

## Public Charter Schools: A Snapshot

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### General Background on Charter Schools

While charter school laws differ in some respects from state to state, they generally authorize charter schools that:

- *are created and managed by groups of parents, teachers, and/or others.* These schools are tailored to meet the needs of the local community. For example, curricula range from back-to-basics, to a more interdisciplinary approach, to a partnership with a museum, to a focus on technology or workplace preparation.
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- *continue to operate only if they do a good job, meet the conditions of their charters, and if they can attract students and their families to the school.*
- *tend to be smaller schools, where students can have sustained relationships with caring adults.* Average (median) student enrollment in charter schools is 154 students.
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### Around the Nation:

- *33 states the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have enacted laws authorizing the creation of charter schools.* More than 750 charter schools are estimated to be in operation nationwide, and most are in nine states. Over 1200 could be in operation next year.

## **President Clinton's Support for Public Charter Schools**

**The Clinton Administration is supporting charter schools in several ways:**

- ***Charter Schools Start-Up Program.*** In 1993, The President proposed a public charter schools program, which became a law in 1994 as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, that is already providing grants that will help start over 400 charter schools in 19 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. The program is helping parents, award-winning teachers, business, museums, and others to start charter schools that are open to all students and accountable to the public for performance.

This program is designed to address the most pressing challenge shown in surveys to be facing charter schools: a lack of access to start-up funding. With the President's leadership, the program has grown from \$6 million in FY 1995 to \$80 million in FY 1998.

In FY 1995, start-up grants were awarded to 10 states and two individual schools for charter school design and initial implementation. FY 1996 grants provided \$8 million to continue these projects, and \$8.8 million for start-up grants in 9 additional states and the District of Columbia. FY 1997 funds provided more than \$44 million to new and continuing grants. In FY1997 the average state received more than \$2 million, and the average school received between \$50,000 and \$70,000.

- ***Other Federal Funds.*** Goals 2000, Title I, and other federal funds may be used to support charter schools and to share lessons learned with other charter schools. At least four states (Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, and Texas ) use Goals 2000 funds for charter schools.
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# **A Study of Charter Schools: First Year Report 1997**

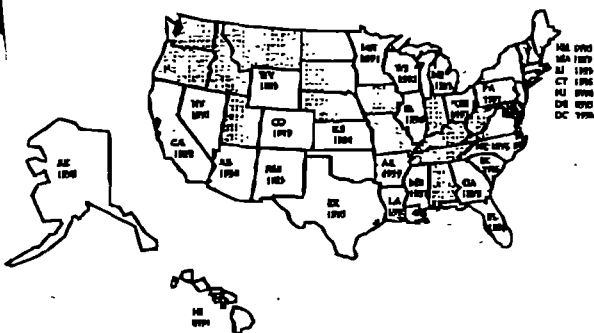
by RPP International & the University of Minnesota

funded under contract from the U.S. Department of Education

## **Highlights of First Year Findings from the first-year report:**

- ☒ Most charter schools are small. Schools started from scratch are smallest, while schools that previously were a non-chartered public school are larger.
- ☒ Grade level distribution varies considerably, with charter schools more often choosing a K-8 or a K-12 distribution than other public schools.
- ☒ Over half of all charter schools are newly created; almost one-third were pre-existing public schools; a little over one-tenth were pre-existing private schools.
- ☒ Charter schools serve a diverse student population. Approximately half of all charter school students are students of color.
- ☒ Some states have higher percentages of charter schools serving students of color than other public schools in the state; a few have a somewhat higher percentage of charter schools that serve predominantly white students, compared to the percentage of other public schools in that state.
- ☒ Charter schools report that 7.4 % of their students had received special education services prior to enrollment. Although 10.4% of all students nationally receive services under the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA), the percentage is lower for the ten states covered by the first survey. An exception: charter schools in Minnesota and Wisconsin serve substantially more special education students than other schools in those states.
- ☒ Charter Schools serve a smaller proportion of Limited English Proficient Students than do other public schools in their state, although in some states the average is higher.
- ☒ Most charter schools report that they are eligible for Title 1 funding, but many reported that they do not receive funding.
- ☒ Charter schools are founded for diverse reasons. Newly-created schools often seek to realize an educational vision. Many others seek to serve a special student population, though most reflect the demographic characteristics of their area.
- ☒ Resource limitations are a pervasive problem. Lack of start-up funds was mentioned most frequently, by 59% of charter schools. Schools in the survey did not often site regulatory problems.

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Guidelines for school and state grant applications are contained in the federal authorizing legislation and are further explained in the grant application package. Individual schools should obtain guidance on receiving subgrants from their SEA. A list of State charter school contacts may be obtained by contacting a member of the U.S. Department of Education's charter schools team listed below.



States with Legislation Authorizing Charter Schools

Grants may be used for planning and implementation activities such as professional development, identifying assessment strategies, curriculum development informing the community about the school, investments in technology, updating of facilities, and to defray other costs not covered by state and local funds.

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Other Helpful Charter School Information may be found at:

<http://www.uscharterschools.org>

This practitioner oriented site was prepared by WestEd in collaboration with USDOED and the California State University Institute for Education Reform, and provides information, relevant research, policies, and practices to those wanting to create a charter school.

For more information or to receive an application, please contact a member of the U.S. Department of Education's Charter School Team:

U.S. Department of Education  
600 Independence Avenue, SW  
The Portals Building, Suite 4500  
Washington, DC 20202

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Leslie\_Hankerson@ed.gov



**United States  
Department of  
Education's  
Public  
Charter Schools  
Program**

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93, President Clinton proposed a public charter schools program, which was enacted in 1994, as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This program is helping outstanding and award-winning teachers in partnership with businesses, universities, museums and others in their communities to start charter schools that are open to all students and accountable to the public for performance.

A federal charter school discretionary grant program was established to address the most commonly cited obstacle to creating these schools--lack of access to start-up funding. The \$80 million in funding authorized for FY 1998 should support the development of nearly 1,000 charter schools by teachers, parents, community groups, and other responsible organizations.

As of November 1997, 29 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had charter school legislation and there were more than 700 charter schools operating nationwide.

### What is a Public Charter School?

Charter schools are a promising way to raise academic standards, empower educators, and actively involve parents and communities in public education.

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- A charter school is a **public school** that is exempted from many traditional rules and regulations allowing charter schools greater **flexibility** to try different instructional approaches.
- In exchange for this flexibility, charter schools are held **accountable** for the achievement of the **high academic standards** described in their charters. A charter school that fails to meet these standards risks being closed by its chartering agency.

### Charter schools are public schools and must therefore meet certain criteria to be eligible to receive federal funding.

- **Charter schools must be fair, open and accessible to all students.** Charter schools may not have admissions requirements or charge tuition. When more students apply to attend a charter school than there are spaces available, a lottery process must be used to select students.
- Like all public schools, **charter schools must be non-sectarian.**
- **Charter schools must comply with Federal regulations.** Charter schools are freed from certain traditional regulations, but still must

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follow federal regulations regarding civil rights, special education, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) and others.

### How do schools receive federal charter school grants?

Federal charter school grants are **usually** awarded **directly** to a **State Educational Agency (SEA)**. In cases where the SEA has not applied for federal start-up funds, individual schools may apply.

- Eligible SEA's (those SEA's in States with legislation authorizing charter schools) must complete the application process and compete for discretionary funds. SEA's then award subgrants to schools or districts for charter school planning and implementation.
- **Charter Schools may receive Federal grant funds for a period not to exceed three years.** Up to 18 months of that time may be used for post award planning and program design, and a maximum of 2 years may be used for the initial implementation of a charter school.

# **Public Charter School Program Briefing**

## **July 14, 1998**

### **Quick Statistics:**

- Approximately 800 charter schools operated at the close of the 1997-98 school year.
- Next year we anticipate between 1200 and 1300 charter schools.
- A total of 33 states, DC and Puerto Rico have passed laws authorizing charter schools.

### **Introduction:**

This document provides an update on state activity regarding charter schools and explains Department efforts to:

- distribute grant funds for FY 1997;
- work with Congress on legislation that would affect the public charter school program;
- create publications and technical assistance materials; and
- plan for a second national charter school conference.

### **I. Recent activity on charter schools by state legislatures:**

33 states, DC and Puerto Rico have passed charter school laws. Four states added new legislation this year. In addition, the California legislature also significantly expanded the state's charter school law. While the change is already being challenged in court, the expanded law is expected to be upheld by the courts.

| <b>New laws passed in four states this year:</b> | <b>Legislation will probably receive serious consideration in the following states next year:</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Idaho<br>Utah<br>Nevada<br>Missouri              | New York<br>Oklahoma<br>Oregon<br>South Dakota<br>Washington                                      |

### **II. Status of latest grant competition and current grants to states:**

Nearly \$75 million in federal assistance is available to provide new and continuing grants to States and other eligible applicants to help charter schools cover costs associated with planning and initial implementation.

Grant periods for states are for three years and require annual reports for states to receive second and third year continuation grants. Annual reports/applications for continuation grants are due on August 3, and awards will be made by September 30.

About 10 states will finish the first three-year cycle of their charter school grants this year, and consequently must apply for new grants. In addition, several states just recently passed laws or

have previously not received grants. The application package for new grants is awaiting reinstatement of OMB approval. As soon as it is approved, the Department will publish a Notice Inviting Applications in the FEDERAL REGISTER, and mail out application packages. Applicants will be given a short turnaround time to complete their applications, probably 30 days, and awards will be made by September 30. Information contained in the application is nearly identical to that contained in prior applications, and the information required by applicants to respond has not changed from prior years.

**III. Pending Legislation would change the Department's Public Charter School Program:** There are efforts to change the legislation authorizing the Department's charter school program. A bill has passed in the House; and another is pending in the Senate. The Senate bill should be marked up in committee around July 23, 1998. The Department currently supports the passage of the Senate bill, while recommending several important improvements to the bill.

Both bills would:

- direct the Department to prioritize states according to certain aspects of their charter school laws and reward states for passing particular types of charter school laws, (states with multiple sponsors, broad deregulation authority, periodic review of progress, and which do not have caps on the numbers of charter schools would receive preference.);
- cap the national activities funded by the program at 5 percent of the total allocation for charter schools -- this would be down from the 10 percent available currently. These funds support evaluation and technical assistance;
- take steps to ensure that charter schools receive funds from other federal programs -- like Title I -- including during the first year of operations.

The Department's response has been to:

- modify the criteria used to prioritize states. Our preferred priorities would strengthen accountability, improve flexibility, and still support states that pass laws that authorize larger numbers of charter schools;
- leave the national activities funded at 10 percent, or reduce it to \$5 million or 5 percent, whichever ever is greater while maintaining flexibility in its use; and
- ensure charter schools receive appropriate federal funds in their first year of operation, but not dictate broad strategies that wouldn't work in all programs or unreasonable time lines for implementation.

The Department is also advocating a new grant program to provide "dissemination grants" which would allow successful charter schools to work with other public schools, charter or otherwise, to spread the successful innovations they have developed to the rest of our public school systems.

**IV. Status of Upcoming Publications on Charter Schools and Public School Choice:**

- *Second Year Report from the National Evaluation of Charter Schools* -- this indepth report is in the final stages of layout and should be ready for release later this summer or early in the fall. It provides information from two years of surveys and site visits with over 50 charter schools;
- *Guide for Charter Granting Entities* -- this guidebook helps charter granting entities --

such as school boards or state boards of education -- learn from other public groups that review, approve and monitor charter schools. This handbook should be released around July 20, 1998;

- *The Charter School Roadmap* -- this book is designed to help state-level policymakers interested in developing charter school laws. It is a neutral document, designed to lead state leaders through the key questions that must be answered while formulating charter school policy. This book was written by NCSL and ECS for the Governance Institute at OERI. This document has passed POC review and is being laid out, it should be released this summer;
- *A Parents Guide to Public School Choice* -- this book is designed to help families consider all the options that may be available to them in their public school systems, including charter schools, magnet schools, focus schools, open enrollment in inter- and intra-district choice programs. This book is under development and is scheduled for release this fall.

