

Katy Kinder

It was only October of my sophomore year at Grapevine high school and I already felt like I was just another kid trapped in those hallways from eight to three every day. The teachers seemed too busy, coaching sports and trying to teach their over crowded classes to take the time to help me as an individual. As my grades started to slip from A's and B's to C's and D's, this became a big problem that carried over from school to my home life.

I had some really great friends at Grapevine high, but with so many kids starting drama, spreading rumors, and pressuring their peers, it was easy to become side tracked. Feeling like I would never get the help and attention I needed, I gave up and stopped caring about my success in school. So now, from eight to three every day stood in those hallways being hurt and hurting others with words, and even fists. Eventually I started to realize how overwhelmed I'd become just by being another troubled high school statistic heading towards dropping out.

As if this wasn't enough, I had been really sick for the past year and the constant stress from school only caused me to suffer relapse after relapse. Regular doctor appointments took me out of school a lot, and I fell even more behind in my classes.

I hit rock bottom in every part of my life, and my parents and I decided it was time for a change. We looked into home schooling programs and charter schools such as Winfree and bridges. When we visited Winfree, I wasn't sure if it was for me because it was so different from my high school, but a very different environment is what I needed so I enrolled.

It's amazing how quickly I caught up in my work at Winfree. I needed a new beginning in a place where no one knew me and this was it. I can communicate so well

with my teachers here, and since the classes are so much smaller, I get help when I need it. Instead of dropping out of high school, I now plan to graduate early. The last quarter I completed had a one hundred percent average. I was so proud to show that to my parents! I've managed to turn my life around through Winfree Academy. This experience has given me so much more confidence in myself, I finally feel like I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.

Three Advantages of Winfree

I think that Winfree is helpful in many different ways. For me I wouldn't know or have half the stuff that I do now with out Winfree.

One way it has help me and I'm sure many others is the four hour day.

Because of the fact that im here for only four hour I still have time for a full time job after school. The four hours that im here also helps me not get bored with school.

Another reason I like this school is because of the self-pace environment.

The self-pace environment is really helpful because if I get bored or tired of working on one class I can switch to another. Unlike a normal high school we don't have to wait for a year or half a year to complete a class if we work hard enough we can complete a class in a month or two.

I'm sure many people would agree with me when I say that this school is also good because its not as crowded as a normal school. We also don't have to switch class rooms so we don't have to worry about being late five times a day because of the crowds. And because we don't have so many classes and kids its easier to keep a little more control.

In conclusion this school as far as I can see is better for me. There are so many more ways that this schools has helped me that I don't have time to list them.

Chaz Herney

My whole life school has been a struggle. In all the different learning environments I've been in, the one that I understand the most is Winfree, and I will go into detail on why I believe this.

Growing up I always felt different than everyone else in school, never really understanding why. Now that I'm here I look around and feel normal. The kids here seem to understand where I'm coming from. It could be because they've felt the same way I did when I was younger. If it weren't for this feeling of understanding I would still be in the same struggle with school.

It's actually really hard for me to see myself in any other school than Winfree. I know that without this place I would be working full-time for minimum wage trying to survive. For this reason I am glad a place like this exists for people in my situation.

Not only would I be a dropout, and an outcast without charter schools, I would also not have the confidence I do now to take responsibility and succeed in life. This place has shown me that my life as it was, was not acceptable. Slowly my life has begun to improve with the help of the people here.

Although I am only one person, with nothing special or beneficial to offer the world, It's nice to know someone can actually care about my future even when I myself did not. The students and staff here have all shown me my future can be as bright as I want it to be.

Winfree Academy Charter School has been a godsend to me. This school has enabled me to believe in my self to graduate, else wise I would have already dropped out. Without Winfree Academy I would be going nowhere in life right now. There curriculum is amazing and enables you to go your own pace. The four hour classes encourage me to want to come to school everyday. I used to go to Northwest High School in Justin TX but I would never go because I very much disliked sitting in a classroom for an hour listening to the teacher talk. The information would go in one ear and out the other. At Winfree Academy I teach myself how to do things. Take geometry, when I went to northwest I had been in geometry twice already but could never pass it until I came here I passed it in about a month. I actually teach myself valuable information. If you shut Winfree Academy down you will be shutting me down so many ways. If it weren't for Winfree Academy I wouldn't be in school at all.

Sincerely,
Brendi Taylor

Dear Mrs. Shapiro,

There are many students who dropout everyday and some want to go back to school because they realize the opportunities and the things they can achieve with a complete education. Charter schools have helped millions in many different ways by either giving someone another chance or giving someone the chance to excel. Most people make mistakes and they've those by getting them back on track. As for me I'm here to go through my studies quicker. I've never really liked school at least the way some teachers teach and well in this environment I still get to socialize and learn at my own pace allowing me to finish school quicker. They also give many opportunities for people with different situations such as some that have dropped out or those who are having a child and feel they can't go back. And the fact that it's only 4hrs helps lots too. I have so much time to prioritize and get things out of the way without stressing. This makes me more productive and I can accomplish more now. This also gives me chance to help out my community around me which I do. It gives me more time to help those less fortunate around my home by proving my time and help at places that give back. The people at this school are very generous too by giving things. From money needed for our prom to presents for the less fortunate during Christmas. Winfree is a great place and if we didn't have it I don't think the communities around us would be the same. So if you're asking yourself if you're getting what you asked for out of these schools then your answer would be a yes. Thanks for your time and good bye

Sincerely,
Benjamin Lopez

Dear Senator Shapiro,

If you only knew how Winfree academy has helped me through this long journey of education, you would help me keep this school alive. Me and my five friends have come here after almost giving up all hope for graduating and starting a career. Now, three have graduated and finally see the great light at the end of the tunnel.

When I was in high school I was always falling behind because there was just too much pressure and expectations that I didn't know which way to turn. I didn't like asking teachers for help because I was shy and thought the whole class would laugh. However, in Winfree the teachers work with me one on one, the three sessions help me balance school and work, which takes up the time of one whole day of regular school. Finally, these people are like family to me now, and if this school had never come along, I wouldn't know where I'd be.

Sincerely
Craig Polizzo

Dear Senator Shapiro,

The charter school system is very important to today's youth. It is a place where kids who make mistakes and up changing for the better can rebound and get caught up in the right direction. The direction of graduating that is. It is a place where good kids can stay on track without the distractions of regular high school drama. Also charter schools are a much safer environment both physically and educationally.

Winfree Academy itself has helped me dramatically. I made a lot of the same mistakes most teenagers do in today's world. I fell far behind in my other school; but when I decided to recommit myself to graduating and being a productive member of the state of Texas Winfree Academy was there to help me get to where I wanted to be. Winfree Academy was just like a shining beacon of hope they assured me that I could save my education and myself. Now I am back on track to be a senior next year at Richland High School. After I graduate in 2008 I plan on entering The United States Marines Corps. So I can give back to this country and this state which have given so much to me, including a second chance on my being what I want to be. I also feel that Winfree Academy has been a much healthier environment with no stress from peers or staff and its less stressful four hour work days make it much easier to stay on task and productive.

Before any decisions are made or proposed please think of the true value charter schools possess. Mentally, physically, educationally, and emotionally.

Sincerely,
Taylor R. White

Dear Senator Shapiro,

It has come to my attention, that our building of knowledge may be getting closed. I really cannot describe how big of a mistake it would be to shut down the only thing that some of our students and staff have. This place of learning, is most different from regular schools. Without Winfree Academy, so many kids are going to lose their chance to graduate and better themselves. Basing your decision on a single TAKS score, isn't right. Our graduate numbers and our closeness to our faculty, should at least have a fighting chance.

Also a huge advantage, we have over regular High Schools is our flexibility of time. Most students who attend also need their part-time jobs to survive. How can you turn your back on students, who are working on their school grades and their income everyday? Not all of us, are blessed with wealthy parents who can help. A lot of us don't even have parents, and are on our own already.

We also work like a very close, but diverse family. We're all from different parts of the metroplex. From the country kids to the city kids, the only thing were all fighting for is bringing us close together. And that's to graduate, and to feel appreciated just like every other hard-working student leaving High school. Since, our school is much smaller than others, we have time to get closer to everybody on the faculty. Not just teachers, but the principles, counselors, and even the security guard too. Which means they actually get the chance to leave us with positive intuitions in our heads.

My biggest concern, is that with as many kids were keeping off the streets and in school. Im not sure how you even have the heart to consider closing our place of learning down. The people that have graduated this year alone, is unbelievable. If Winfree Academy were to close there is no doubt in my mind that all of the students would give up on their higher levels of education. And just continue working more hours at their place of work. If, you think working at McDonalds for more hours, is more important than a higher education then please go ahead with what you've planned.

All we need is a helping hand, that Winfree Academy has offered to us. Please, just consider what a great opportunity your taking away from our students.

Thanks, Jaidi Barton

There are many reasons why Winfree has helped me stay in school, but I'm not going to bore anyone through all of them. I'm only going to name the main one why I'm still in school.

My future, this school is the only one who gave me the opportunity to graduate and get my high school diploma not my GED like some people think. To be honest I've been rejected from three schools: Richardson, Trinity and Keys, they actually told me I most likely won't graduate and I was better off getting my GED. I understand why they didn't accept me in to the school it's mostly because of my age and credits.

When I first dropped out I attended night school at Berkner High to get my GED, but it seemed endless. Sometimes I wouldn't even be able to make it because I spent the nights at my apartment waiting for my boyfriend to come home safely from his daily drug runs which I disapproved off but at the same time was kind of thankful for because it also helped us out. But that's not how I saw myself living at all, as soon as reality kicked in and he was incarcerated for three years I decided to get my life straight and not end up in the same path as he did or worse. I now I'm not the only one who needs a diploma and want it but I actually desire it, mostly because of my past and how it ruined the person I really care about. When I first heard about Winfree I automatically thought another rejection to my list. I met Mrs. Gillespie and she asked me why I've been to alternative school and the reason why I wanted to get back in school. To be honest I thought I wasn't going to be able to get in. But with a smile and a warm welcome she accepted me into Winfree. I know there are many students who feel the same way when I say Thank you, and I also want to take this opportunity to thank her and everyone else at Winfree for this opportunity for a better future.