#### **V. Second National Charter Schools Conference Set:**

The Department has scheduled a Second National Charter Schools Conference for March 15-17, 1998. It will take place in Denver, Colorado. The conference will be open to all interested charter school operators, people planning to open charter schools, LEA and SEA administrators, and policymakers. The first national conference was an invitational event that involved around 800 charter school operators and was very positively received. We anticipate over 1,000 people for this second conference.

## **The National Study of Charter Schools**

- first definitive survey of all charter schools
- new charter schools will be included in the survey each year
- four-year study funded by U.S. Department of Education
- in-depth site visits at a sample of schools
- longitudinal testing in a sample of schools
- future reports with in-depth findings
- future reports on student achievement
- 90% of the schools responded to the survey in the first year
- schools at the time were located in 10 states
- follow-up survey took place last spring
- The first report was issued this year. For highlights see reverse side of this sheet.
- ED mailed the Executive Summary to charter schools in the Spring 1997.
- To supplement the national study, in 1997 ED issued two additional contracts to study how charter schools serve students with disabilities and to study accountability policies and practices by chartering agencies and charter schools.

*For either the Executive Summary or the full report, go to <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/charter> or write to the National Library of Education, US Department of Education, Washington DC 20208-5721. Limited copies of the Executive Summary are also available at this conference at the School Choice Institute (see agenda).*

*For more information about ED's charter school research program, contact Judith Anderson at [Judith\\_Anderson@ED.gov](mailto:Judith_Anderson@ED.gov) or at (202) 219-2039.*

## **Charter Schools by State, Number of Schools, and Enrollment**

| <b><u>State</u></b> | <b><u>Number of Schools</u></b> | <b><u>Enrollment</u></b> |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Alaska              | 18                              | 1,098                    |
| Arizona             | 187                             | 37,949                   |
| California          | 160                             | 53,747                   |
| Colorado            | 60                              | 11,638                   |
| Conneticut          | 15                              | 1,701                    |
| Delaware            | 10                              | 1,685                    |
| DC                  | 22                              | 5,526                    |
| Florida             | 71                              | 8,850                    |
| Georgia             | 26                              | 13,841                   |
| Hawaii              | 2                               | 565                      |
| Illinois            | 20                              | 1,930                    |
| Kansas              | 15                              | 1,873                    |
| Louisiana           | 13                              | 544                      |
| Massachusetts       | 37                              | 6,720                    |
| Michigan            | 118                             | 21,259                   |
| Minnesota           | 40                              | 3,947                    |
| Mississippi         | 6                               | --                       |
| New Jersey          | 39                              | 4,439                    |
| New Mexico          | 5                               | 4,341                    |
| North Carolina      | 65                              | 4,853                    |
| Ohio                | 20                              | --                       |
| Oregon              | 31                              | --                       |
| Pennsylvania        | 35                              | 1,047                    |
| Puerto Rico         | 36                              | --                       |
| Rhode Island        | 1                               | 197                      |
| South Carolina      | 5                               | 390                      |
| Texas               | 60                              | 4,120                    |
| Wisconsin           | 18                              | 2,148                    |
| Wyoming             | 1                               | --                       |
| Total               | 1,136                           | 235, 187 <sup>1</sup>    |

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<sup>1</sup> This estimate is based on specific enrollment projections at 939 charter schools totalling 194, 408 students. An estimated 40, 779 students will be served be served by 197 additional charter schools, based on an average school size of 207 students.

Los Angeles Charter Schools Evaluation  
Cross-Site Report, June 1998

WestEd, in partnership with the University of Southern California, has just completed a five-month evaluation of 13 charter schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

### Approach and Methods

In response to the district's Request for Proposals, WestEd developed a framework to address central theories of the charter school concept, namely, that increased parental choice, regulatory flexibility, greater site-based decision-making autonomy, and performance-based accountability will yield improved outcomes for students and schools. Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods and data, the study relied on four major data collection approaches: review of documents (e.g., charter petitions) and data on fiscal, demographic and student performance; surveys of administrators and teachers at all 13 schools, and of parents in the five charter schools up for renewal; site visits; and interviews with stakeholders at all schools. In addition, district staff and board members were interviewed about their work with, and expectations for, charter schools.

### Overview and Background

LAUSD's charter schools are diverse in size, degree of flexibility granted, and origin. Of the charter schools evaluated, three are considered *"fiscally independent,"* i.e., school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders are exempt from most district finance, personnel, and operational policies. The remaining 10 schools are *"fiscally dependent,"* thus remaining largely within the district's operational structure and subject to district policies, though they may request waivers. Eight of the dependent charter schools (five elementary, one middle and two high schools) share an umbrella charter and an overarching governance structure.

### Evaluation Results

The evaluation yielded in-depth **case studies** for the five charter schools up for renewal and a **set of profiles** for the other eight charter schools. It also produced a **cross-site report**, *The Findings and Implications of Increased Flexibility and Accountability: An Evaluation of*

*Charter Schools in Los Angeles Unified School District* which analyzes the implications, lessons learned, and cross-cutting themes and issues raised by our findings.

Specifically, the cross-site report discusses findings in six major areas: 1) the **context** in which schools operate, such as the demographic profile of the student population and **origins** of the schools' foundation and development; 2) the types of **governance** models and structures used, including the roles and influence of various stakeholders; 3) the variation found in **finance and staffing** practices, especially those used by independent charter schools; 4) the nature of the **educational program**, including strategies for special needs students and professional development approaches; 5) structures and practices used for **assessment and performance-based accountability**; and 6) analyses of student performance and other schoolwide **outcomes**.

The report then explores what the findings imply in terms of: 1) the effects of increased flexibility on outcomes, non-academic services, and facilities; 2) differing opportunities provided by charter schools relative to other district reforms; 3) lessons learned from charter schools for district systemic reform purposes; and 4) whether outcomes improved over the term of the charter for those schools up for renewal.

The cross-site report will be available on-line by August 17, 1998, at [www.wested.org/policy/](http://www.wested.org/policy/). For more information, contact Kathy Swank, at LAUSD's School Reform/LEARN Office: (213) 625-6530.

# RESEARCH TODAY

## Charter Schools

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A report from the National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment

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August 1998

### A National Study of Charter Schools, Second-Year Report

On July 24, 1998, President Clinton announced the release of the second-year report of the National Study of Charter Schools, a comprehensive four-year study of charter schools sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The charter school phenomenon that seemed radical only a few years ago is now an accepted part of public education in many parts of the country. In 1991, Minnesota became the first state to enact charter school legislation, and today, just 7 years later, 33 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have passed charter school laws.

Across the country, teachers, parents, and community members are working to open charter schools—schools they believe will improve education. The second-year report, which was produced by RPP International, of Emeryville, California, describes the charter school movement nationwide, and documents and analyzes ways in which charter schools are being established and run. Key findings include:

➤ **The number of charter schools is growing.** In the 1997-98 school year, 279 additional charter schools opened, bringing the total number to nearly 700. If the various branches of charter schools in Arizona are counted as separate charter schools, the number of charter schools in operation was approximately 781. Arizona, California, and Michigan have the largest numbers of charter schools; together, these three

states have about half of all charter school in the country.

- **Most charter schools are standing the test of time.** Once established, charter schools have remained open. Only 19 charter schools had ceased operating as charters by September 1997; and only 12 of these schools actually closed their doors.
- **Over 110,000 students attended charter schools in 1996-97, and the schools are in great demand.** More than 70 percent of charter schools sampled said they had more applicants than could attend. Charter school enrollment varies from less than one-tenth of one percent of the state's public school enrollment in Florida, Illinois, and Louisiana to more than two percent of the state's enrollment in Arizona.
- **Generally, in terms of race and income level, charter school populations are similar to those in the overall public school system.** However, about a third of charter schools are more likely to serve students of color and low-income student.
- **There appear to be possible legislative trends surfacing toward relaxing limits on the number of charter schools and increasing flexibility in the charter-granting process.** Despite these trends, charter school operators face many

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## Promising Charter Schools

***City Academy***, in St. Paul, Minnesota, was the first charter school in the nation to open its doors. Founded by two teachers and members of the Minnesota Education Association, the school focuses on youth who have dropped out of school. City Academy places a heavy emphasis on student responsibility and decision making, and has had significant success. Most of the students, all former drop-outs, have graduated and gone on to some kind of post-secondary education. Like most charter schools in Minnesota, this school was started "from scratch", rather than converted from an existing school.

The school's director is also helping the National Education Association with a project to assist union members in other states to create charter schools. Despite mixed feelings within unions about charter schools, this project may help show the ability of teachers and their unions to start high-quality charter schools.

Contact: Milo Cutter, teacher and founder of the school. 612-298-4624

***New Visions School***, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is called "The Reading School" for its intensive focus on reading, and helping children overcome reading deficiencies. The school was started by a parent who has a child with a disability and who had worked with the Minneapolis school system on innovative approaches to reading. The school's students are making substantially more progress in reading than before, and it has received a Goals 2000 grant to help teachers in nearby school districts learn about its effective strategies to help children read.

Contact: Bob Deboer, parent and founder of the school: 612-521-2266

***O'Farrell Community School***, in San Diego, California, was visited by the President when he announced the federal charter school start-up program in the fall of 1995. O'Farrell Community School was converted from a relatively new public school to a charter school in 1993. The school is comprised of 1400 students in grades six through eight, and is divided into schools-within-schools, or families, of about 160 students and six teachers in each. The school places tremendous emphasis on high academic standards for all students.

O'Farrell is also truly embedded in the community, through a rich set of partnerships with parents, local businesses, universities, and social service agencies. Students present their work for parents and community members during frequent open houses. The school provides one computer for every five students. The school, working with Cox Cable, Apple Corporation's Christopher Columbus Consortium, and San Diego University, makes effective use of computers and educational technology across the curriculum.

Contact: Bob Stein, Chief Executive Officer of O'Farrell Community School: 619-263-2009

***P.S. 1***, in Denver, Colorado, was started as part of an empowerment zone-style project to revitalize a deteriorating area in downtown Denver. The school *received a federal charter schools start-up grant* to develop interdisciplinary assessments that measure how well its students are doing on Colorado's tough academic standards. The school is trying to help its students gain knowledge and skills needed in core academic areas, but through an interdisciplinary teaching approach.

This is an example of how charter schools can pursue their innovative approaches and still be held accountable for challenging state and local standards.

Contact: Rex Brown, founder and director of P.S. 1: 303-575-6690

***City on a Hill***, in Boston, Massachusetts, was founded by two teachers eager to structure a school around civic education, community service, and diplomas awarded on the basis of clear academic progress. The school is working with Northeastern University and other local groups to provide learning and volunteer opportunities in the community.

The school's high expectations are embodied in academic requirements for what students must do and learn in order to receive a diploma. For example, students must be able to write a well-structured and interesting essay, defend their views on various subjects, analyze important American historical documents, converse in a second language, and read a core list of great books.

Contact: Sarah Kass, teacher and co-founder of City on a Hill: 617-262-9838

***Vaughn Next Century Learning Center***, in Los Angeles, California, was a public school that became one of California's first charter schools in July, 1993. Parents and teachers call this school "the little school that could", and indeed, after more than three years of intensive focus on academic restructuring and family involvement, attendance and test scores have improved significantly. Reading and math scores are up, and attendance has gone from one of the worst in the area to the best in the L.A. school system.

The school has also cut administrative costs considerably, and has used the savings to reduce class size and build a new computer center. While most charter schools are quite small, Vaughn serves 1200 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. All of its students are eligible for the federal free lunch program, and 75% speak a native language other than English.

Contact: Yvonne Chen, Principal. 818-896-7461

## Recent Statements from the President and First Lady:

From remarks by the President to Boys Nation  
July 24, 1998

"Across our nation, public school choice, and in particular, charter schools, are renewing public education with new energy and new ideas. Charter schools are creative schools, innovative schools, public with open enrollment, strengthened b the commitment of parents and educators int he communities they serve. They can be models of accountability for all public schools, because they are chartered only when they meet rigorous standards of quality and they should remain open onoy as long as they meet those standards."

"According to new data from Secretary Riley's Department of Education, parents are choosing charter schools more and more often because they're small, safe, supportive, and committed to academic excellence. We can do more of this."

From remarks by the First Lady to the D.C. Public Charter Schools  
August 4, 1998

"...

barriers to starting charter schools. Principal among the barriers cited by study respondents was insufficient start-up funds, followed by inadequate operating funds, inadequate facilities, and lack of planning time.

The study is examining why parents choose charter schools for their children, and what students think about their charter schools. In focus group discussions, parents and students consistently voiced dissatisfaction with their previous public schools, expressing concerns about low academic standards, a dehumanizing culture, student safety, and unresponsiveness to serious parent involvement. The charter schools they are choosing tend to reflect their concerns:

- **Most charter schools are small, particularly compared to other public schools.** Charter schools have an estimated median enrollment of about 150 students, whereas other public schools in the charter states have a median of about 500 students.
- **Many charter schools have non-traditional grade configurations.** Charter schools include a higher proportion of K through 12, K through 8, and ungraded schools than other public schools.
- **Most charter schools say they attract parents and students by focusing on academics, but they also feature other attractions.** Charter schools tend to focus on one or a combination of the following themes in seeking to attract students: a quality academic program with high standards, a supportive environment often based on small school size, a flexible approach to educational and cultural programming, or, in sharp contrast, a highly structured environment.

The study also is examining the state role. Chartering statutes differ dramatically from state to state as to the extent and nature of the autonomy they allow. State statutes also vary greatly with respect to the number of charter schools allowed, the conditions of accountability and renewal, and the types of charter schools permitted. Thus, different charter approaches are

being tried simultaneously across the country. Although charter laws vary greatly across states, several key features dictate the number and types of charter schools that are created within each state:

- **Most states allow both newly created and conversion schools.** Some, however, only allow public conversions; only five states and the District of Columbia allow newly created schools and both public and private conversions.
- **Most states establish some limit on the number of charter schools or the number of students enrolled in charter schools.** Only 13 states have no limit on the number of schools or students.
- **Most states allow automatic waivers of most of the education code, except for provisions related to health, safety, and civil rights.** In 10 states, however, charter schools must apply for specific waivers, and in two states charter schools are responsible for following most of the education code.

The full report, as well as an executive summary, will be placed on the Department's WWW site at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov).

#### **For additional information:**

For additional information about the study: U.S. Department of Education, OERI/Student Achievement Institute, 555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Room 510, Washington, DC 20208-5573, Attn: Judith Anderson, or [judith\\_anderson@ed.gov](mailto:judith_anderson@ed.gov).

For information on the grant and model development programs: U.S. Department of Education/Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 4512 Portals, Washington, DC 20202, Attn: John Fiegel, or [john\\_fiegel@ed.gov](mailto:john_fiegel@ed.gov).

The U.S. Charter Schools World Wide Web site at <http://www.uscharterschools.org/>

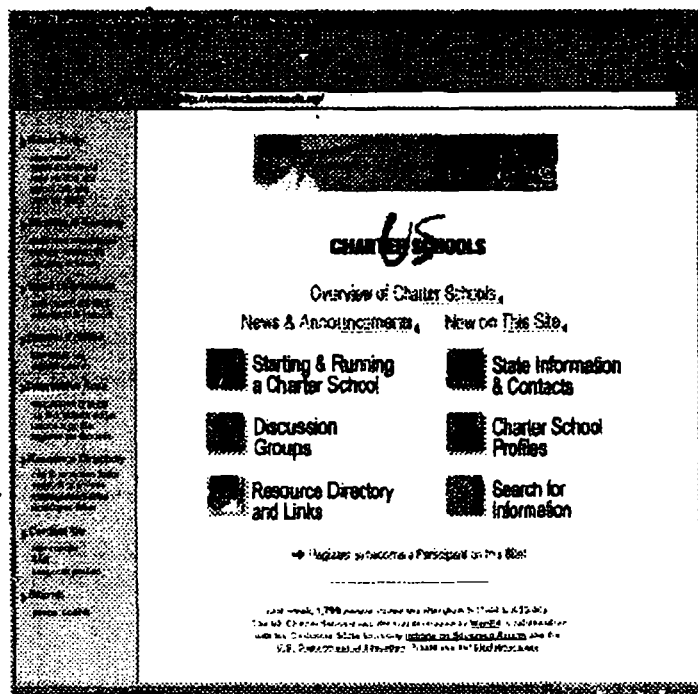
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# overview

[www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org)

For more information regarding the US Charter Schools web site, contact [uscharterschools@wested.org](mailto:uscharterschools@wested.org) or call Don Klein at 415.565.3017 or Eric Premack at 916.278.4600, [epremack@aol.com](mailto:epremack@aol.com).

The US Charter Schools web site is dedicated to linking charter school developers and operators across the country to the most current and comprehensive technical assistance information available on-line. Developed by WestEd and the California State University Institute for Education Reform in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, this site is an evolving, interactive resource that helps charter schools and members of the education community who work closely with them to share information and build on-line connections.



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## Starting & Running Your Charter School

This area of the site addresses technical assistance questions encountered in the development and daily operation of charter schools. It provides a general overview of the start-up process for developers, such as the steps involved in developing a mission or vision statement, interpreting state guidelines and laws, and writing a charter.

## State Information & Contacts

Designed for operators and developers alike, this area presents key contact and legislative information on each state with charter schools. It also provides charter school operators the opportunity to create a personalized, on-line profile of their charter school that describes their mission, instructional program, student population, and much more.

## Discussion Groups

Discussion groups allow charter school operators, teachers, developers, board members and parents to exchange information with colleagues across the country on a variety of topics, including curriculum & instruction and technology planning. Future discussion group topics will include special education and access to federal programs.

**CHARTER SCHOOL Qs &As**  
**\*Internal Use Only -- Not For Distribution\***

**CHARTER SCHOOL ISSUES**

**Q. Why do charter schools need extra funding?**

A. The Federal start-up grants provide funding for start-up costs and can last a maximum of three years. The grants are designed to fill an acknowledged gap. Research has documented that the greatest challenges charter schools face are associated with initial planning and start-up. For example, charter schools that start from scratch often must pay for their facilities out of the portion of funding used in traditional systems to pay for operational costs. Federal grants help by paying for things like curriculum design or renovations that must occur before the school opens.

**Q. Aren't charter schools eroding the teaching profession by allowing uncertified teachers?**

A. Teacher certification requirements for charter schools are set by each state. Most states require that the vast majority of teachers in charter schools be certified. Charter schools sometimes hire people to teach who have professional experience that can be translated into valuable teaching. For those non-credentialed staff, charter schools must demonstrate that they will have the appropriate training and support to effectively provide instruction in the classroom.

**Q. Aren't charter schools elitist?**

A. No. Charter schools are public schools and they must be open to all students. Charter schools are being established in all types of communities -- including inner cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Recent studies show that on average, they serve roughly comparable numbers of minority students as neighboring schools, and in some states, they teach a higher proportion of minority students than are in that state's traditional public schools.

**Q. Do you think that charter schools might draw students and resources away from public schools?**

A. These are public schools -- exciting, innovative public schools that can draw people back into the public school system. In some states between 10 and 14 percent of the students in charter schools are students that were not previously enrolled public schools. These new students include former dropouts, teen mothers, and students coming back from private schools to attend charter schools.

**Q. Are charter schools adequately serving disadvantaged students?**

A. It is critical that charters schools serve a diverse population and provide help to those students who need it most. Several of the schools highlighted today have student populations that are predominantly poor or limited English proficient and these schools are successfully educating

all of their students. And there are encouraging reports that show that charter schools are serving the same or slightly higher percentages of poor and minority students than their states' overall public school systems.

**Q. Are charters are serving students with disabilities?**

A. As public schools, charter schools are not exempt from requirements to serve special education students. This reflects one of the fundamental values of public schools -- that they serve all children. There are wonderful examples of charter schools' providing a better education to children with disabilities than the schools from which they came. It is true that data from the national survey contracted by the U.S. Department of Education showed that, except in a few states, charter schools are serving a slightly lower percentage of students in special education than the overall public school system. We think this is an important issue and the administration is working to address it. Several of the school highlighted today have -higher- than average percentages of students with disabilities.

**Q. Do charter schools represent a significant reform, if they only represent 700 of the thousands of schools in this country?**

A. Charter schools are just one piece of a larger strategy of promoting high standards and accountability, but these schools can help lead the way for reforms and improvement in public education. They can provide models for successful public schools, provide new choices for parents, and stimulate healthy competition within public education. But they are part of a broader strategy. The President has urged states and school districts to adopt challenging academic standards in all core subjects, and to adopt high national standards in the basics of reading and mathematics. The President has strengthened existing federal programs and fought for new resources to improve local schools and help students reach those standards.

**CALIFORNIA CHARTER SCHOOL ISSUES**

**Q. How do you respond to charges that charter schools are breeding grounds for religious instruction, as in the case of the recent consideration of a charter school application based on scientology?**

A. While charter schools are freed from many rules and regulations, they are not exempt from health, safety and civil rights requirements under the law. Federal law is clear that public schools cannot promote religion. As with all other public schools, charter schools must be non-sectarian.

Deciding which schools to charter is solely a state and local matter. The chartering authority - in California, the local school district -- is responsible for evaluating the charter application to determine, among other things, whether the charter complies with federal and state definitions of a public, non-sectarian school. If issues arise concerning any public school's non-sectarian status, the U.S. Department of Education can investigate those concerns.

*Background on scientology charter: A former special education teacher in the Los Angeles*

*district submitted a charter application to create a K-8 school. The school would utilize an educational methodology set forth in texts written by the founder of the Church of Scientology. The district delayed a hearing on the charter application pending its review of the proposed texts -- which have been used by other area teachers for years -- and the school's connection, if any, to the Church of Scientology. According to the district official overseeing the charter process, the applicant has temporarily withdrawn the charter application.*

**Q. California has more than 130 charter schools, but only 34 of them have received Federal start-up grants. Why has California received so little Federal charter school funding?**

A. Each state receiving federal grants establishes its own process to award subgrants to the charter schools in their state. California's subgrant program focused on newer schools. California had many schools operating before it received Federal funds and the state allocated most of its funds for start-up costs. Schools that had already been operating for a year or more did not apply for, or receive, funds for start-up costs. Other states have shaped their programs differently, providing funding to larger proportions of their charter schools and, in some cases, funding older charter schools.

California's newly announced FY 1997 grant will increase its charter school funding by an additional \$3.4 million. This increase should enable California to raise the proportion of its charter schools receiving federal support.

**Q. If the country is to reach the President's goal of 3,000 charter schools, shouldn't California revise its charter law to repeal or expand its cap on the number of schools?**

A. The President firmly believes that the number of charter schools nationwide should be increased -- and he has included funding of \$100 million in the FY 1998 budget to support the development of approximately 900-1000 new charter schools. The Department of Education's charter school program provides start-up funding, technical assistance and research support that we hope will enable states to increase the number of charter schools. Ultimately, Californians should look at the success of these schools and make their own decisions about how many more they want.

### **NATIONAL TESTS IN CALIFORNIA**

**Q. Is California participating in the national testing initiative?**

A. We do not consider California to be one of the seven states (Alaska, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina and west Virginia) that have committed to participate in the tests.

Last April, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin announced her support

for the President's national testing initiative, and her intention to work to secure support for California's participation in it. Gov. Wilson and the State Board of Education (appointed by the Gov.) have indicated that they believe that the State Superintendent lacks the authority to unilaterally commit the state to participate in the tests. Superintendent Eastin agrees with this, which is why she explicitly indicated in April that she would work to secure the support of the Governor and the State Board of Education. We hope that the State Superintendent, the Governor and the State Board of Education will be able to work together to enable parents, teachers and all others involved in education to determine how well students and schools in California perform compared to rigorous national standards.

In addition last July the Los Angeles, Fresno and Long Beach school districts - in each case with the full support of the school board, superintendent, and teachers' organization -- announced their intention to participate in the President's national test, along with 12 other large city school districts around the country. We believe there may be other local school districts in California and elsewhere that also want to participate, and we would welcome the participation of any interested local school district.