Winfree gives me the opportunity to be able to keep a one to ten job to help my mother out in any way I can if possible. Also if I wouldn't of came to Winfree and gone to a regular school again I feel I would start skipping class and hang with the wrong crowd, I would probably never graduate, so for that I'm very thankful.

JAMIE MARTINEZ

February 19, 2007

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I am a student at the Winfree Academy Charter School Grapevine Campus and I am writing to you today in hopes that I can show you how beneficial charter schools really are. Many students, like myself, have reasons why they are unable to attend a traditional high school. I believe that without the opportunity to attend a charter school I would have been forced to drop out.

One thing that benefits all students is the self-paced work program. I can admit that I have wasted a lot of time in the past, but this program gives me the chance to make up the time I've lost. At this point, I would not be able to graduate from a traditional high school in time, but at Winfree all I have to do is double or triple my effort and I can accomplish that much more. At traditional high schools a student can only advance with the class, at Winfree I am able to move on without the need to wait for a certain student to grasp a particular concept.

The aspect that is probably most beneficial to me is the flexible schedule available at Winfree. When my father passed away my mother was left with a heavy financial burden. I noticed that she wasn't able to keep up and my only option was to find a job to help out. The long eight-hour day of a traditional high school makes it nearly impossible to maintain a full-time job as well as further your education. In contrast, the four-hour day at Winfree leaves me enough time to work a 8-12 hour day with no effect on my education. These shorter days and the ability to choose between morning, afternoon, and evening classes opens up a whole new world of possibilities for students that need to carry their own weight financially.

The flexible schedule has also helped me in another way. Because of my situation at the time, I used to have very bad attendance issues. Not only did I have trouble getting to school on time but I also found that I could easily leave school early, skipping classes. Attending Winfree, I have more than enough time to get here and I'm unable to skip classes. Recently, my attendance has improved and I can finally say I am truly on my way to graduation.

These are only a few ways Winfree has helped me. In actuality, I believe the benefits of charter schools are infinite. I have seen and met many bright and talented individuals at Winfree and I feel that without charter schools the futures of these students would be wasted. I hope that you too understand the importance of charter schools and choose to continue providing these opportunities.

Sincerely,



Patrick Rosswurm

To whom it May Concern:

I am currently a student at Winfree Academy Charter School, at the beginning of this year, and for the past two years I attended Trinity High School, in Euless Texas (District 6, 5A State Football champions last year) however could not bring myself to focus for the entire eight hour school day, I would find myself falling faster and faster down what seemed like a never ending hole, and ended up barely passing my junior year. Towards the beginning of this year, I withdrew from Trinity and seriously took under consideration the option of getting a GED, it was at that time that the crisis councilor at Trinity told me about Winfree Academy, I attended orientation the day after I withdrew, and started the day after that. Winfree is by far the best school that I have ever attended; its work is based primarily on the computer, and only involves a miniscule amount of bookwork. I find myself able to concentrate and able to finish more work than I ever have in the four hours a day that I attend Winfree as opposed to the eight hours a day in a public school. Winfree will be the school I graduate from, and I will graduate before the school year ends in May, I have been able to finish almost my entire Senior year of work in only a few months, at four hours a day, as opposed to the entire school year at eight hours a day. I will be of voting age in only a few months and will NOT stand for the shutting down of Texas Charter schools, too many students depend on exactly what the Charter schools give them, an alternative to the Texas public school system, an alternative that allows students to graduate under shorter hours, and under their own terms. Many students find themselves as parents, and cannot attend public schools as they have children to take care of, shutting down Winfree would pretty much be like Texas saying "if you don't graduate from public schools, you don't graduate at all" which will increase high school dropout rates, something which has declined due to Winfree and other state charter schools. Everything's bigger in Texas? Well so are the public schools, many students find that a thirty to one student-teacher ratio in public schools is not sufficient enough for a learning environment, students cannot get the help needed even with the longer day, however at Winfree, teachers are always willing to help, and go out of their way to make sure you understand what you are doing. If you shutdown Winfree, you will shutdown me.

Sincerely,
Spencer Sword
Winfree Student

February 19,2007

Dear Senator Shapiro,

My name is Amanda Lewis and I attend Winfree Academy Charter School in Grapevine. I enrolled at Winfree in my sophomore year from Keller High School. When I first transferred here I was behind and never liked going to school. Charter school allows an opportunity to anyone to better them selves in education. I know that me going to a charter school was the best decision that I could have made. It gave me the chance to catch up and move ahead, which I have. Charter schools are self-paced which helps with eh pressure of having to get so much work done at once. I remember when I was in Keller I would have homework in every class which would sometimes get to be overwhelming. At charter schools they allow more one on one help.

I am going to be a 2007 graduate of Winfree Academy Charter School. I know that me enrolling at Winfree, a charter school was the best decision I could have made and it's the amazing teacher's and all the help that I received that made it happened. I am very proud to say that I will be a 2007 graduate of Winfree Academy Charter School.

Sincerely,
Amanda Lewis

To Whom It May Concern:

Hi, I'm Brittany Tidwell, I'm 17 years old and I've been attending Winfree Academy Charter School since October 2006. Winfree Academy was my last option before I decided to drop out completely.

Before I came to Winfree Academy, I attended Haltom High School. I was a classified sophomore with a one junior class that I should have had six others of. School was never really important to me when I entered Haltom High. I rarely went to school and rarely passed my classes. I hated it so much that in February 2006, I received two tickets from the truancy officer of my school. He gave them to me in a six-month period thinking that it would change my attitude towards school.

Even with the knowledge that I could put my mom, my best friend, in jail for not attending, it still didn't change. My mom has made the best choice for me that I feel has changed my future. She told me that Winfree was my only chance at graduating. Winfree Academy is very good for students because if they are behind, they can come to Winfree and catch up. Its 4 hour days call for hard working on important work and success.

Since I've been attending Winfree, I have made new friends, better grades and have started making a better attendance record. Although I miss all my best friends at Haltom, the four hour day calls for hard working and learning. I've come a lot farther that I ever would have at Haltom. Winfree has saved me from dropping out and ending it all.



Brittany Tidwell

Winfree has made my future BRIGHT.

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I Seth Christopher am excited to tell you about the benefits in charter schools. I for one, go to Winfree academy. I love it at this school for many reasons.

This school has helped me appreciate the idea of a diploma. With its wonderful staff I have been determined to graduate on time. If Winfree were not here I would have just been a kid that dropped out and might turn into a manager at McDonalds down the road. But instead I'm going to get a diploma. If I keep the same mindset I will go to college and have a much more furnished future.

I also love the four hours a day, which lets me, and many others keep a full time job while attending class. And it being a self-paced school I have not only caught up where I should have been but also pulled ahead. With Winfree's strict rules and awesome staff all students are kept quite so that each student can do his or her work without any distractions.

Above are the reasons why I love and think that charter schools are so good for us. I don't know where I would be if it wasn't for Winfree.

Sincerely Seth Christopher

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I would like to let you know how Winfree has helped me and many other students. Winfree has helped me because this was me and a lot of other students last resort. For me this school has helped me by out so much because it's a lot smaller than my other schools so the teachers have more individual time for each student.

I came to Winfree because my old school had so many people in it so I didn't get the academic attention I needed, but the teachers at Winfree will actually sit down and help me with what I need help with and actually guide me through it.

Without Winfree my parents would have to send me back to sylvan and we don't have that kind of money right now so Winfree has helped my family out a lot.

Basically I think that Winfree is well worth the state's money. If the state disagrees then I know a lot of kids would be very upset, and I know I would be too. I also think the Texas drop out rate will increase by a lot if the state decides to close down charter schools.

Sincerely,
Chelsea Richardson

Dear Senator Shapiro,

What would have happened to my education without Winfree? Well, I know I would have become a normal High School dropout. I also would have never achieved a High school diploma, and I would of never seen my parents so happy about seeing me so good at school. Winfree has really helped me stay in school and complete my education, and I will explain how next.

First off, I would have become a High school dropout. What good can someone say a dropout is? No diploma and no future in anything. I would have never made it this far into school without the help of winfree.

Secondly, I would of never in my life dreamed of getting my high school diploma. That was that thing in my life I never thought I would get. Now I know that no matter what I will be able to get my diploma and make something out of myself.

And thirdly, I would have never seen my parents proud of me for anything in this world. Now I'm progressing so much they cannot believe it. My parents thought they would never see me where I am at now in life. They see me becoming a better person from my experiences here at Winfree.

In conclusion, Winfree has greatly influenced me to stay in school. Remember; I was considering being a dropout, I can get my diploma now, and my parents are the proudest out there. That is how winfree has helped me out in my time here.