**Q. We have heard that Los Angeles and perhaps other city school systems have withdrawn from the testing initiative because the reading test will be given in English only, and there will not be a Spanish version for Hispanic students with limited English proficiency. Is this true?**

We are aware that this has been a controversial issue nationally both and here in California. However, neither the White House nor the Education Department has heard from Los Angeles or any other city that it will back away from its commitment to participate in these tests.

*Note: There is in fact a rumor that L.A. will decide not to participate in the 4th grade reading test because of our decision to test reading only in English, while continuing to participate in the 8th grade math test (which will be available in a Spanish-English version). However, there has been no public announcement of this, and there is not likely to be a public announcement or any notification to the Education Department while we are still fighting in Congress for the tests. There have been no signs that Fresno or Long Beach are contemplating a similar move.*

*In addition, note that just last week California passed legislation establishing a state testing program, at Gov. Wilson's insistence, and over the objections of many Democrats (including Delaine Eastin). He threatened to veto the state budget bill if it did not include his tests. Among the contentious issues in this debate was whether limited English proficient students would be tested in their native language. The compromise reached requires all students to be tested in English, and allows local school districts to also test students in their native language if they have been in school for less than a year, and if an appropriate test is available.*

**Q. Earlier this week a statewide panel recommended statewide academic standards for California. The state budget also contains new legislation proposed by Gov. Wilson, requiring norm-referenced testing to begin this school year. How will these steps affect**

**either State or local school district participation in your national testing initiative?  
Won't this lead to layer upon layer of standards and tests?**

It is good that California is on the way to adopting its own academic standards. This is a critical step to raising academic expectations, strengthening the curriculum, and increasing accountability for our schools. And I agree that California should test every student, not just a sample of student. So California is making real progress in this area.

That's all the more reason for California to adopt national tests as well, once they become available. These tests provide information on how well students and schools in California perform compared with others throughout the nation. Further, the 8th grade math test will provide international comparisons, so that parents can tell how well their students perform compared to 8th graders in 41 other countries, in addition to students here.

*Note: The proposed state standards are supported by Delaine Eastin, and are central to her education reform plans for the state. She has worked to make sure they are aligned with NAEP and can therefore be the basis for California's participation in the national tests.*

*Much of the controversy over Gov. Wilson's recently enacted testing proposal arose from the fact that he insisted on beginning testing this school year, with commercially produced tests that could not possibly reflect the state standards. Wilson proposed these tests in part because California lacked any uniform statewide testing program, and because the plans for developing new assessments aligned to California's new standards only called for assessing a sample of students instead of all students. It is widely suspected that he insisted on the fast time line for testing in order for the test to be administered at least once before he leaves office.*

**PROP. 209/DECLINING MINORITY COLLEGE ADMISSIONS**

**Q. Are you concerned about declining enrollments of minority students in California postsecondary education?**

A. These declines -- not just in California, but in Texas, as well -- are disturbing and completely unacceptable. Educational opportunity is the touchstone of the American dream, and these trends raise a serious concern that the doors of college education are being closed to minority students. In addition, diversity in education helps prepare all our students to be productive citizens in the 21st century, so these developments should concern every American.

**Q. What is your administration doing to address this problem?**

A. First, we will use federal law to the maximum extent we can to promote an integrated education environment in postsecondary education, not just in California, but elsewhere. In particular, we will continue to support appropriate affirmative action programs and oppose efforts like Proposition 209.

Second, we are pressing state officials and educators to maintain and expand diversity, and offering assistance to them to do so. We have called on colleges and universities burdened by new legal restrictions to recruit aggressively in secondary schools with high percentages of minority students and to form educational partnerships with such schools. Many colleges in California are developing plans to this effect. We have also called on these university systems to review different kinds of admissions programs, such as Texas' decision to guarantee college admission to the top 10% of the graduating class in any high school in the state.

Third, we have fought for resources to improve education and open doors to college. The budget agreement contained the biggest increase in education funding in a generation, including major increases in Pell Grant funds and college work-study, and the new Hope Scholarship and Lifelong Learning tax credit. The Administration is beginning a campaign to make sure that the parents of every middle school student, and students themselves, know that a college education is attainable if students stay in school, take tough classes, and study hard.

**Q. Are you planning to petition the Supreme Court to review the Ninth Circuit's decision upholding Proposition 209?**

**A.** I am awaiting advice on that question from my legal counsel and the Solicitor General, and I shouldn't address that question until I receive their advice. I can say that I will do everything I can to prevent other states or cities from passing ill-considered proposals like Proposition 209.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary  
(San Francisco, California)

For Immediate Release

September 20, 1997

OPENING AND CLOSING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
IN ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

San Carlos Charter Learning Center  
San Carlos, California

11:19 A.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. First, thank all of you for coming here today and sharing your Saturday morning. I thank the Superintendent for his really marvelous remarks. He talked about all the things that we have in common -- I saw a living symbol of his dedication to education above all else; and one thing that we have in common that he didn't mention -- if you look closely at his tie you will see it is a pattern of golf balls and tees. (Laughter.) And on this beautiful Saturday morning he's here with us. (Laughter.)

Let me thank your instructional coordinator, too, for being here, leaving her 11-day-old baby. I would like to see the 11-day-old baby, but I think it's -- where's the baby? A wise mother leaves the baby outside. (Laughter.)

Hillary and I are delighted to be here. And I want to spend most of my time just at this panel today. But I thank all of you for coming because I believe in charter schools and I believe they are an important part of helping us to lift our standards and renew our schools and achieve the kind of educational excellence that all of our children need as we move into the 21st century.

I congratulate the San Carlos Learning Center for being the first of its kind in California, which obviously makes it among the very first in the United States.

Let me just give you a little, brief personal history here. When I was governor of my state for 12 years, I spent a great deal of time working on school reform -- and so did Hillary -- spent lots of time in the schools, talking to teachers, talking to parents, talking to students, dealing with issues of curriculum development and teacher training and all those things. And when we were active in the 1980s, the state of

Minnesota became the first state in the country to pass a public school choice law, to give parents and their children more choice among the public schools their children attended. I think we were the second state to pass that law. And we used it quite a lot.

Then when I began to run for President in 1991, Minnesota became the first state in the country again to pass a charter school law, recognizing that sometimes it wasn't enough just to give the parents and the students choices, but that we needed to give the educators and the parents and the students with whom they worked options to create schools that fit the mission needed by the children in the area; and that if you gave them options and held them accountable, we might be able to do something really spectacular. Then five years ago today, I think, California became the second state in the country to adopt a charter school law, and then you became the first of those schools.

In 1994, I passed legislation in Congress to help us support more charter schools. By the end of 1995 there were about 300 charter schools in the country. Today there are 700 charter schools in the country. Many of them have been helped by the program we passed in Washington in 1994.

The historic balanced budget agreement that we just passed into law includes the largest commitment to new investment in education since 1965 -- among other things, expansion of Head Start programs, more funds to support computers in the schools -- I'll say more about that in a moment -- our America Reads initiative to help make sure every 8-year-old can read independently, and the biggest increased investment in helping people go to college since the G.I. Bill passed 50 years ago, tax credits for the first two years of college, credits for the remainder of college, IRAs, Pell Grants, work-study positions. All these together mean that for the first time ever we can really say, if you're responsible enough to work for it, no matter what your income or your difficulties, college is now a real option for you in America -- for every single American. And I'm very proud of all of that.

But one of the things that was in this balanced budget that didn't get a lot of notice is enough money for us to help to set up literally thousands more charter schools in America. Because excellence in education is more than money. And from my point of view, having spent years and years and years working on this, we need two things -- we need a set of national standards of academic excellence that will be internationally competitive in basic subjects. And then we need grass-roots, school-based reform, because education is the magic that takes place in every classroom, and indeed in every student's mind, involving every teacher, every student, and also, hopefully, support from home.

So that's why these charter schools are so important to me. And that's why we've tried to help a lot more schools like San Carlos get started on the path that you've been on now for some years.

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For people who don't know exactly what they are, let me say that charter schools are public schools that make a simple agreement: in exchange for public funding, they get fewer regulations and less red tape, but they have to meet high expectations, and they keep their charter only so long as their customers are satisfied they're doing a good job.

As I said, we've gone from -- the day I took office, there was only one charter school in America, January of '93. Then a couple years ago we were up to 300; now there are 700. And what started as a movement in Minnesota and California now encompasses 29 states; 27 more states have passed charter school laws.

These funds in our budget, as I said, should allow us to set up several thousand more over the next four years. Today I am pleased to announce that we're going to release \$40 million in grants to help charter schools open. Start-up costs are often the biggest obstacle. And in states that can't afford to help, it's a terrible problem. I see a lot of people nodding their heads out there who have had experience with this.

So we have curriculum development costs, teacher training costs, new technology costs -- all these things can help. The \$40 million we're releasing today, of which about \$3.4 million will come to California, will help us to establish another 500 charter schools in 21 states. So we'll go from 700 to 500 in one pop here.

And as I said, pretty soon -- and if all the states will join in, we obviously can help all of them -- we'll have well over 3,000, perhaps even over 4,000 by the year 2000, which is enough to have a seismic echo effect in all the public school systems of America. So that's what we are trying to do.

Let me say that there are a couple of problems that we're going to face. Last week, the U.S. Senate, by a very narrow margin, supported an amendment that would make these charter schools funding that I just announced the last such announcement that would ever be made, because it would lump all the education funds together and arbitrarily distribute them to the state without regard to whether these programs were continued or not. And in the process, it would abolish very specific and highly successful education reform programs like the charter schools, where we work with local communities and school districts. It would abolish our highly successful effort to put computers in the classrooms -- I'll tell you how much movement has happened on there in just two years -- and to create safe and drug-free schools. I think that would be a mistake.

The House of Representatives recently passed, although the Senate opposed them, an amendment that would prohibit us to pay for -- not to develop, but to pay for -- a

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non-political, private organization to develop voluntary national tests of excellence in mathematics and reading. I think that would be a mistake. This is the first time, last year, in history that our students in elementary schools scored above the international average in math and science. We're doing much better in America, but we don't test all of our kids, we just test a representative sample. I think we need to know how we're doing based on a common standard.

So we have these problems in the Congress, and if either one of these provisions makes it into the final bill I will have to veto it. So I hope that we can continue to work on moving forward in the right direction. And in that connection, I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, who I think is one of the -- absolutely -- even I would say this if I were in Washington -- she really is one of the finest, most forward-looking members of the United States Congress, and she's made a big difference in our country today. (Applause.)

Now, running these charter schools, as we are about to hear, is not easy. It's not self-evident how to do all this. It sounds great to say we'll cut you free of red tape and bureaucracy; you have to perform at a higher level, you've got to get the parents involved. There are all kinds of practical problems, and we'll hear about some of them.

The Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, is going to convene a national conference on charter schools in Washington this November to bring together teachers, administrators, parents, others who are interested in this to share best practices and look to the road ahead. But just think about where we can go with this. If we go -- we've gone from one to 700, to 500 more, with a budget that calls for funds for 3,000 more -- just this year's budget alone that will be funded starting October 1st, if we get the funds for it, will give us enough funds for another 700 -- or 900 to 1,000 schools.

So this movement can sweep the country and can literally revolutionize both community control and standards of excellence in education if we do it right. That's what the panel is about.

And before we start, let me just thank some of the business leaders who are here today for their commitment to educational excellence -- Regis McKenna, David Ellington, Brook Byers, Terry Yang, Paul Lippe. And I'd like to say a special word of thanks to Larry Ellison who is up here on the platform. He's the chairman and CEO of Oracle Corporation.

Two years ago this week, I met with Larry and a number of other high-tech executives to talk about another one of my passions, which is to connect every classroom and library in every school in America to the Internet by the year 2000. And

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that, like everything else, it turned out to be more complicated. It sounded great, but we not only had to connect them, we had to make sure we had the hardware, the software, and the trained teachers to do the job.

So we got this group of business people who knew about all this, who are working very hard to try to make sure that we can do that, give all the support services to every school. We got the Federal Communications Commission to give what amounts to a \$2.25 billion a year subsidy to schools, to lower the rates they have to pay to hook on to the Internet. But to give you an example of what we can do when we work together, since we made that announcement two years ago, California has 65 percent of the schools connected, which is twice the percentage you had two years ago, and four times as many classrooms connected as just two years ago. That shows you how quickly we can move.

And Larry has not only sponsored the San Carlos Learning Center, but yesterday he announced Oracle's promise to spend \$100 million in a foundation to help schools across America who need support to get the kind of connection to the future through telecommunications technology that we all want. So thank you, Larry, for doing that. (Applause.)

So this is a good news day. but what I want to do now is to turn it over to the panel and let's get into the facts of the charter school movement and see -- hopefully, by being here today, this will encourage the 21 states who do not have charter school legislation to adopt it. It will encourage the Congress to fully fund the charter schools program for the next four years. And it will help us to take what you have done here and spread it all across America in a way that will guarantee international standards of excellence in the education of all of our children.

Thank you very much.

\* \* \* \* \*

MRS. CLINTON:

Well, I want to thank all of you for sharing your experiences and success stories about charter schools. And I think that there are just a couple of general points that I would make. First, what the Congresswoman just said is critical, when she talked about test kitchens, because my husband I have said together and often that there is a good public school in every community in America, but the problem is they don't learn from each other and they don't get to scale in the sense that we know

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what works, but for too many years we have not been motivated sufficiently to do what worked in every school.

And so we are now seeing, with the charter school movement, an effort to do just that -- to take these, in some ways, old-fashioned ideas that are now married to technology and very much motivated to be successful by the demands of the new economy, and put them into action in schools across the country.

When we talk about parental involvement, that is a very old-fashioned idea that we have had to relearn. When we talk about empowering teachers to design curriculum, that, too, is something we know will work if we unleash the creative energies of teachers. When we talk about giving students a chance to explore and learn and develop their own capacities, that's what many of us try to do with our own children, but which we deny to other children because of the bureaucratic structures and expectations of the old system.

So there are many aspects of what we heard today which would be very familiar in any setting 30 or 40 or 50 years ago in many parts of America, but which we somehow lost track of as we got bigger and bigger and schools became impersonal and anonymous, and really we lost our way in the very important connections that have to be made between homes and schools, students and teachers, and the understanding of how community has to support that magic.

Secondly, I think that the charter school movement should not be seen as a threat to public schools. It should be seen as a liberation of public schools, and particularly teachers and administrators who for many years have known what should be done, but have felt unable to do so. (Applause.) And there is certainly nothing hidden about the President's agenda on this. He wants every school, whether it is formally called a charter school, or not, to act like a charter school.

And that is our real objective in the charter school movement -- not only to create thousands more charter schools, but to take the lessons from the charter school movement and literally infect every public school in America, so that parents are standing at the door of principals' offices, so that teachers will not feel so oppressed in their classrooms, but will join together to demand from administrators and school boards what they know their children need, and for businesses, which have in many ways the greatest stake in the future of our public school system, to be constantly be prodding for academic excellence as in many communities they now prod for athletic excellence.

So the charter school movement is really a rallying cry that we hope will not only create more charter schools like the ones we have heard about today, but encourage and give courage to public school patrons, teachers, and students around the country to say, well, you know, if Jose could find a home in

a new charter school in San Francisco, why can't all the Joses in our public schools feel similarly welcomed and supported? And if Gregg can go into competition with Oracle in the 6th grade, why can't all the Greggs in America feel similarly encouraged to pursue their own intellectual excitement?

So we're very much appreciative of what all of you on the front lines are doing from San Francisco to South Central, LA, to San Diego, to right here in this community. And we really do appreciate the zeal with which you have expressed your excitement about this, because we do want it to infect and to be contagious so that, as Yvonne said when I saw firsthand visiting her school, every child will feel that that child is special and valued and appreciated. And that's really what we're hoping to achieve with this kind of effort.

So thank you for doing what needs to be done in American public education. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, let me say I agree with everything she said. (Laughter.) I'd just like to make a couple of brief point to build on what Hillary said. I want to say, first of all, I have no hidden agenda here; I believe the only way public schools can survive as the instrument by which we educate our children and socialize them and bring them together across all the lines that divide us is if all of our schools eventually -- and, hopefully, sooner rather than later -- are run like these charter schools. That's what I believe. I am not running for office anymore. I have no political interest in this. I am think about what our country is going to be like 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now.

And you know what Tom said about the industrial model -- that's part of the problem. A lot of our schools are organized on an industrial model -- a lot of our middle schools are almost -- are organized for when families were like Ozzie and Harriet, instead of like they are today. There are a lot of organizational problems. It's also true that our schools get money from a lot of different places and have to suffer rules from a lot of different places, and a lot of people think if they give up their rule-making, they won't matter anymore. And in some way, the most important person here is the Superintendent because he's here supporting this instead of figuring out how he can control it. And I think that's important. (Applause.)

And so Hillary and I have been working at this business for a long time now -- seriously since 1983 -- really seriously. There has been a dramatic change in the attitudes of the teacher unions, which is positive. There have been dramatic advances in the attitude of administrators, which is positive.

But I just want to say, we cannot -- there are a lot of people who believe in the information age, with things changing as fast as they are and with standards needing to be as

MORE

high as they are, that we ought to just basically send everybody money and let them do whatever they want to about education, and forget about the public education network -- let it sink or swim. The problem with that theory is that the short-term costs to people who got left behind would be staggering.

But if we want to preserve excellence and the socially unifying impact of public schools over the next generation, I am telling you, every school in the country has got to become like this one. The power needs to be with the parents, with the children, with the teachers, with the principals. And those of us who are up the lines somewhere, up the food chain, what are we interested in? We're interested in what Kim said -- we're interested in results. We don't need to make rules. We're interested in results and we want to be able to measure them. We want to know our kids are going to be all right and our country is going to be all right.

Let them make the rules in the schools. Let them figure it out. And then education will be something that will get bright young lawyers to leave their more lucrative law practices to do something that doesn't pay as much, but makes them feel good when they go to bed every night and get up in the morning. That's what we want. And until every school is run like that, you and I should not rest.

Thank you. God bless you.  
(Applause.)

END

12:35 P.M. PDT

## **Charter Schools Meeting**

**September 15, 1997 -- 1:00 p.m.  
OEOB -- Room 211**

1. History of Charter Schools
2. Charter Schools Grant Program
3. Key California Charter Schools Issues
4. Q's and A's on California Charter Schools
5. Brief Summaries of California Charter Schools
  - Bowling Green Elementary Charter School
  - Vaughn Next Century Learning Center
  - East Bay Conservation Corps Charter School
  - International Studies Academy
  - San Carlos Charter Learning Center
  - The Accelerated Charter School
  - Leadership High School
6. Operational Plan
  - Charter School Conference Brochure
7. Q's and A's on Charter schools

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## A Brief History of Charter Schools

### Definition

Charter schools are public schools run by groups of teachers, parents or other community leaders that operate with a contract -- or charter. Charters are granted by public groups, such as local school boards or state boards of education. Each charter explains how the school will operate and how well its students will perform. In many states, as long as the school meets the terms of its charter it is freed from rules and regulations covering traditional public schools. However, charter schools are held highly accountable, and if students in a charter school fail to perform at levels described in their charter, or if the school breaks rules that have not been waived, it can be closed. As public schools, charter schools are not allowed to charge tuition, they must be non-sectarian, and they cannot be selective in their admissions.

### Background

The concept of charter schools grew out of several other education reforms, including expanding public school choice, increasing accountability, delegating control of education and management decisions to schools, and increasing parent and community involvement in schools. At the heart of the concept is an exchange. Charter schools receive increased autonomy in exchange for performing under increased accountability. The charter school movement grew out of a belief that carefully developed competition among existing public schools and new kinds of schools could provide three things:

1. a broader range of options for families within public education systems;
2. new models of successful schools that traditional schools could replicate; and
3. incentives for school districts to improve their other schools.

### Growth

Minnesota became the first state to enact charter school legislation in 1991. The first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992. Since then, the charter reform concept has spread rapidly. In January 1997, 428 charter schools were open, and in the beginning of the 1997-98 school year approximately 700 charter schools were operating. These numbers are likely to grow rapidly over the next few years.

As of September, 1997, 29 states have enacted varying forms of charter school laws. Federal legislation also provides the District of Columbia with a charter law and Puerto Rico has enacted its own version of charter school legislation. [see chart below] The state of Oregon has no specific charter law but does have authority in state law to establish charter schools and has received a Federal grant.

The specific terms of states' charter legislation vary widely and reflect considerable differences in how the states view the charter school concept. In some states, charter school legislation could be characterized as a relatively modest effort to facilitate modifications in the relationship of existing individual schools to local school districts. On the other end of the spectrum, charter legislation in other states provides opportunities for fundamentally different schools, sponsored by groups such as state boards of education or public universities, as well as local school boards.

### States with Charter School Legislation, by Year of First Enactment

| 1991      | 1992       | 1993                                                                | 1994                        | 1995                                                                    | 1996                                                                     | 1997                                   |
|-----------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Minnesota | California | Colorado<br>Georgia<br>Mass.<br>Michigan<br>New Mexico<br>Wisconsin | Arizona<br>Hawaii<br>Kansas | Alaska<br>Arkansas<br>Delaware<br>N. H.<br>Louisiana<br>R.I.<br>Wyoming | Connecticut<br>D.C.<br>Florida<br>Illinois<br>N.J.<br>N.C.<br>S.C.<br>TX | Mississippi<br>Penn.<br>Nevada<br>Ohio |

#### Federal Role

The 1994 amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act established a role for the Federal government in the charter movement by authorizing funds for charter school development and for a national study to assess the impact of charter schools. This program is designed to address the most pressing challenge shown in surveys to be facing charter schools: a lack of access to start-up funding. This program also provides funds (up to 10% of the total) for National Activities to support the development of charter schools nationally.

**Please attach this chart from the RPP STUDY**

**Exhibit 2 -- Estimated Number of Charter Schools in Operation, by Initial Start Year**

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## Public Charter Schools Program

**DRAFT**

In 1993, The President proposed a public charter schools program, which was enacted in 1994 as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This program is providing grants that will help start over 400 charter schools in 19 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. The program is helping parents, award-winning teachers, business, museums, and others to start charter schools that are open to all students and accountable to the public for performance.

This program is designed to address the most pressing challenge shown in surveys to be facing charter schools: a lack of access to start-up funding. With the President's leadership, the program has grown from \$6 million in FY 1995 to \$51 million in FY 1997.

In FY 1995, start-up grants were awarded to 10 states and two individual schools for charter school design and initial implementation. FY 1996 grants provided \$8 million to continue these projects, and \$8.8 million for start-up grants in 9 additional states and the District of Columbia. This year more than \$46 million will be awarded to support new and continuation grants.

Up to ten percent of funds available to carry out the Public Charter Schools Program in each fiscal year may be used to conduct National Activities, including the peer review of applications, an evaluation of the impact of charter schools, and other activities designed to enhance the success of the activities assisted under the Public Charter Schools Program.

### Funding History of National Activities

| <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Appropriation</u> | <u>Available for Nat'l Acts</u> | <u>Used</u> |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 1995               | \$ 6,000,000         | \$ 600,000                      | \$ 600,000  |
| 1996               | 18,000,000           | 1,800,000                       | 1,200,000   |
| 1997               | 50,897,000           | 5,100,000                       | 4,000,000   |

In 1995, national activities funds were used to conduct the peer review of applications and to support the first year of the national study of charter schools. In addition to continuing these activities in 1996, a number of new activities were conducted. A charter schools website ([www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org)) was developed. Five sessions on charter schools at the regional IASA conferences were supported. Two national meetings to enable people from around the country to come together to discuss ways to overcome obstacles and ensure the success of charter schools were supported, as were three regional workshops to provide assistance to people operating or trying to create charter schools, and 15 informational meeting in States with new charter laws. In 1997, the first -year report of the national study was released, the study was expanded to include additional cohorts, the website was further developed, and 7 competitions were held to conduct research and development in targeted areas such as assessment and accountability, special education, school finance, equity, leadership training, outreach, and cross-fertilization among charter and other public schools.