Thank you very much,
Amanda Miller

Dear Ms. Shapiro my name is Jesse Gomez and I have something for you to know. The schools I attended before Winfree Academy didn't work out for me so well. It feels like Winfree has restarted my attitude toward graduation and got me back on the working track. I have attended this school for a little over a year now and it has been wonderful. If this school was shut down I'm 99.9% sure I would not graduate high school. My goal as of now is to graduate and go to TCC. But that would not be possible without the help of Winfree Academy so please make the right choice

Jesse Gomez

Jesse Gomez

To whom it may concern:

I came to Winfree because I have gone to a few different schools, but have never done well. I have ADD and can not concentrate well when listening to lectures. My whole life I have made C's and D's no matter how hard I tried or what school I would go to, until I came to Winfree Academy. Some people think this is a school for stupid kids that just like to get in trouble but it definitely is not. There are many kids here that work hard everyday and can't wait to graduate and go to college. The students here learn just as much if not more than at any other schools. I am now making all A's. Before I came here I was not planning on going to college because of my grades, but now because of Winfree I am now planning on going to a four year university. I can now come to school work at my own pace so I can actually learn instead of just memorizing the information just to get by, then I can go to work so I can pay for my own things and get ready for college. I don't think it is fair to judge this school by its TAKS scores because TAKS isn't something you learn in a year or two it is something you learned over all the years of going to school so if there is any one to blame for low TAKS scores it should be the others school that the students came from before they came to Winfree.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cassie Schell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Cassie Schell

Joe Russell
Winfree Academy-Richardson
1661 Gateway Circle
Richardson, TX 75080

RE: The Need for Winfree Academy

To Whom It May Concern:

Much discussion has been had of late regarding accountability for charter schools. Senator Shapiro has now introduced legislation requiring higher accountability for said institutions. However, in the seemingly endless quagmire of TAKS, No Child Left Behind, and a dozen other "catch phrases", political talking points, and inadequate assessment measures what is being over-looked is the well-being of children.

Let me clarify my point. Winfree Academy is a charter school for mostly at-risk kids. All of our kids are not the cream of the academic crop. Many of them do not have a family support structure that provides for even their basic needs, let alone any kind of support for academic success. Often our students come to us because they have not been successful in a traditional school environment and many have been in trouble with the law.

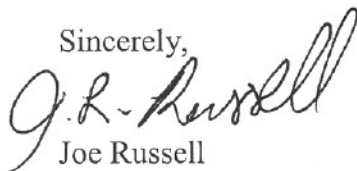
For some, it would be easy to forget about these kids. It is all too easy to write them off as a waste of time or as bad kids. The traditional school systems certainly seem to have taken that exact approach or our student population would not be swelling like it is.

But these are not bad kids. They are just kids. And like a lot of kids, they do some stupid things and sometimes they are not the best students. But put yourself in many of their shoes for a moment. If every day of your life was a struggle to survive, would *you* give a damn about Algebra?

That is where we come in. Our job here at Winfree is to teach children. But more importantly, it is to provide a place where these kids can come and feel safe and to be with responsible, adult role models who care whether they live or die.

Make no mistakes, we are not miracle workers. We cannot save every kid. Our system, like anything created by human beings, has it's flaws. But our kids know that they have teachers and faculty that care about them and that we will do our best for them. I cannot tell you what that is worth in a dollar amount. To some, maybe not much. It is not an asset that can be measured by testing and bureaucracy. But when we get to the point in education where we completely disregard that special kind of contact with a child that we work so hard to develop here at Winfree, then that is when I will be ashamed to call myself a teacher and will find another line of work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J. Russell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name "Joe Russell".

Joe Russell

Rachel Egan
4204 Nasmyth Dr.
Plano, T.X. 75093
February 19, 2007

Dear Senator Florence Shapiro,

It has recently come to my attention that Winfree Academy Charter Schools are in danger of being closed. I am writing you this letter to try to persuade you to rethink that. And I hope by the end of this letter you will see just how Winfree Academy Charter Schools have changed the lives of many young students.

The kids that attend Winfree aren't like regular kids. They have had problems, and difficulties, that most of the youth should never have to deal with. Everywhere you look, there is advertisement for drugs, alcohol, and sex, making this generation and the ones to come subjected to the corruption of this world. A few of these kids have turned out wrong, and messed up. But that doesn't mean they still don't have a chance. When everybody else has given up on these kids Winfree gives them an extra chance when their last chance was taken away. Despite if the students here still don't do their work, and slack off, the majority of us does our work and wants to graduate. This is the only place for us to do it.

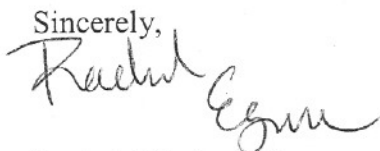
Winfree Academy Charter School had been a blessing to me. About a year ago I had to leave school and take a whole year off. When I finally went back to school, I went to Vines High School of Plano ISD. I didn't have any friends, so I didn't eat lunch, I couldn't sleep, and I was constantly scared. On the third day of school I fainted smashing my head onto a solid wooden art table causing me to have a seizure. (Talk about freak accident.) I couldn't go back there. Then I heard about Winfree and it was the best thing that ever happened. Now that I go to Winfree, I have friends, and I'm more open and I feel a lot more comfortable around other students. I'm happy and content. I love Winfree. I want to study, and I want to come to school each day. Winfree is a home away from home for me and I'm pretty sure I could say that for a lot of students attending Winfree.

There aren't many places like Winfree Academy Charter Schools. Most school districts are babysitting. Half the time in a regular school all the teachers are doing is babysitting. Keeping the students is for seven to eight hours. Yes regular schools have their perks like sports, and drama clubs, and fine arts. But Winfree tries their hardest to make us feel like a real high school. They have a student council who now at this moment is raising money for prom. Even though we don't have as many perks as a regular high school does, we have the perk or hope. Regular high schools aren't meant to have students like these in them. Winfree is the only place for students like us.

The environment, the teachers, and the kids, it all makes it so much easier to work. Yes a lot of the students don't realize how lucky they are to go here, but a lot of student here do. A lot of students need this place. The teachers here are some of the best teachers I've had in my whole educational life. Never in my life have I loved going to

school. I know that Winfree will always be here for me, unless I screw it up for myself. I have a good future here. I learn more, and I want to work to get better grades. After everything that has happened, Winfree has been there for me. The teachers who always want to talk to you, who go out of their way to make you smile, are amazing. Winfree is a sanctuary almost. I have made friends, I am happy, I am doing well in school, and I am working hard to graduate. If you close Winfree Academy Charter Schools you will be shattering a lot of kids dreams and plans for their future. So please rethink closing my school. It's the only place that I love going to and it's the only place I feel totally myself.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel Elizabeth Egan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Rachel Elizabeth Egan

February 19, 2007

Dear Senator Shapiro,

My name is Desiree Squire, and I am a second year math teacher at Winfree Academy Charter School's Richardson Campus. I know this letter is lengthy, so I appreciate you taking the time to read it in detail. I have substituted at Dallas Can! Academy and in DISD, so I have had experience in regular districts as well as charter schools. As a Math teacher, I see how the level of basic skills among students as a whole had dropped over the years since I was a student. When I receive new students of all ages that lack the basic skills they should have acquired years before coming to me it saddens me. You are about to punish Charter schools for the short-comings of regular schools.

The school that I work at is a "Choice" school, yet it is often looked at as a "last resort" school. This is because the regular school districts either failed these students or simply gave up on them. Many of them with dreams of a high school diploma are too old to attend regular school, and would have to "settle" for a GED. I ALWAYS encourage students to get their diploma and only go for a GED as a last resort. Finishing High School shows a sign of discipline, that they didn't give up.

Our students were required to write an autobiography the first week of school to put in their portfolios where they keep their work, and they were aware that the teacher's would be reading them. Some of the stories of what these kids have been through honestly brought tears to my eyes. Abused, raped, abandoned, pregnant, living in cars, rehab, you name it, these kids have been through it. Despite what they have been through, they still have the desire and passion to get their education. Did you know that we have a pregnancy program that includes a day care allowing these teenage moms to bring their child to an in-house FREE nursery? Local traditional schools kick out pregnant teens, just one more way to tell them they made a mistake and we don't want them around. The students here will tell you that public school didn't give them a chance to make up for their wrong doings and threw their hands up. Well, Winfree opened its arms.

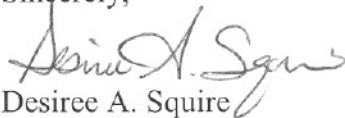
As a math teacher, I have participated in TAKS prep for EVERY school that I have worked at. Dallas Can! Academy even hired me to teach in a summer program strictly for TAKS. These kids were failed long before they came to any of the charter schools. For me to have an 18 year old in Algebra 3rd quarter that does not know his multiplication table from 1 to 10 but received 70's on his transcript from a well-known regular ISD proves my point. They simply passed him along, now he and his present school, Winfree, are suffering their short-comings. Winfree and many other Charter schools are picking up the slack for what other schools didn't want to deal with.

I have students that work full-time, live on their own, arrive to school consistently AND complete their work. Is it their fault that their parents were on drugs and abused them? No, it is not. However, if they had to attend school for 8 hours a day, they would have a much harder time financially supporting themselves and finishing school at the same time.

As for myself, I can find a job without much effort, I know my skills and what I have to offer. I took a \$5000 salary cut by coming to Winfree, because I WAS offered jobs in Dallas ISD and Lancaster ISD. I felt in my heart that the students here could benefit more from someone like myself. My personal upbringing and background is very reputable and diverse and that is exactly what these kids here need. I am a military dependent and went to 3 high schools, and have many experiences. I have to say that one of the BEST qualities about Winfree is what I call the "mesh" factor. I have never been in an environment where everyone gets along so well and feels like they belong. Whether they are GenEd, SpEd, a genius, average, fat, skinny, black, white, attractive, unattractive, all according to society's stereotypes, they simply mesh together. Everyone, teachers included, felt as if we didn't fit in at regular schools.