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**Background:**

In 1992, California became the second state in the country to pass charter school legislation. Since then, more than 130 schools have been approved (more than every other state except Arizona). California's law is in the middle of the "strong-to-weak" spectrum of charter school laws. Districts basically approve all charters, without a significant appeal process. The law allowed only 100 schools statewide, with only 10 in any district. The state board has used its waiver authority to waive the 100-school limit, and allowed more than 130 schools to be approved.

Only 34 of California's schools have received Federal start-up subgrants. California has funded a smaller proportion of its schools than other states. This is due to several reasons. California had many schools operating before it received Federal funds. The state allocated most funds for start-up costs. Schools that had already been operating for a year or more did not apply for, or receive, funds for start-up costs. The total number of schools is higher than other states. Finally, the state's process was more competitive, and less equalized in its distribution than charter school subgrant programs administered elsewhere.

Efforts to strengthen the state's charter school law have failed recently, sometimes for partisan reasons. Most policymakers are awaiting the release of a state-funded evaluation of California's charter school program before acting on legislation. This evaluation could be released this October or November.

**A. Charter supporters' legislative agenda:**

- **Repeal or expand the cap on the number of schools.**
- **Waive the teacher signature requirement for start-up schools; or allow parents to sign petitions for start-up in lieu of, or in addition to, teachers.** Currently 50% of the teachers in a school or 10% of the teachers in a district must sign a petition supporting the creation of a charter school. Advocates want those numbers to include parents as well as, or instead of, teachers.
- **Expand charter granting authority to university and community college governing boards.** Currently only districts, and in rare instances, county education districts can grant charters. State law in Michigan and North Carolina allows state universities and colleges to grant charters.
- **Address legal and liability issues to ensure full funding.** Most California charter schools do not receive as much funding as traditional public schools. In addition, the legislation can make it difficult for schools to exercise legal independence, further complicating financial difficulties.
- **Target low-achieving and low-income students by changing the number of charter schools serving these targeted populations.** The state's current law, by only allowing 10 schools per district, limits the activity in large districts like Los Angeles where many low-income and low-achieving students live. By lifting the state-wide cap or the district limit, these targeted populations would likely have greater access to charter schools.
- **Full facilities funding,** in addition to getting equal operational funding, advocates are also looking for a fair share of state and local resources.

**B. Opponents' legislative agenda:**

- **Apply building safety codes** that traditional public schools must meet to charter schools. This could possibly close many of the charter schools that have started from scratch. The sponsor, Leroy Green (D), is the author of many of California's very stringent earthquake safety standards for public schools.

**C. Other Issues:**

- **The California Department of Education is working on a "direct funding pilot"** program with six schools, that would allow these schools to receive funding directly from the state instead of through their district. The pilot has proceeded slowly. If the department does not work out the pilot, sympathetic legislators could enact state-wide changes.
- **Home-based charter schools** continue to cause debate. California is unique among charter states in that around 20% of the charter schools involve some form of home-based instruction. These

schools deliver many unique approaches, but also raise questions. Many states prohibit home-based charter schools.

- **Non-credentialed teachers in Los Angeles raise concerns.** Other states allow non-credentialed teachers to work in charter schools. There are questions about this in Los Angeles. Not required to be certified in California, union issues include collective bargaining.

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## California Q&A

### Religious Instruction

**Q:** How do you respond to charges that charter schools are breeding grounds for religious instruction, and even cultist instruction, as in the case of the recent approval of charter schools based on scientology and the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard?

**A:** Charter schools are public schools, and as such are not allowed to be sectarian in their operations. (In fact, there are statutory requirements covering this that go even farther for charter schools than they do for all public schools under our constitutional language regarding separations between church and state.)

As in all charter schools, the responsibility for approving a charter is given to a public body in that state, here in California it is the local school boards, and they are charged with the responsibility of judging applicants. It is a responsibility of public stewardship to maintain that these schools are not religious. When problems arise, as in the case of all public schools, the Department of Education can investigate.

The Department of Education is preparing workshops with chartering agencies to help them with issues such as this, so that they can exercise their responsibilities appropriately.

### Home schooling

**Q:** Does the President support Home schooling in charter schools? This is another area of the charter school movement that is ripe with possible religious instruction, not to mention inflated attendance figures and consequent over-billing of districts.

**A:** Home schooling in charter schools is an area that is addressed differently from state to state. And, as in most of these variations, the Department has not taken a stance on aspects of charter school laws. As in all charter schools, however, it is important to reinforce the importance of oversight and accountability. Charter schools are free from many rules and regulations, but they are not free to conduct religious instruction, and they are accountable for financial matters. They must be able to demonstrate to their chartering agency, and the public proper accounting for their revenue and expenditures.

### Elitism

**Q:** Aren't charter schools elitist?

**No.** When charter schools were originally proposed, many opponents feared they would be used by affluent communities to discriminate against disadvantaged students. This has not happened.

Charter schools are being established in all sorts of communities -- including inner cities, suburbs, and extremely rural locations. On average, they serve roughly comparable numbers of minority students, and in some states, they teach a higher proportion of students of color than are in that state's traditional public schools.

Powerful partnerships have been created to run charter schools. These include the backing of

groups such as housing projects, community development non-profit organizations, businesses, community-driven schools, and organizations such as local Urban League affiliates.

### **California's Federal Funding**

Q. Over 100 California charter schools have not received Federal subgrants. Why has California received so little Federal charter school Funding?

A. Only 34 of California's schools have received Federal start-up subgrants. California has funded a smaller proportion of its schools than other states. This is due to several reasons. California had many schools operating before it received Federal funds. The state allocated most funds for start-up costs. Schools that had already been operating for a year or more did not apply for, or receive, funds for start-up costs. The total number of schools is higher than other states. Finally, the state's process was more competitive, and less equalized in its distribution than charter school subgrant programs administered elsewhere.

California is receiving an increase in its current funding under these newly announced grants. These changes should bring California back to a level of funding that is closer to that in other states. Unfortunately, as long as the Federal funds are focused on start-up costs, and California has so many charter schools that are this mature, this funding is less likely to arrive at existing California schools.

### **Teacher professionalism**

Q. Aren't charter schools eroding the teacher profession since they allow uncertified teachers?

A.

### **Changing California's charter school law**

Q. Since a state of California's size will have to create many more charter schools, if the country is to reach the President's goal of 3000 schools by the year 2000, does the President think California should lift its cap on the number of schools, or allow alternative sponsors to authorize charters?

A.

We are deferring to states in how they establish their charter school programs. However, there are several principles to which the Department believes all charter schools must be held. Charter schools must:

- maintain and reach high academic standards;
- be held accountable for results;
- contribute to equity in education;
- practice sound management; and
- share the lessons they learn with all schools.

When it comes to many of the policies that establish charter programs in states, the Department defers to the states in how they establish their programs. We think these are decisions that state legislatures will have to make. If later, evidence shows some differences in charter laws that lead

to students learning more, or to greater access for all children, then we should make sure that the states have this information.

But in terms of alternative sponsors, let me add one point. California in part serves as an example of local school districts working for successful charter schools in their communities. At this point, only Arizona has more charter schools than California, and almost all of these schools were approved by local districts. I think it is still too early to say what kind of charter school laws should be passed.

### **Are charter schools resegregating American education?**

Q: Could charter schools lead to resegregation of education?

A: Racial and ethnic concentration is an issue we have to look at more, but we are examining it in a new Federally supported study. It is too complex to say what is going on in a simple short answer. Some charter schools do have high concentrations of minority students, while others do not. This is happening in public schools as a result of residence patterns and other factors as well. It needs to be examined in traditional and charter schools.

Some were concentrated as non charters; or they are located in communities that are ethnically homogeneous, where the parents may be more frustrated with their community schools, and doing more to create schools. It's too complex to sum up quickly based on these initial studies.

Much of the concentration that is going on is due to residential segregation, and that is affecting all of education, charters are just a symptom of that. It is disturbing however it happens.

We're concerned about this, and we plan to study it more.

Q. One of the problems in inner cities is flight from the public schools. Do you think that charter schools might draw students and resources away from public schools?

A. These are public schools. Additionally, they draw people back into public schools who had left the schools. Some states have between 10 and 14 percent of the students in charter schools that weren't in the public system before they enrolled in charters. These students are dropouts, delinquents, teen mothers, people coming from home schooling situations, and students coming back from private schools to attend charter schools. These people all represent families, who are also becoming reinvested in public education.

Q. In light of 209, will California changes affect racial diversity in charter schools

A. We sure hope not... (need more here now)

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## I. The Accelerated Charter School

Los Angeles, CA

**Type of School:** New start-up

**Charter Status Obtained:** 1994

**Educational Focus:** Located in South Central Los Angeles, this charter elementary school is philosophically grounded in the Accelerated Schools Model that emphasizes high expectations for all students. The Accelerated charter school strives not only to increase academic performance, but also to teach its students social responsibility, increase parent participation, and create a sense of ownership within the school community.

**Grades Currently Served:** 140 Kindergarten through sixth grade students

**Demographics:** (1994-95) 2% American Indian, 48% Hispanic, 50% African American  
94% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

### **Interesting Facts:**

- During the school's first year, student standardized test scores showed an increase of 21.9% in reading and 41.5% in math.
- The school has established a teacher training program in cooperation with California State University Los Angeles and Pacific Oaks College.
- The school offers English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes for community members.
- Accelerated moved during the summer of 1997 from their rented church space to a new location that will accommodate 1200 students (Carole Little donated the building).

**Contact:** Kevin Sved, 213-235-6343

## II. Bowling Green Elementary Charter School

Sacramento, CA

**Type of School:** Public school conversion

**Charter Status Obtained:** 1993

**Educational Focus:** Bowling Green Elementary converted to charter status in 1993. Conversion enabled this school to make many changes including the implementation of a single-track, year-round schedule. With the assistance of a California School Restructuring grant and significant work by school staff and leadership, Bowling Green also developed and now implements an integrated-thematic instructional approach based on the teachings of Susan Kovalik. The new curriculum is aligned with the California Curriculum Frameworks. Teaching methodologies used at the school are

grounded in the efficacy approach developed by Jeff Howard.

**Grades Currently Served:** 750 Pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade students

**Demographics:** 25% Asian and Pacific Islander, 22% Hispanic, 35% African American, and 18% white. 90% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

**Interesting Facts:**

- Bowling Green serves one of Sacramento's most disadvantaged areas.
- Bowling Green also serves as a regional site serving orthopedically handicapped and other special needs students.
- Conversion enabled the school to reallocate resources and reduce average class size from 33 to 25.
- The school has begun after-school family programs in math, reading, and other subjects to aid parents in helping their children learn.

**Contact:** Dennis Mah, 916-433-5426

### **III. Clear View Elementary School**

Chula Vista, CA

**Type of School:** Public school conversion

**Charter Status Obtained:** 1994

**Educational Focus:** Clear view provides an active learning environment where students can develop an understanding of contemporary issues and technology and participate in a partnership between the school, home, and community. The school aims to prepare students to function effectively in a world of new ideas; think independently, critically, and creatively; and to become collaborative workers.

**Grades Currently Served:** 595 Kindergarten through sixth grade students

**Demographics:** 25% Asian and Pacific Islander, 50% Hispanic, and 25% White.

**Interesting Facts:**

- Located five miles north of the Mexican border, the school serves as both a "neighborhood" school and cluster site for Spanish primary language instruction.
- The school is nationally recognized for its innovative and intensive use of instructional technology and was named an International Model Technology School by Cox Communications.
- There are at least 8 computers in every classroom.

**Contact:** Lesley Woldt, 619-498-3000

### **IV. East Bay Conservation Corps Charter School**

Oakland, CA

**Type of School:** New start-up

**Charter Status Obtained:** Received charter in 1995 and opened in 1996

**Educational Focus:** The East Bay Conservation Corps Charter School is a new charter developed by the East Bay Conservation Corps (an independent California non-profit corporation) and sponsored by the Oakland Unified School District. The objective of the school is to equip students with two areas of competency, the ability to read, write, speak and calculate, and the ability to participate in the life of the community. The educational principles that guide the school's approach include the following; learning is more effective when done through meaningful work, service learning promotes student involvement, and learning opportunities should be varied in order to meet the needs of learners. Students at East Bay will demonstrate mastery of critical benchmarks using a variety of assessment tools including multiple choice tests, portfolios and exhibitions. Students will also develop and present a final project before a panel of educators, business leaders and other students, based on criteria still to be developed in conjunction with the District.

**Grades Currently Served:** 1,000 Kindergarten through twelfth grade students

**Demographics:**

**Interesting Facts:**

- The charter school plans eventually to operate at multiple sites.
- This school is located in the warehouse district in Oakland and serves an at-risk population.
- The students spend time four days a week working in the community on various projects, and then do their classroom work in the evenings and all day Friday.

**Contact:** Al Auletta, 510-891-3900

## **V. Fenton Avenue Charter School**

Lake View Terrace , CA

**Type of School:** Public school conversion

**Charter Status Obtained:** 1994

**Educational Focus:** Fenton's curriculum emphasizes the delivery of enriched academic skills and concepts through the promotion of pro-social values. Fenton implements a student driven technology plan, not a technology driven student plan. The curriculum is fully aligned with the California Framework in all areas. Fenton endeavors to be a role model for effective education reform.

**Grades Currently Served:** 1280 Pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students

**Demographics:** (1994-95) 2% Asian and Pacific Islander, 76 % Hispanic, 18% African American, and 3% white. 91% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

**Interesting Facts:**

- Received the California Distinguished School Award
- Fenton is one of- if not the- largest charter schools in the nation
- Through conversion, the school was able to reduce class size from 30 to 25, add 16 full-time-equivalent staff including teachers, counselors, a psychologist, special education resource teachers, and security staff.
- Also through their conversion, the school assumed control over 97% of their resources allowing a nearly \$1 million annual increase in on-site expenditures.
- Fenton has a family center and provides after school enrichment classes,
- The school has an extensive child nutrition program serving all students breakfast and lunch.
- Fenton offers English language and citizenship classes to adults four times a week.
- Fenton operates a 12 channel digital satellite station and a Cable in the Classroom connection that jointly allow developmentally appropriate choices and programming.

**Contact:** Joe Lucente, 818-896-7482

## **VI. International Studies Academy**

San Francisco, CA

**Type of School:** Public school conversion

**Charter Status Obtained:** Received charter in 1993 and opened in 1994

**Educational Focus:** The International studies academy is one of more than 30 international high schools established in this country to promote international education and the study of foreign language. The school's curriculum centers around issues including commerce, trade, and tourism- with an option to pursue the prestigious International Baccalaureate diploma. The school features block scheduling and cooperative agreements with San Francisco Community College District.

**Grades Currently Served:** 545 Ninth through twelfth grade students

**Demographics:** (1994-95) 1% American Indian, 36% Asian and Pacific Islander, 33% Hispanic, 12% African American, and 17% white. 50% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

**Interesting Facts:**

- ISA serves a large educationally-disadvantaged and limited-English proficient

population, and has a special program for hearing impaired students.

- All students engage in community-based service learning projects.
- Extensive career counseling services are supplemented by an internship partnership with the San Francisco State University counseling program.
- ISA has established partnerships with the Bay Area Global Education Project, the World Affairs Council, Project 2061 (science and technology), the Bay Area Writing Project, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and Coopers and Lybrand.

**Contact:** Cam Nguyen, 415-695-5866

## **VII. Leadership High School**

San Francisco, CA

**Type of School:** New start-up

**Charter Status Obtained:** 1997

**Educational Focus:** Leadership plans to serve San Francisco and its diverse student base by providing an excellent education and developing effective community leaders. They have developed a rigorous curriculum that is college preparatory, supported by innovative technology (each student will have their own E-mail address), leadership programs, service learning, internships, and classes in English, History, Mathematics, Science, Foreign Language, and Art.

**Grades Currently Served:** 100 Ninth grade students

**Demographics:** 20% Asian and Pacific Islander, 25% Hispanic, 25% African American, 30% white- including Russian immigrants. The students hail from 21 elementary schools and every zip code in the city.

### **Interesting Facts:**

- Leadership will have a strong partnership with the University which will provide student tutors, counselors, and, next year, pre-service teaching interns.
- Students at the school will be encouraged to take on business internships and participate in volunteer opportunities in the community. Students will spend Friday afternoons in the community taking advantage of other learning opportunities.
- Leadership has numerous business partners and donors, including Golden Gate University which rents classroom space to the school.
- Students have YMCA memberships to allow the school to use the facility for physical education and give the students a place to spend their off campus hours.

**Contact:** Mark Kushner, 415-951-4767

## **VIII. San Carlos Charter Learning Center**

San Carlos, CA

**Type of School:** Start-up

**Charter Status Obtained:** 1994

**Educational Focus:** The curriculum is based on current research about learning and the grouping of students. Students learn in multi-age classrooms with two or more grade levels of children in one classroom. All instruction is based on the constructiveness learning theory and the theory of multiple intelligences. Children are engaged in hands-on, minds-on learning every day. Each child's personalized learning plan is created by the teacher, parent and student. Outcomes are measured by the new California Learning Assessment System, and the school has articulated its goal of achieving in the top quartile. Other locally developed assessments will also be used including student products, performances, and Rites of Passage Experiences. Parental participation is required.

**Grades Currently Served:** 120 Kindergarten through eighth grade students

**Demographics:** (1994-95) 14% Asian and Pacific Islander, 11% Hispanic, 8% African American, and 67% white.

**Interesting Facts:**

- San Carlos was California's first charter school
- San Carlos provides an after school "Educare" program to support the school's basic instructional day and reinforce learning experiences. Revenues from Educare support instructional assistants in the "regular" classroom.
- San Carlos was started as a vision of the district's superintendent
- 20,000 volunteer hours have been logged in creating and maintaining the learning center.
- Thanadar Software, a student-based company with most of its students coming from San Carlos Charter Learning Center, develops and markets inexpensive games and learning software for children of all ages. A portion of Thanadar's profits are pledged to the school's technology program. Thanadar's President, Greg M. started developing software and web pages when he was age 10.
- There is one computer for every five students at San Carlos.
- San Carlos Community Learning center receives support from Apple, Hewlett Packard, and Oracle.

● **Contact:** Elise Darwish, 415-508-7343

## **IX. Vaughn Next Century Learning Center**

San Fernando, CA

**Type of School:** Public school conversion

**Charter Status Obtained:** 1993

**Educational Focus:** The school serves a population of severely disadvantaged elementary school students, using a full service system including a child-centered curriculum, small classes, integrated technology, preschool education, accelerated English transition for its 900 limited-English proficient students, and an extended 200 day school year.

**Grades Currently Served:** 1,150 Kindergarten through fifth grade students

**Demographics:** 95% Hispanic, 4% African American, and 1% white. 50% of the students have limited-English proficiency.

**Interesting Facts:**

- Vaughn is a 1997 US Department of Education Blue Ribbon School (Vaughn is the first charter school to receive this distinction.)
- Vaughn was awarded the prestigious California Distinguished School award in 1995
- Vaughn serves as a model site for the RJR Nabisco Next Century Schools
- Vaughn is a Danforth Foundation Successful School
- Vaughn participates in California's School Restructuring and Healthy Start programs.

**Contact:** Yvonne Chan, 818-896-7461

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# MEMO

**DRAFT**

**To:** Judith Johnson  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Arthur Cole, Sylvia Wright, Kristin Bunce, Mikel Morton, Alex Medler, Jennifer Ryan, Leslie Hankerson

**From:** John Fiegel  
Public Charter Schools Program

**Subject:** 1998 Operational Plan

**Date:** September 15, 1997

Attached for your review is the first draft of the Public Charter Schools Program Operational Plan for 1998. The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for discussion, refinement, and approval of activities to be conducted in the upcoming months to continue implementation of the Public Charter Schools Program.

## **Introduction**

The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 authorized the Public Charter Schools Program with a purpose to increase national understanding of charter schools by awarding grants to State educational agencies and other eligible applicants to support the planning and initial implementation of charter schools. The Department is charged with evaluating the effects of charter schools, including the effects on students, student achievement, staff, and parents. Additionally, the Department may undertake national activities to enhance the success of charter schools. Lessons learned by charter schools can provide serious accountability for all public schools, and can reinforce, and even accelerate, other education reform efforts. The activities outlined in the attached operational plan will help the Department accomplish these charges and meet the purpose of the authorizing statute.

To provide parents with more choices in public education, we will expand our effort in 1998, to help teachers, parents, community groups, and other responsible organizations to start charter schools that are nonsectarian, do not charge tuition, are open to all students, admit students on the basis of a lottery if more students apply than can be accommodated, and comply with health, safety, and civil rights requirements of other public schools. We need to encourage the growth of innovative public schools that stay open only as long as they produce results and meet the highest standards.

### **Strategic Plan and Seven Priorities**

The first goal of the U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan, 1998-2002 is to help all students reach challenging academic standards so that they are prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment. Objective 1.6 under this goal is that public school choice supports flexibility and family-community concerns. The performance indicators for this objective are important measures of how well the Public Charter Schools Program is implemented during 1998 and in following years. These performance indicators, as well as the Department's efforts to promote strong, safe, drug-free, and disciplined schools under priority seven of the Secretary's Priorities provide the framework for the attached operational plan.

### **Next Steps**

I recommend that we meet to discuss, refine, and enhance the activities in this plan, and when we are satisfied that they are consistent with what we want to do in 1998, meet with the cross departmental team and others working on charter schools to finalize staff assignments and begin to work on schedules.

### **Attachment**

## Public Charter Schools Program

### Draft Operational Plan -FY 1998

---

U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan, 1998-2002, Objective 1.6 states: Public School Choice supports flexibility and family-community concerns. The performance indicators for meeting this objective are:

- *By 2000, a minimum of 40 States will have charter school legislation.*
  - *By 2002, there will be 3,000 charter schools in operation around the nation.*
  - *By 2002, half of all school districts will make choice available to their students through magnet schools, charter schools, and open enrollment policies.*
  - *By 2002, 25% of all public school students in grades 3-12 will attend a school that they or their parents chose.*
- 

#### Core strategies (from the Strategic Plan):

► **Engage the Public:**

*State meetings.* Offer States with new laws (currently NV, MS, OH, PA) up to \$30K each, and States with older laws but no federal grant money and little charter activity (currently AR, HI, NH, RI, SC, WY) up to \$10K each to conduct informational/outreach meetings to encourage interest and understanding of charter schools requirements in their respective States. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* to be determined.

*Regional meetings.* Plan and implement through selected Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers (CTACs) three regional workshops with an estimated cost of \$50-\$75k each to enable teachers, universities, museums, organizations focused on educating disadvantaged children, local businesses, and others to begin to think about how they may initiate or contribute to the creation of a charter school. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* to be determined.

*PR Campaign.* Plan and support a public relations campaign designed to provide evidence (videos, brochures, radio and TV spots, etc.) of good charter schools, especially those whose charters are being renewed, to counter the press about a few bad schools. *Print information.* Develop a series of articles, briefing papers, and OP-Ed pieces on charter schools targeted to relevant stakeholders, selected trade journals, general interest magazines, newspapers, and other publications. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* to be determined.

*Information Exchange.* Provide support in the amount of \$3-5K to small groups for information sessions to bring charter school operators, consultants, and others to advise groups on charter school development. This would allow, for example, some States that are considering drafting legislation to bring in experts from other States. *Lead Responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* to be determined.

*Charter schools website.* Continue to support and develop the charter schools website to provide information for charter school developers and potential developers, operators, and chartering agencies on starting and running a charter school, State legislation, curriculum development, policy development, school finances, legal issues, and other issues. The website includes an overview of charter schools, news and announcements, a school information exchange, a resource directory, and links to other sites. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* Website is enhanced on a continuous basis.

*Parent's Guide.* Develop and disseminate widely both English and Spanish versions of "A Parent's Guide to Public School Choice" written in simple, non-jargon, accessible language. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team with the Office for Public Affairs. *Schedule:* planned to be available for national charter schools conference, November 3-5, 1997.