These students love it here and feel that not only did their previous schools give up on them, but now the state is about to give up on them and close one more door of opportunity. So many students have come to me pleading, "We don't have anywhere else to go, we are too old to go to regular school!" How can we honestly preach about how important education and keep making it more and more difficult for our future leaders to have ample opportunity at receiving one? If these kids didn't come here, most of them would be out on the streets doing God knows what. I ask that you take this and the many other letters from educators and students into consideration in making your decisions in your upcoming proceedings. Once again, I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Desiree A. Squire
Math Teacher
Winfree Academy Charter School
Richardson, TX Campus

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Winfree Academy has helped me immensely. Without this school, I am not sure where I would be right now. Before enrolling at this school, I had withdrawn twice from my local high school because of personal reasons. Essentially the simple version is as follows: my parents had divorced, we lost our house, and I was forced to attend a new school all within a six month period. I did not respond favorably to these events and spiraled into a deep depression. At my lowest point, my mother involuntarily checked me into a rehab clinic. There I learned humility and what true hell was like. The people I met there showed me that my problems, in comparison to theirs, were trivial. I was not a drug abuser, I had not been molested as a child, and my mother had not been shot in the head in front of me when I was young. This was the beginning of the end of my depression. Although it would take me quite a bit longer to fully get my life on track my views on the world and subsequently my life had changed.

During this time I had my first experiences with Winfree. I was instructed to attend the school, briefly, as a way to finish out the school year. At this point, attending the school full time was not on my mind. After the summer, I returned back to my local high school in Coppell. Things went well for the first few months, but ultimately I was still unhappy. One day I went to my mother and told her I no longer wished to attend Coppell High School. She was upset and over the next few months and was patient in trying to get me to go back to school. During this time she did not become angered with me and did her best to try and help with the situation. This time off gave me the time I needed to really think over my life, where I was, where I was going, and what I needed to do. I could not be a high school dropout. This was simply NOT an option. I came to the conclusion that perhaps attending Winfree full time would be a beneficial option. I believed that the self paced environment would remove the stress factor from school, giving me the time and space I needed to attack my problems head on, kill off this depression (whether it was situational or medically caused), and get my life back on track. The self paced structure would also allow me overcome the time I had lost and work as fast as I could, making sure I graduated within a reasonable time frame.

My predictions were right. Winfree gave me the tools I needed to turn things around. Going into the school year I had a new, clear, mindset: I could not allow myself to be dragged down and the only person capable of changing my life for the better was ME. I fully took advantage of the self paced environment and worked as hard as I could every day. Since, at Winfree, there are no deadlines or homework, a significant source of tension and stress was removed. I focused on improving myself and getting things back on track. During my first full year at Winfree I lost 40 pounds, met my current girlfriend (we are still together), focused myself academically and once and for all killed the depression that was causing me so much trouble. Without the relatively stress free environment offered by Winfree, I sincerely doubt my turn around would have been as quick, or whether it would have happened at all.

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm a student at one of the many Winfree Academy Charter Schools that you're trying or debating on closing down, which I have a problem with.

One of the main reasons I'm writing this letter of concern is that you can't shut down all the Winfree Academy Charter Schools, because they better us as students in as people. I know it's not much for you to understand, but your right. You don't understand if you shut down Winfree Academy Charter Schools then your shutting down hard work that were putting in seven days a week.

Then if that happens your also shutting down our heart in a education that we couldn't receive at any public school, because some of us work at a self pace environment. It's hard for you to understand because you don't live the life that some of us do. Most of you went threw High School without a problem in got your Diplomas and College Degrees congratulation that something we would like to receive in life as well, but your putting a stop to that dream of thousands of students.

Most of us at Winfree Academy Charter Schools aren't blessed with that dream or life, shutting Winfree Academy Charter Schools means your shutting down thousands of lives which you guys don't understand we work hard just as well as most of the public schools, but at a slower rate of speed in that's a problem with you because?

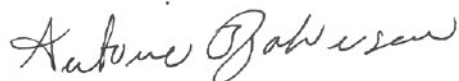
Please don't blame us for not passing the TAKS or what not it's not our fault if you look at the problem our way then you'll understand most of the blame is towards you guys in the state. Every year you make that test harder in harder which is not easy for most of us because were not geniuses if that was the case we wouldn't need Winfree Academy Charter Schools or any other Charter School that helps us to better our education. Just realize if Winfree Academy Charter Schools are shut down then you may be shutting down thousands of lives of students and teachers that put there heart in soul into this school I'm pretty sure that most of the students will drop out in become nothing in this world of nothing to be without the facieses of tomorrow in the future. So realize you're not doing a good deed your doing something worse then a deed your shutting down hope that was built by Winfree Academy Charter Schools. Where students like myself could work at there own pace without worrying about tomorrow until that day comes, but now it might not be a tomorrow for most of us.

I know if you shut down Winfree Academy Charter Schools I'm dropping out of school period because there's not hope for me at a public school.

Thanks for reading this letter of concern hope is what were wishing for so make our dreams come true don't crush them.

Thanks,

Antoine Johnson
February 19, 2007



Whitney Nicole Bradford

To Whom It May Concern:

Winfree Academy Charter Schools has been a good experience for me although it seems like I am behind but really I have learned more here than if I was in regular high school. In regular high school you have teachers spoon feeding you but here at Winfree you have to learn things for yourself because in regular school all you do is take notes do worksheets and take a test at Winfree its pretty much the same but you have to apply the knowledge yourself to pass your test mind you can get one on one help if you need it but if you just slow down and focus you should be able to master your subject at regular school you don't have a self paced environment where you can take you time to learn a subject but be for real all students are not going to spend hours on doing school work at home because you spend eight to ten hours at school and you want to chill out when you get home well at least that's how I was so I would get up early in the morning and do my work but that was not a really good choice that I made . One thing I have noticed is regular public high school is not for everyone people learn at many different speeds and different ways and not only that many students that go to Winfree have a challenging home life I am not saying that kids that are in regular school lives are easy but for me my life has its challenges my mom and my step dad are both disabled and so after I come to school I go directly home and take care of them something's they cant do for themselves so I have to do it and I wouldn't have been able to take care of them as well if I attended regular high school. Winfree Academy Charter School has made me recognize that I am responsible for my own actions and my education. Without Winfree I probably would have been another statistic on the high school drop out list. Winfree academy has only been open for approximately eight years and so its going to have to take sometime for the Winfree staff and students to work the problems out but its going to take a lot of hard work, prayer, and determination. But most of all I am proud to be a Winfree Academy Charter School student. My advice would be don't give up on Winfree academy its going to take hard work like I said before but we can not forget about all the young adults that attend this school and we are going to be the future generation that's going to be your doctor or lawyer some day or someone you are going to have to deal with somewhere and some kids need this school to graduate.

Whitney Bradford

Elizabeth Pinto

To Whom It May Concern:

There are many reasons that I think that Winfree Academy Charter Schools should stay open. The one main reason is that many of the students that go here don't have a choice to go anywhere else.

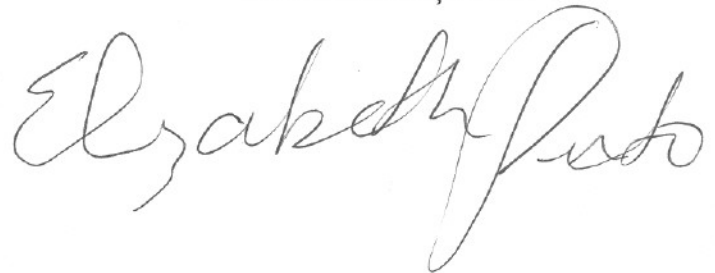
There is a huge range of why these students are here, some were sick so they couldn't go to any other school comfortably so they had to come to Winfree and others were living in Africa as a missionary and other schools didn't accept the time studied over there. So the only choice these people have is to come to Winfree Academy Charter School and hope to finish school in an appropriate time period.

For example, I am planning on being a doctor and I also plan on finishing school by December. The reason I'm not in any other High school was because I was in Africa as a missionary helping schools teach young children who can't afford to get a good education and I also helped make food to distribute throughout the people. I also went to school there but when I came back here other schools wouldn't accept what I did there so I came to Winfree Academy Charter School hoping to catch up to my appropriate grade. I accomplish all of my goals and my goal this year is to finish school. If Winfree Academy Charter School closes I would have no more hope and have to get a GED to be able to get into a Medical School in the time that I planned to.

So all that I ask is that Winfree Academy Charter Schools don't close this year or the next to keep on giving hope for other students like myself who actually want to become someone in life and that try hard. My sister (14) is now living and studying with missionaries in Paraguay and when she comes back she hopes to have Winfree Academy Charter Schools open to be able to have the same choice I did instead of having to start all over from scratch.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Frana Pinto

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Frana Pinto". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.



February 19, 2007

Senator Florence Shapiro,

Dear Senator,

It is with great pride that I write this letter as a faculty member at Winfree Academy. I have been in the field of education as an instructor and administrator for over 13 years and I have never been apart of an educational institution as focused on the development of the student as a productive, educated individual.

Winfree Academy takes in all students regardless of their past and looks to facilitate the improvement of their future. It is true that this school has a unique approach to education but our students are truly unique and to reach them we have to "go outside the box." The attention to individualized education and a self paced curriculum to reach this specialized population of student is simply not possible in a traditional ISD. Are we to cast out these students because of a standardized test which is in no way a true or accurate assessment of an individuals knowledge? There are surely other means by which to hold accountability and assessment of our unique student centered school.

I do not take education lightly. I have spent my life as an advocate education and educational reform. To abruptly shut down a school based solely on something as debatable as a standardized assessment is a complete and utter failure to the students of the great state of Texas.

I eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Walker".

Don Walker
Science Teacher
Winfree Academy-Richardson

WINFREE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS

Richardson Campus

... Making the world a brighter place



February 12, 2007

The Honorable Senator Shapiro
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I have been at Winfree Academy Charter School for four years as the Program Director for the Courage Program, a program within Winfree Academy designed to provide students who have or had previous problems with substance abuse, but who are now committed to recovery. The Courage Program and Winfree Academy has a positive impact on the type of students we serve, in that, each student has the opportunity for credit recovery, as well as receiving individualized academic guidance.

The curriculum is a self-paced curriculum, thus allowing for each student the chance for accelerated graduation. Each student within the Courage Program are given support for their recovery from substance abuse while being afforded a positive learning environment in a classroom that provides a safe and supportive environment from the temptations and pressures of drugs and alcohol. The majority of our students graduate and are continuing their pursuit of Post-High School education and/or serving in the military services.

The question your office has to ask is not "Are Charters School providing the education needed to pass a State-mandated test, the TAKS, but when will the students pass the TAKS test?" When you serve an at-risk population, as our system does, there are emotional, mental, social, and family factors that will interfere with school performance and ability to becoming successful. By providing a positive learning environment, our students are able to facilitate their own successes for the first time in their life by experiencing and realizing that they can set and obtain goals in their life, thus further developing self-esteem and worth, as well as stabilizing family systems and creating a more productive environment to grow and develop. The first Objective within the Mission Statement of the Texas Education Code states that there must be a relationship between the school and families in order for success to be possible. The Courage Program mandates that kind of contact from families who want their children in our program.

I encourage and invite you and your staff to visit our Courage Program here at Winfree Academy and talk with our students face-to-face to hear their success, plans, wishes, and

WINFREE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS



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stories BEFORE you make a decision regarding telling them they are not successful if they cannot pass a State-mandated test within a two year period. It is not the school that suffers, but the students who lose a safe, supportive environment within to grow and develop.

Sincerely,

Chuck Jaecks MS, LCDC
Courage Program Director

February 18, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is David Sutton Jr.. I am a nineteen-year-old student at one of the Winfree Academy Charter Schools in my area. I came here in January not because I was failing or because I was worried about graduating. No I came because I am expecting an addition to my world. Here at Winfree Academy I will be able to work full time starting in the next couple of weeks. Winfree was originally introduced to me through my sister, Christina Sutton. She came here because she has fallen behind in her studies. I guess I was the more studious of the two of us. She came and had the opportunity make something of herself but chose not to. She came here in August of this school year and got expelled because of her hot temper. She got zero credits in her time here. But she didn't take hold of her opportunities. She didn't take Winfree for all it is worth. Since being here in my short time I have earned almost a credit and a half while working near 36 hours a week. My projection until graduate is mid March at the latest. Winfree is more like a saving grace from God than anything.

I am writing to you because it was brought to my attention that not just Winfree, but many Charter Schools are at risk of closing down because of the test scores that their students attain on TAKS this year. I feel that to be closed down because of some students lack of performance, is not only not fair, in no light right. Is that test really testing the knowledge of the students who take it? Webster classifies knowledge as the attaining of information. How does a test, examine how much the student does or does not know? A teacher told me that they are taught to teach through three different mediums, the audio, visual, and practical. So how can one test channel in all three mediums. Recalling information is a completely different thing.

I would like you to consider this. Winfree Academy is a vital tool in the "No Child Left Behind" program implemented by our President, George Bush. This is an "At Risk" school, why you close it down? We are **at risk** to being the next person locked up if our options don't change. Winfree Academy is not just a holding cell for your future convicts. But it will be if you close us down. Yes these TAKS test are a "helping" tool to a successful future, but Winfree gives us one last chance to have a future.

Thank you for your listening to what I had to say and I pray that you would consider what has been said.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Sutton Jr.", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

David Sutton Jr.

To Whom This letter may concern:

My name is Christopher Nicholson. I am enrolled in winfree academy specifically because the hours here are less time consuming and I know if I continue to apply myself I can get out of school faster than I would at a regular school. I could have graduated a long time ago when I went here back in 2004-2005 but I was here for the wrong reasons instead of the right ones...All I wanted was attention and to be the class clown instead of buckling down and doing the work, and in doing so instead of graduating on time with my class I had to stay behind and play catch up. I'm older now and I'm seeing that without at least a high school diploma, its hard for the job market to take you seriously. I like the atmosphere here at Winfree because you are surrounded by a bunch of teachers that care just as much as you do about getting your work done. So I work just as hard now as I ever did thanks to selective teachers. Winfree has meant nothing more to me but just a second chance for me, because there's been plenty of times where I wanted to give up but Winfree has given me the chance I needed to redeem myself.

Dear Senator Shapiro,

My name is Megan Bostelmann and I am the Courage English teacher at Winfree Academy Charter School. As you are probably aware, our school will be shut down if this new bill is passed. I realize that the state of Texas bases academic achievement on the TAKS test, but I am asking you to make an exception in the case of charter schools.

I have twenty-six students in my class. These twenty-six students have been given a second chance at a high school education. These twenty-six students come to class everyday and move closer to their goals. These twenty-six students are not in jail. These twenty-six students are not living on the street. These twenty-six students are not using drugs.

For many of the students, the Winfree Courage program has been a turning point in their recovery. The pressures of main stream school do not exist here. Winfree has created a safe place for them to learn that is completely drug free.

If this school is shut down, those twenty-six students will suffer. Antonie Medlin, Ashleigh Lealan, Rebecca Christian, Qua-Neisha Lyons, Colby Wieland, Brook Husereau, Stephanie Vanstone, Chris Reed, Corey Reed, Jedidiah Leoffler, Joel Jacobson, Brittany Monschein, Scott Shaulis, Justin Weaver, Christina Clonts, Alix Altenbaumer, Ashley Roberts, Allyson Anderson, Johnathan Speakman, Jameson Greiner, Kristen Emerline, Ryan Cramer, Leah Grant, Amanda Moore, Kenzie Poole, and Carlos Trujillo will be lost.

Right now, these twenty-six students are working to improve their education. Please don't put an end to that.

Sincerely,



Megan Bostelmann
Courage Program

To whom it may concern.

February 19, 2007

How I Came To Winfree....

Before I came to Winfree I had attended Summit High School in Mansfield and then I had attended Trinity High School in HEB. The reason that I chose to come to Winfree was because I got married at the age of 17 this was my junior year, and I wanted the chance to graduate early so that I could take care of my family. Now I am pregnant with our first baby and closer to reaching my goal. If it wasn't for Winfree I don't know if I would have ever gotten closer to finishing school. Winfree has been good for me and my husband.

My husband had come to Winfree last year. It was his last chance to graduate. He had 8 credits to finish in his High School career in the course of three months. Other schools would have just laughed at him and said good luck. But not Winfree they helped him all they could and he earned all eight of his credits in a mere two months. He graduated a month early. No one thought that he could complete the requirements except for the staff at Winfree Academy. They help so many students on a daily basis to move on with their lives. Without Winfree being around there would be a lot less educated people in the world. Winfree is one of the best things that has happened in my life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christina Mitchell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Christina Mitchell

February 19, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Becky. I began going to Winfree Academy at the beginning of August, and I love it. I came in as a junior and I am now beginning my senior year. I was kicked out of my home school Birdville High School for fighting and they accepted me back in. I personally didn't want to be in high school anymore, and I still do not want to be in high school. For a lot of people high school is supposed to be the time of your life, but for me at Birdville it was hell. Here at Winfree I get the chance to be in an isolated community where I was able to obtain my honors credit for Algebra 2, which I would have never been able to do at Birdville.

I am now 4 months pregnant and expecting in July. My goal that I put myself to is to graduate in May. A year early, and if this school is shut down I will be forced to put my child in a child care facility until I get out of school at 3:30 rather than, asking my grandfather to just watch my child until 12 when I get out of school.

Since August, I have seen many people graduate that I thought never had a chance. People who dropped out of school or got kicked out when they were a senior in High School. They came in, sat down and graduated in 3 months. There was also a girl in classroom that came in a senior and graduated in less than 2 months. It was amazing.

I believe that Winfree is an excellent place for people to get out of school that are "lost" and need some place to go and work. Please take into consideration all the students that do not have a chance in a regular high school.

Sincerely,


Becky Bean

February 19, 2007

Dear Sir or Madam:

I have a Masters degree. I have been a high school math substitute for RISD for 8 years. This is my second year as a Texas Certified high school math teacher, teaching at Winfree Academy Charter School.

When I was a substitute, I preferred substituting for teachers with pre-AP and upper-level math classes (Algebra 2 and above) because the students were better behaved. The Algebra 1 and Geometry classes had more discipline issues and the students' math skills were frequently extremely poor. I noticed that these lower-level classes were much too large, given the poor math skills of so many students, for any teacher to adequately help each student. Too many of these students had not adequately mastered basic math skills and could not comprehend the teacher's math lesson. This resulted in inattentiveness and, for me, behavior problems. The upper-level math classes did not contain these students. They were gone. Did they move? Did they drop out of school? I had no way of knowing.

I received my certification through the Region 10 Alternative Certification Program and am now teaching at Winfree Academy Charter School. Last year, I was surprised at the large number of Winfree students that I knew from public high school math classes, for which I had substituted the previous year. When I talked to them, they had a variety of reasons for being at Winfree. They were sick too often and would absence fail classes; they were in too much trouble at their old school; they couldn't keep up with the teacher and assignments; or they simply didn't like the rigidity of school and wanted to graduate early to get out. They would have either dropped out or could go to Winfree. They chose to attend Winfree.

I had a student receive 2 four-year scholarships last year that completely paid for all of her college tuition and expenses at Texas Women's University. We do have some very gifted students. I also helped a student last year re-learn a semester of Algebra 2 so that she could graduate. This would not have been possible in a public school. She would have been another dropout. The structure of this school allows students to complete their studies at their own pace, allowing for health and learning issues. Students are given that one extra chance to pull their lives together and graduate.

Each student that graduates instead of dropping out of school enjoys a better quality of life. Each student that graduates instead of dropping out is a life saved. Please vote against the bill to shut down charter schools. Our students need them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marcia Koenig". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "Marcia Koenig".

To whom it may concern:

Why I chose Winfree!!

All my friends went to Winfree, while I went to Birdville. They all told me how much they liked Winfree and how much work they have completed. They explained to me how Winfree is self paced, one is able to complete as desired. Winfree is the type of environment I need to be successful in life. I hated being at Birdville, there were too many distractions for me. I had hard time learning with these distractions.

My friends told me that Winfree might be the right type of place I need to be at to finish my high school education. I started looking up some information about Winfree and spoke to my mother about letting me attend. She agreed with me and thought it was a good idea. Now that I have been going to Winfree I am much happier and earned multiple credits. I plan on graduating with in the next month. If I were still at Birdville I know I wouldn't have come this far. I am looking forward to my high school graduation.

GO OSPREY'S!!!!

Sincerely,

Keri Barfield

Keri Barfield

Karen Collins
3110 Skyway Circle S.
Irving, Texas 75038
972-251-2010

February 19, 2007

Attention: Congressional Hearings for the 25% Rule
In Charter Schools/ Submit for public record

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been employed at Winfree Academy Charter Schools for almost seven years. Winfree is a vital part of the community in serving students who are not successful in the public school arena. It is imperative that charter schools not be penalized by this 25% rule regarding Taks test scores, because the cliental of students we serve are at-risk-kids, and are already behind the public school students. Therefore, charter schools, especially Winfree Academy, serves a crucial role in educating and graduating students, who otherwise, would become another dropout statistic. As a charter school teacher, I request that the 25% rule, be overturned and allow Winfree Academy to continue to educated the throw-away kids of our society.

Sincerely,



Karen Collins—English Department Chair
Winfree Irving Campus

To the Texas Legislature

To be entered as written evidence in support of Charter Schools

February 19, 2007

This is my third year as Diversified Career Preparation Coordinator (Work Program) at the Winfree Academy Charter School Irving Campus. Many of our students work more than 40 hours per week to support their family. My observation is a staff of dedicated professionals serving the "whole child." These at-risk students come to us with academic, emotional and social needs. Every attempt is made to meet their needs in a very caring atmosphere. Today might be a day where extra food for their family is required. Tomorrow might be a need for a counseling session. The next day might be the need for individual tutoring on an assignment or test. Each teacher makes the student feel secure enough and safe enough to ask for help. Our schools offer that hope to each child who enters the building - the hope for success in their academic future and life.

I have had students tell me:

"I feel much safer here than at the public high schools in the area."

"Teachers really care about each student. They explain things to us – not just pass out papers!"

"I get more individual attention at Winfree."

I have attended two graduation ceremonies. Each has been very inspiring. I have seen the expressions of gratitude on parent's faces and the hope for the future for their children. Many would not be walking that stage if it weren't for Winfree Academy.

Respectfully submitted,



Janet Nachtweh

Winfree Academy Charter High School

February 19, 2007

Dear Sir or Madam:

We are extremely concerned about the upcoming S.B.4 being introduced to Congress at this time. Passage of this bill in its current state would be detrimental to many charter schools that are truly making a difference many children's lives. I do believe that accountability for charter schools is needed and highly important. However, we must take into consideration the great things charter schools are accomplishing for students and communities. If we truly are advocates for all children we will not be quick to close down charter schools. As an educator making a difference in at least one or a million different lives is what education is all about. As educators we should and will never give up. I have personally seen hundreds of students lives changed because of the Winfree Academy Charter High School. Taking the extra step to overcome the obstacles many of our students face today is not easy and takes a tremendous amount of time and dedication. At Winfree Academy we have many highly qualified teachers and staff that are willing to go that extra mile for all kids and are committed to never giving up on our students.

Thank you very much for all your work,

Sincerely,



Emily McClarnon, M.ed
Special Education Teacher
3110 Skyway S. Circle
Irving, TX. 75063
469-688-6803
emilymcclarnon@yahoo.com

My name is Cheryl Jackson, and I am a teacher.

I have given my life in service to my country - as a soldier for six years and as an educator with over 30 years of experience in a wide variety of educational settings. Eight to ten years ago, I began to get discouraged...disillusioned with the public school system and increasingly frustrated with our inability to truly meet the needs of all students. They were not failing us. We were failing them. The one thing we were effectively teaching was to hate learning and to hate school. As a result, I made the decision to leave the public school system and try an alternative setting. The reason I am writing today is that I firmly believe the charter school system provides a successful model for reaching and teaching students who are doomed to fail by public school standards.

Over the decades, I have seen a steady increase in our at-risk student population. Public schools for the most part, are successful with mainstream students. Difficulties arise, however, when large numbers of non-mainstream students begin populating classrooms. Public schools have done their best to implement programs they hope will re-invent at-risk students. But no matter how hard they try, they cannot hammer a square peg into a round hole.

The question before us as educators and legislators is how can we effectively assimilate these children into our society? How can we help them to lead healthy, productive lives and to make positive contributions to their communities? When we consider that our country was founded on protecting freedoms, defending human rights, and embracing diversity, as leaders can we not truly model this in our classrooms?

Currently, disenfranchised high school students do have the freedom of choice - they can drop out, or they can attend a charter school. Charter school districts tend to be smaller than regular school districts and therefore can provide innovative, progressive programs more quickly to address specific issues, such as the need to work full-time, accelerated graduation, remediation in basic skills, drug and alcohol abuse, and teen pregnancy.

At Winfree Academy, students may attend one of 3 sessions depending on their work schedules, and the curriculum is self-paced. There is a wide range of remedial and tutorial programs during and after school. The Courage Program allows drug and alcohol dependent students to participate in a recovery program while attending school, and there is an onsite nursery where young mothers can care for their babies while they earn graduation credits. The message this district and staff sends each student is clear. We do care about you. You are a person of worth, and you can be a successful member of society.

Students who attend Winfree Academy are not resigned to being on the fringes of society. They are young adults who are eagerly pursuing their dreams, whatever they may be...gainful employment after high school, continuing their education, becoming professionals.

Research tells us there are many learning styles, and that utilizing only one methodology does not meet the needs of all learners. Charter schools offer one more way to meet our children's diverse needs. Students who attend charter schools are choosing to remain in school. They are choosing to receive an education. Despite adversity, they still believe in the system and in the American dream. Can we not continue to light the way for them, to provide an alternative, a school of choice, a charter school?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

What I Like About Winfree

When I first made the decision to come to Winfree, it was mostly because my mother convinced me that it was better to go to a small school because it would be easier to stay out of trouble. My first week was scary because it seemed like a lot of work to have at one time. I sat alone and contemplated the idea of going back to the regular high school. I still doubted myself until I first saw my graduation plan. I was surprised at how little I had to do before graduation. I decided that I should try my best to work out my problems and graduate as soon as possible. The work was difficult at times; however, I found that whenever something was too difficult there was always a teacher willing to help. I found just the right amount of support at Winfree Academy. I feel that I get the attention I need in the areas where I need them most. I am set to graduate almost a year early and have never been more excited about my future. I have developed friendships with other people who are just as excited about their futures and the teachers offer to support the friendships that are beneficial. In the same light the teachers in my class are always very cautious of letting me talk too much and not get work done. They show from day to day how much they really care about me here. Every teacher including our principal knows me by name and makes sure I'm okay everyday. I have never felt more safe or comfortable in any school as I do at Winfree Academy. I love my school and appreciate all the people who come together to create such a safe, caring environment. To conclude, I would like to offer a sincere and appreciative Thank You to everyone at Winfree.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shawna Riley". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Shawna Riley

Margaret Patterson
2/19/07 6AM

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Hello my name is Margaret Patterson. I'm a junior at Winfree Academy of Grapevine. This would have to be my very first year here. If there were no Winfree, I would probably be a high school drop out. At my old high school Fossil Ridge, I almost dropped out twice. Once my freshman year and the other time my sophomore year. My parents were determined not to let me drop out. They knew I had the potential but I wasn't using it to the fullest. In high schools that are really big there tends to be a lot of Drama. People you think are your friends, really aren't. Rumors get spread super fast. Ever since I started going to Winfree I have not got suspended once. No I.S.S or anything. There has been no drama or fights. Here at Winfree I actually get my work done. It took me all summer to actually get my parents to agree to going to Winfree. This Charter School is the reason I still actually have a chance on having a future. Winfree has had a major impact on my life. I used to be one of the kids, who never cared, never did my work or anything. Here I actually get stuff done and the teachers help me anytime I need it. If there weren't a Winfree I would either be dead or a high school drop out. I would rather die than go back to regular high school. At Winfree academy there may be a few mishaps here and there. But there is not that much drama at all. Another thing I love is there aren't that many students. So your work gets done faster, and if you don't understand something the teachers here at Winfree sit there until you do. Here at Winfree I started out in classroom 3, then got moved to classroom 6 because my teachers also agreed I had the potential but I wasn't using it to the fullest. I never believed my parents or the teachers and now I actually think I am starting too. At Winfree there aren't gangs and fights every day exactly right after school. You don't hear "Meet me at Silver Sage Park" everyday. You get to listen to music and eat and drink in the classroom. The one rule I hate is no cell phones. But its only four hours without it so that's good. I used to never want to go to school. I would skip a lot, like all the time. Now I sometimes don't want to go but I do anyways. It's only four hours. Now I actually have a chance to Graduate, and walk the stage. My mom has been telling me that is her all time dream is for me to walk the stage. I seriously don't know what I would do without Winfree or where I would be. I am thankful that we have a Winfree Academy.

Sincerely Margaret Patterson

Corey Tucker

Why should Charter Schools be around? There are many reasons that charter schools should be open. They help students that fall behind catch up, they have one-on-one all the time, and you only go to school for four hours.

The main reason students go to charter schools is to get caught up or graduate early. In a charter school you can make up work really fast, a lot faster than in a real school. This fact helps people that are behind or people that would like to graduate early. All your work is at your own pace and you do it the way you want to in a regular school you either fall behind your right there you can't really get ahead.

Another big reason is there is so much more one-on-one with the teachers, I know how some kids don't need that, but some of them do. And it helps a lot when the teacher is there helping you taking it step by step and explaining in great detail what you need to do and how to do it. And with that the students make much better grades because they do understand. It is much easier having someone there to help you all the time.

Not the best reason but a really good one for the students, is you only have to stay at school for four hours. I went to regular school I had a hard time sitting there listening to teachers for eight hours straight. But in a charter school they don't just stand there and talk they help you when you need it and plus it's only four hours not eight. You also have your choice you can go morning, afternoon, or at night. That is a good deal for people with jobs or important things that they have to do.

You have heard why people go to charter schools and these reasons should be enough to keep them around. I could think of 100 more reasons why people go and why they should stay open. But I just thought of three big reasons. Just because people made mistakes doesn't mean they shouldn't be given a second chances and that's kind of what a charter school does for some people because it did it for me. Charter schools saved my high school years and if they stay around they can do it for many others to.

Elisabeth McClain
February 19, 2007

Winfree as a charter school has been a great asset to my life. When I got to the point where I didn't know when I would ever get to graduate, Winfree was there for me to choose. Charter schools have helped kids from all different types of backgrounds and situations, and continue to change lives.

Charter schools give us a second chance when public schools won't. In my case, I chose to be home schooled and dropped a grade level behind. Winfree has given me the chance to catch up and keep my education going. When girls get pregnant, or when kids get kicked out of their schools, they can make the decision to turn their life around. Charter schools are there to aid in helping them graduate. Schools like Winfree aren't there just for people who've had a troubled life. Many kids come here with goals of graduating early, which many achieve.

Coming to school during whichever session is most convenient is one of the many ways charter schools have won teens over. Morning, afternoon, and night sessions allow us to be more flexible with our schedules. For those of us who want to get a more convenient job during better hours, charter schools have been the way to go. Some teens here have their own children and families to care after, and the way our school is scheduled they can spend more time with loved ones. Choosing our own schedule gives us a sense of responsibility and freedom that we strive for in our lives.

Probably one of the best things I love about going to Winfree is only having to be here four hours a day. Being at school for four hours keeps me from getting restless and puts in my mind that I only have four hours so I better get my work done. One thing a lot of us think about is money, and being at school for this time period results in more hours at work... which eventually results in some good quality money making for us. No one wants to be locked up in school for eight hours, five days a week. Being here at Winfree, I only have to come four hours and get the same, if not more, work done.

So, I think that charter schools have been a great thing. They have benefited and changed countless peoples lives. I will hope that they will always be around and improving to help in more kids lives to come.

Amanda Berg
2-19-07

Discuss Three Advantages of a Charter School

Have you ever thought about dropping out of school for any reason? I know I have, but I changed my mind after I heard about Winfree Academy Charter School. Charter schools are not like regular high schools, so in my opinion I believe charter schools have many advantages over high schools. Here are just a few of my opinions on why I believe charter schools have advantages over high schools.

I believe that one of the biggest advantages charter schools have is that you are able to have more one on one time with the teachers. At regular high schools you have about thirty kids in a class working on the same subject and same assignment and they all have different questions or need help on different problems so it's hard for a teacher to get to you when they don't have that much time with you while trying to help all the student's and not having that much time with you cause you have another class to go to. At charter schools, not everyone is in the same class or working on the same assignment so teachers are more likely to be able to get to you when you need their help.

The second advantage that I think charter schools have is that you only go for four hours. When I went to a high school for eight hours a day, I went crazy! I would get so bored and could not stand being there, so I would skip. Now that I go to school for only four hours I do not get nearly as bored as I did and I do not skip.

The last advantage that I believe charter schools have is that you are able to graduate early, if that is what you really want to do. At charter schools, you are able to work at your own pace, so depending on how motivated you are you could graduate early. You do not have to be in the same class for a whole semester, so the faster you work the faster you get classes done, and the faster you are able to graduate. It is all up to you if you want to graduate early or not.

Those are just a few of the advantages I believe charter schools have. I believe that charter schools is a lot better of an environment for some student's then it would be for them going to a regular high school. I know that it is a lot better of an environment for me!

Angela Rodriguez
February 19, 2007
1AM

Discuss 3 ways Winfree has helped me stay in school

Have you ever thought about dropping out of school because you thought nothing could help you? Well, Winfree Academy can change your mind. Winfree opens up new opportunity for those who think about giving up.

Winfree Academy welcomes all who are destined to work to finish school. Its self-paced work ethic helps students build more courage and no due dates make work even better. Noise is also kept down to a whisper, so you really have a good environment to concentrate in.

This school is only for 4 hours a day, so you don't even have to go 8 hours like public schools do. You can either go in mornings, afternoons, or nights, but you have to work. How hard is it to turn down half a day of school compared to a full day of school?

Teachers at Winfree are not so bad either; they help you when you need it. They are also easy to get along with. One day when I graduate, I'll come back and be sure to thank them.

Over all, Winfree has helped me in so many ways and in which I have named some such as, opportunity, time and environment, and teachers. I wouldn't have anywhere else to go if Winfree wasn't here for me, so that's why I thank them for opportunity to help me with school and also with life changes.

Three Ways Winfree Has Helped Me Stay in School

By: Lindsey Carlson

Can you imagine what it is like to not understand how important school is and want to drop out? I know what that is like, because when I started coming to Winfree in November I wanted to drop out. I didn't think this would work, but I didn't realize that everyone in here was already on my side. The great teachers that help me stay on track, the self-paced environment that is so much easier to focus in, and the one on one time with your teachers are three reasons why I'm still here.

On my first day of class at Winfree, I didn't want to go. I was giving this a try before I dropped out. I had to stay after class, this was one very unforgettable life – changing event for me. This was when I met my teacher Mr.Hill, the one who made me realize that dropping out would be the worst mistake u could make. From then on I knew if I had not come here I wouldn't be in school now.

Another reason I'm still in school is because Winfree has the best self-paced environment. It's so easy to get focused on your work. Winfree helped me realize that I can graduate. When I finish my work, it gives me a great feeling of accomplishment; one I know I have never felt before I came here.

My last reason is the one on one time you have with your teachers. This is important because having dedicated teachers who give you lots of their time is not something you can say for public school. I've always been helped when I didn't understand something here. I know if I need help I don't need to be afraid to ask, because ill always receive it.

Winfree has helped me in more than just three ways, but I listed the most important. I know that Winfree has helped me, and I would not be in school if I had not come here.

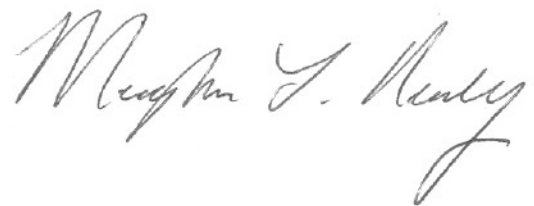
Dear Senator Shapiro,

Winfree equals my future, without this organization, graduating would be far down the road for me, something unimaginable, but now I am finally categorized as a senior where before I was a sophomore for 2 years. Winfree has helped me in several ways I am now able to work a full-time job, at a job I love, and save money for a car. This school has helped my parents a good deal because they are reassured that I'll get a diploma and enter college as well. I believe an establishment such as this one encourages more students to finish the high school education.

Winfree Academy has helped me stay in school because it is only 4 hours a day, it let's you enjoy your music and eat snacks while you complete your work. I am compelled to complete more work because of the relax environment, the helpful teachers, and the incentives, such as the ten minute breaks, music and snacks.

Overall, I believe Winfree academy and all charter schools alike that work towards the same goal in achieving more graduates are a wonderful advantage for people like me. You have options that open up for you that you wouldn't be able to pursue normally with 8 hours of school. Winfree is simply a great opportunity and hopefully will become an expanded change available to more students nationally.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Matthew J. Nealey". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "Matthew J. Nealey".

Richard Stoneking
2/20/07
TAKS Prep
AM

The way that a charter school has helped me stay in school, is the fact that you go to school for four hours a day. That gives you time to hold a part to full time job. It is also a self paced environment so you can work at the speed that is right for you.

One of the best advantages of a charter school is that you go just four hours a day. If you have moved out or have been kicked out of you house and live on your own, the four-hour day can help get you a job to help you pay your bills. It can also work around the problems in your life.

If you just want a job or if you need a job a charter school can help get you that. If you only got to school for four hours a day then you have the best availability over a regular high school student. You can also go to a different session If your current one does not work with the one you are currently in.

If you are not the quickest learner in the place, you can go the speed that you want. If you are good at a particular subject you can get through it in about one to two months an what would take you a year in public school. Also another good side to a charter school is that if everyone is on a different part of a subject you get more of a one on one teacher to student interaction.

If you want a high school diploma, but if for personal reasons you can't attend a regular eight hour high school then the charter school is probably the way for you. If you like one on one student teaching then the charter school is the way for you.

After I had finished a difficult year at my previous school, I felt like giving up. I was in one of the most challenging school districts in the area. I couldn't keep up with everyone else. A friend of mine was attending Winfree that year and she had told me all about it.

I wanted to try it out for myself. The first few months went well for me. Since I was not as pressured as I was at my previous school, I felt more comfortable. My confidence was starting to increase and I started to gain more self-esteem. Things seemed to be brighter for me.

I finished half a year of geometry in only a few months. I was moving along faster than I had expected. When I received my certificate for completing geometry it just felt so good for me. I had accomplished one of the most difficult subjects I've ever had. I was able to move to the next grade level after those few months.

The hours they have can fit your schedule. If you aren't a morning person, you can go in the afternoon. If you can handle going in the morning than you can attend the morning session. If you have to work most of the day they have an evening session as well. Each session is only for hours long. So you aren't in school for as long as normal schools.

Attending Winfree has helped me gain more confidence and I am less pressured than I used to be. It's really done wonders for me. It does take work to progress, but it's not too difficult and they can always help you if you are still having difficulties.

Jennifer Bridegum

Can you imagine life in today's competitive environment without a high school education? I can, and I came dangerously close to dropping out and being another statistic. Here are three reasons why Winfree Academy has helped me in so many ways.

A little more than a year ago, I stopped coming to school everyday because I never knew what a high school education could do for me. Finally, I came to school for one purpose, to sign my withdrawal papers. Little did I know, I had another thing in store for me. I was soon surrounded by my teachers, and principals explaining to me why I wasn't allowed to dropout. So an hour later, and a bucket full of tears, I agreed to stay in school.

Now, I'm in my senior year, with only a few more credits until graduation. I applied to the Art Institute of Dallas, and was just recently accepted. I have been taught so many life lessons while attending Winfree Academy, and have learned so much about myself. Here, no one cares what color your hair and nails are, what kind of clothes you wear, what kind of music you listen to, or about the car you drive. Winfree Academy has become a family to me.

Winfree has showed me that I don't need to rely on anyone, and I have my own two feet to stand on. I have never believed in my self, or my capabilities, until I started here. I have learned that reaching out to other people can really benefit myself, and others. Winfree Academy has helped me accomplish goals I never thought were possible, and helped me want to graduate high school.

In conclusion, Winfree Academy has helped me stay in school, build my confidence, my self-esteem, realize that dreaming is believe and helped me to realize that dropping out of school was the worst mistake of my life! Thank you for you time, and please consider the students.

Dear Senator,

Today I am here to talk about the benefits of going to a charter school and the ones that have benefited me personally. Going to Winfree Charter School helps kids who are having trouble in public school to have a fall back plan rather than just dropping out. I have seen many kids in my 3 month stay here who planned on dropping out go on to Winfree to work hard and become a successful individuals who will now be walking across the stage in the spring. Going to a charter school gives you a chance to go to school for four hours, which helps many of the students to go to work and have the benefit of an education .Winfree also allows special privileges such as eating during class hours and being able to listen to a musical device at a normal level, listening to music while working really does help the students to focus and get more work done. I believe going to a Charter school has changed the way I feel about education, in a public school I had taken so many things for advantage and coming here has showed me the progress I can make through accelerated learning and how I can push myself to change personally and through my education. Going to a Charter school has also helped me to catch up in my high school classes that I had fallen back in public school through the help of my caring teachers who not only help me in my studies but help to prepare me for the world I will soon be going in to college. I am grateful to have this opportunity to be accepted at this school through the help of my teachers who have given me unconditional support to my peers who help me to keep working hard everyday. Winfree Charter School has changed my look upon education , life, and people in general these are just a few things that have benefited me from a Charter Schools.

Keelye K.

Dear Senator Shapiro,

Charter schools have given me a chance to pursue a dream and at the same time I can achieve my diploma. I am a tennis player with a long-term goal of playing on the professional tour. The second semester of my junior year my father and I decided to home school. I severely struggled my way through the Texas Tech. home school program. Due to my families budget we could not afford to attend a special needs private school. In my past, career as a student, I have been on the place in attendance of pre Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement classes since the seventh grade. My T.A.K.S. scores have been way above average. A common misconception about charter schools, and one that I personally experienced, is that charter schools are not just for kids who have problems passing classes in a "regular" high school. In fact, I have found that is the smallest percentage of teens that attend charter schools. In my experience, charter schools have been a home for teenagers who have special needs. Like my athletic affairs, many students have things that they have to do. The largest percentage of kids that attend the state's charter schools have to work full time because they are rather living on their own or they have to provide for their own families, brothers and sisters, in which it was their mothers and fathers who have messed up. In has been evident that these parents have forced young teenagers, the ages of 15 to 18, to have actual adult responsibilities. It would be better not to punish a child for the actions of whose they did not rightfully possess. But instead of giving up hope and getting swallowed up into their own families mistakes, these kids search for something more, something they can hold on to in the future, perhaps a way out. So if the question comes up in the future to end the existence of charter schools, I wish that you would strongly reconsider. I have seen children's lives that have been changed and transformed from a person who didn't have any hope left to be fulfilled with a strong desire to succeed. If the lives of a hand full of children are saved, isn't the money being spent worth it?

It appears this current administration believes in the children of now and the children of the future. So lets put an emphasis on No Child Left Behind and work with Bush to ensure the future of America. These schools have been home to many students. Lets not trample a man's home of straw and sticks, but rebuild it and make it better with brick and stones. Thank you Senator.

Sincerely,
Blake Maurer

Hello my name is Stephanie Fields and I am going to tell you how I became a Winfree Academy student. I'm sure there is a story behind how everyone got here. Hopefully everyone reading my story can relate and be inspired to stay in school. It all started when I was sixteen years old, after being in the 10th grade. Summer was coming and I decided to spend the summer with my parents so I came to Dallas stayed for a while. When school started I decided to get a job instead of going back to school and that's what I did. I worked at Pep Boys as a parts driver. That's where I met my boyfriend. Soon afterwards my boyfriend and I decided to get an apartment together. I moved out of my parent's house even though the both begged me to stay in school and stay home. Being sixteen and having a job making \$6.75 an hour, I knew everything. I thought I was a millionaire, until I realized I was getting paid about \$500.00 every two weeks. After paying bills, trying to buy groceries and getting gas for my car, which left me \$20.00. To go two weeks on that little was impossible but I didn't want to go home and admit that my parent's were right. Inside I was screaming somebody slap me back into reality. By the time I realized I wanted to go back to school, I was eighteen years old and pregnant. That's when I decided I didn't want to live like this and I didn't have to. Most of all I don't want my daughter to go through life with us struggling. After I had her in January I was on the phone the next week with a school known for helping teen mothers get an education. I had an appointment to meet with them and fill out an application. I spilled my guts to these people only to be turned down, due to my being out of school for almost two years, being eighteen and having a young child. They said I had a high risk of dropping out so they wouldn't even give me a chance to show what I could do. After they called and told me that I was not accepted, I cried and pretty much gave up. I thought nobody believed in me so why I try. Later that day, the school that denied my education, called and gave me the number for Winfree Academy. They said most students who don't make it there could go to Winfree. I wrote down the number thinking why call just to be embarrassed and turned down. That night while bawling and looking at my daughter, thinking I know she believes in me. Someday I'm going to want her to have the best and I'm going to give it to her. I was in my room lying on the bed looking at the ceiling and I started talking to god. I asked, "Why I was so stupid"? "Why"? I asked for another chance to prove myself. I wouldn't let anybody down this time. The next day I called Winfree Academy and set up an

Dear Senator Shaprio,

Winfree has made schooling so much easier for me. Before I came here to Winfree in Grapevine Texas I was at Keller High School in Keller Texas I have been going to Keller K-threw the beginning for my 12th grade year. Schooling was always been difficult for me especially math at Keller I never really understood in a senior still doing 10th grade math. I started Keller again my senior year I left Keller Nov. 1,06 not because I they made me because I wanted to go to Winfree to understand school because the rate I was going at Keller I wasn't going to graduate in May. I started Winfree on Nov 3,06 and now its Feb 19,07 and I only have English 4 and Economics 4th Quarter left to do for school. I finished all my geometry in one month in three days and at Keller it was taking me two years to do. At Keller I only passed English TAKS, since I have been at Winfree I have been doing TAKS prep for over a month I have learned more helping tools for TAKS here than I ever have at Keller last Thursday and Friday I took a practice test for my teacher for the history TAKS I only missed 11 out for 55 that's the best I have ever done all because of Winfree I plan on beeing done with TAKS this week because I feel so good about it with all the help I have had here. I never want t go back to a public school because I feel so comfortable here with the teachers helping me thanks to the teachers here I plan on graduating less than two months and walking across stage on June 3,07 in Denton at UNT with the rate im going here. Please give charter schools more credit because the really do help people in many ways.

Sincerely,
Whitney Justice

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I am writing to you to inform you about our great Charter School, Winfree Academy. Winfree Academy has helped me a great deal and without Winfree Academy, I think I would have dropped out of school because of how many credits I was behind. Now, that I am attending Winfree Academy, I am close to graduating this year, which is very exciting for me. I only need 5 more credits to graduate and I believe if I had stayed in public school, I would have been still in the 9th grade because of the situation I was in.

I was home schooled most of my life and I decided it was time for me to face the real world and see how real school would be like. I enrolled at Central High School; in Keller TX I was very excited to attend a real public school, but my excitement soon vanished when they told me they could not accept my credits and I would have to go back to the 9th grade. The news devastated me because I was supposed to be in the 11th grade. My dreams were shattered, but I decided to give it a shot because I didn't want to be home schooled anymore. I was enrolled in all honors classes and my grades ranked for A+ to B+. I finished my first school year at Central, but I was still discouraged and felt like I didn't accomplish anything, then I heard it through the Great vine About Winfree Academy Charter School.

I decided to go and see what Winfree was all about and the next day my mother enrolled me in the school and I started the school year with high hopes because I was considered a 11th grader and I received all my classes and finished within less than a year. This was a great advantage for


me because I could work at my own pace on my work without being rushed. The best thing of all about Winfree Academy Charter School was that it was only for four hours a day, which helped me to still be able to have a full time job. Enrolling at Winfree Academy Charter School was the best decision I made and now I really feel like I am accomplishing my goals.

The teachers here have also helped me and I receive more individual help, than I believe I would have if I had stayed at a public school.

Charter Schools have helped so many kids in so many ways and I think I can speak for everyone that attends a Charter School have helped stop the drop out population. I believe that there should be more Charter Schools available in all states. I am very proud of my school and I would recommend everyone who wants to graduate early and get caught up on their credits to attend a Charter School because they're a big help in making their dreams come true.

I believe by keeping Charter Schools, like Winfree Academy, we are making the world a brighter place and helping kids today to pursue their dreams and stay in school and better preparing them for the future.

Sincerely,



Candace Dedrick