*High level visitors to charter schools.* Provide information and assistance to the President, Vice President, Secretary, and other Cabinet members and Assistant Secretaries so that they might visit charter schools to give them credibility locally, as well as raise awareness nationally. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* to be determined.

► **Financial support and technical assistance:**

*Charter schools grant program.* Manage pre-award, award, and post-award tasks associated with the charter schools grants program to provide financial assistance to States and charter school developers for the planning and initial implementation of charter schools. *Lead responsibility:* SIP discretionary grant team. *Schedule:* Deadline for new grant applications is scheduled for January 30, 1998 with new awards to be made by April 10, 1998. Continuation awards will be made by August 28, 1998.

*National conference.* Convene a three-day national conference to provide a forum for founders, administrators, and teachers of charter schools to share and receive successful strategies and methods of overcoming common challenges; facilitate networking among charter school operators, technical assistance providers, State department of education representatives, and U.S. Department of Education staff; familiarize charter school directors with Department programs, resources, and staff that can be of assistance to charter schools; ensure that charter school directors are aware of federal rules and regulations they must meet and waivers available to them; and receive feedback on programs and needs of charter schools, and plan for follow-up activities that would

strengthen charter schools. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* November 3-5, 1997.

*Federal programs guide.* Develop and disseminate to charter school practitioners, State agencies, chartering agencies, and others a "Charter Schools Guide to Department of Education Programs." This will be a condensed version of the Department's Guide, listing those programs for which charter schools are eligible, including formula programs such as Title 1 and Title 6, as well as discretionary grant programs. Eligibility aspects that are unique to charter schools depending on their status as independent school districts or as schools within a school district will be discussed. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* Planned to be available for the national conference, November 3-5, 1997.

*Technical assistance to chartering agencies.* Complete review of and disseminate *two publications*: "A Guidebook for Chartering Agencies," developed for the Department by the RAND Corporation, a comprehensive guide covering all aspects of a chartering agency's responsibilities in chartering schools, and "The Charter Review Process," developed by the Southeastern Regional Educational Lab, SERVE, which more specifically covers the application and review process for chartering agencies in approving charter schools. SERVE will offer a *workshop* for chartering agencies at the upcoming national conference that could be used as a prototype for follow-up workshops in States and districts. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* Publications and prototype workshop to be available for the national conference, November 3-5, 1997. Follow-up workshops to be scheduled.

*State-level policy makers.* Establish a series of workshops -- with OERI's, ECS's, and NCSL's help -- at the national conference for State-level policy makers considering charter policies and legislation. Support follow-up work in States with teams of leaders with questions about charter school policy issues. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team with OERI Policy Institute. *Schedule:* Workshops, November 3-5, 1997; follow-up to be scheduled.

*Technical Assistance to D.C.* Facilitate and document, through the Region III Comprehensive Technical Assistance Center, the meetings of the D.C. Charter Schools Network, a group of charter school practitioners who meet at least four times a year to engage in critical dialogue around such topics as instruction, curriculum, assessment, professional development, and governance. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* to be determined.

► **Research and development:**

*National study.* Continue to support and expand the National Study of Charter Schools

which is being conducted by RPP International in partnership with the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement and Boston's Institute for Responsive Education. *Annual survey.* The results of the second annual survey of all charter schools conducted in the spring of 1997 will be released, and the public data set will be expanded and made available to those interested in conducting secondary analysis of the survey results. The third annual survey will be conducted in spring, 1998. *Longitudinal assessment of student achievement.* The ethnographic study will be expanded to include a third cohort of approximately 20 charter schools and 4 comparison sites in States with "new" charter laws, increasing the totals to 92 charter schools and 32 comparison sites. Achievement data will be gathered in the spring of 1998 for all three cohorts. *Policy studies.* The research team plans additional site visits to six of the intensively-studied schools for examination of policy issues affecting charter schools. *Lead responsibility:* OERI Cross Departmental Team members. *Schedule:* Interim reports and findings will be available by January 1998 and 1999.

*Targeted research studies.* Award contracts by September 30, 1997 to conduct two-year studies to analyze the effects of charter schools in special education and in assessment and accountability. Similar contracts will be awarded in the fall of 1997 to study school finance issues and charter schools. There were no successful competitors in FY 1997 to conduct a study on fairness and equity issues, so this area will need to be revisited. *Lead responsibility:* OERI for the school finance and assessment and accountability studies; OSERS for the special education study. *Schedules:* to be determined.

*Model development.* Award contracts by September 30, 1997 for the development and assessment of a model leadership training program for charter schools (2 contracts), a demonstration program for fostering cross-fertilization among charter schools and other public schools (3 contracts), and a model outreach program to attract community institutions, parents, teachers, and principals into founding and operating charter schools (1 contract). *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedules:* to be determined.

*Evaluation of the federal program.* Plan an evaluation of the impact of federal support for charter schools. *Lead responsibility:* Planning and Evaluation Services, OUS members of the Cross Departmental Team. *Schedule:* Planning will begin in the fall of 1997. The evaluation will start in late 1998 or early 1999.

*Title 1 and charter schools in the national study.* Complete a review and determine the dissemination of a report analyzing Title 1 funding data from the national study's first annual survey of charter schools. *Lead responsibility:* Planning and Evaluation Services, OUS. *Schedule:* The report is expected to be ready for dissemination by October, 1997.

► **Outreach:**

*IASA Conferences.* Share information about charter schools and how they are an integral

part of the education reforms to increase public school choice, autonomy, and accountability. Three sessions will be held: a one-hour session on Priority Seven, Every School Will be Strong, Safe, Drug-Free, and Disciplined; a three-hour institute on public school choice options; and a session on the federal Public Charter Schools Program. *Lead Responsibility:* OESE Strong Schools team, IASA Institute team, and OESE core team. *Schedule:* October 16-18, November 16-18, and December 14-16, 1997.

*School reform networks and technical assistance providers.* Facilitate and encourage connections between the New American Schools, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and other school reform networks, and the organizations providing and brokering technical assistance to charter schools, such as the National Charter Friend's Network. Encourage pilot programs where the technical assistance expertise of these networks can be made readily available to people chartering schools. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* to be determined.

*Organizations representing disadvantaged students.* Tap into the President's Race Initiative to facilitate discussions among groups such as the NAACP, National Council of La Raza, Urban League, and others about the opportunities that charter schools might provide to their constituents. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* to be determined.

*NSBA and chartering agencies.* Develop a working relationship with the National School Boards Association to encourage them to work with State affiliates to develop workshops for chartering agencies. *Lead responsibility:* OESE core team. *Schedule:* to be determined.

**Charter Schools Teams:**

**OESE Core Team:** Arthur Cole, John Fiegel, Mikel Morton, Jennifer Ryan, Alex Medler, Leslie Hankerson, Kristin Bunce

**SIP Equity and Choice Discretionary Grant Team:** OESE Core Team; plus Sylvia Wright, Steve Brockhouse, Shelton Allen, Valerie Rogers, Lynette Kee, Richard Kress, Sandra Shever, Bill Mattocks, Edith Harvey, Margie Bednarik

**Cross Departmental Team:** OESE Core Team; plus Pat Lines, Judith Anderson, OERI; Cathy Grimes-Miller, OGC; Kirk Winters, Stefanie Stullich, Lisa Towne, David Cleary, OUS

**Strong, Safe, Drug-Free and Disciplined Schools Subteam:** Cross Departmental Team; plus Gerry Tirozzi, Judith Johnson, Maria Ferguson, Art Cole, OESE; Frank Sobol, Deborah Inman, OERI; Ivonne Jaime, OVAE; Phyllis Barajas, OBEMLA; Ray Meyers, Rhonda Weiss, OSERS; Charles Masten, OPE; Frank Lopez, OGC; David Berkowitz, OCR; Kris Regan, OM

**The  
U.S. Department  
of  
Education**

**PRESENTS  
THE**

**1997**

**CHARTER  
SCHOOLS  
NATIONAL  
CONFERENCE**

***“Strengthening Education  
Through Innovation and  
Public School Choice”***



**November 3-5, 1997  
Renaissance Mayflower Hotel  
Washington, D.C.**



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Through  
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**November 3, 1997 marks the beginning of an intensive three-day conference focusing on the charter school. In response to President Clinton's "Call to Action for American Education in the 21st Century," the U.S. Department of Education will provide a national forum for founders and administrators of charter schools to:**

exchange successful strategies for overcoming common challenges;

familiarize charter school directors with Department of Education programs, resources, and staff that can be of assistance to charter schools;

facilitate networking among charter school operators, technical assistance providers, state department of education representatives, and U.S. Department of Education staff;

strengthen charter schools by addressing concerns of charter school directors and the U.S. Department of Education;

■ learn about federal rules and regulations that apply to charter schools and become familiar with waiver programs and other means of regulatory relief;

■ provide input on programs and help plan for later activities that will strengthen charter schools.

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND

As educators committed to improving the quality of education in America, you will not want to miss this opportunity to gather with others who share your goals and concerns. Conference participants will include:

Charter school directors and founders

State education agency staff responsible for charter school programs

Policy makers

Technical assistance providers

**Questions about the Program?  
Call: (405) 325-3760 or (800) 203-5494**

## CONFERENCE AGENDA

### Monday, November 3

#### *"The Federal Role in Charter Schools"*

|                       |                                                               |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:45 a.m.-8:45 a.m.   | Continental Breakfast                                         |
| 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.  | Welcome and Overview of U.S. Department of Education Programs |
| 10:45 a.m.-11:45 a.m. | State Sessions                                                |
| 12:00 noon-1:45 p.m.  | Luncheon/Keynote Address                                      |
| 2:00 p.m.-3:15 p.m.   | Workshop Sessions on Federal Programs                         |
| 3:30 p.m.-4:45 p.m.   | Repeat of Sessions                                            |
| 5:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.   | Focus Groups                                                  |
| 6:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.   | Meet and Greet Reception                                      |

### Tuesday, November 4

#### *"Common Challenges & Successful Strategies"*

|                       |                                                                                    |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:45 a.m.-8:45 a.m.   | Continental Breakfast                                                              |
| 9:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.  | General Session                                                                    |
| 10:45 a.m.-12:00 noon | Workshop Sessions                                                                  |
| 12:15 p.m.-2:00 p.m.  | Luncheon/Keynote Address<br><b>Richard W. Riley</b><br>U.S. Secretary of Education |
| 2:15 p.m.-4:45 p.m.   | Workshop Sessions                                                                  |
| 5:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.   | Focus Groups                                                                       |
| 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.   | Reception at U.S. Capitol                                                          |

### Wednesday, November 5

#### *"Digging Deeper and Looking Ahead"*

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 7:45 a.m.-8:30 a.m.   | Continental Breakfast |
| 8:45 a.m.-10:15 a.m.  | Workshop Sessions     |
| 10:30 a.m.-12:00 noon | Closing Session       |

## RELATED EVENTS

### Pre-Conference Workshop

#### Sunday, November 2

##### *"Planning and Developing a Charter School"*

9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Pre-Conference Workshop  
(For those in the early stages of applying for charters in the mid-Atlantic region. Registration is limited.)

### Post-Conference Workshops

#### Wednesday, November 5

1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Targeted Working Sessions  
(SEA Staff, Chartering Authorities, Technical Assistance Providers, and Policy Makers)

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

***"Strengthening Education Through Innovation and Public School Choice"***

## **CHALLENGES FACING CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Through a combination of panels, round table discussions, and workshop presentations, conference participants will share the successes, problems, and issues of charter schools. Sessions will feature exemplary models of practice and provide concrete ideas and strategies for creating and operating quality charter schools. Topics will include:

Standards and Assessments

Facilities

Business Operations

Gathering and Mobilizing Resources

Creating Partnerships

Legal and Liability Issues

## **RESOURCES AND INFORMATION FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Participants will receive information and assistance on Federal programs. Department staff and successful charter operators will provide information and insights on:

- The Federal Charter School Grant Program for Start-Up Funds
- Title I, including determining eligibility and operating "schoolwide" programs and how charter schools can use these resources
- Federal rules and regulations that apply to charter schools, waiver programs, and other means of regulatory relief

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including a briefing on the recent reauthorization of IDEA, and how changes affect charter schools
- The Office of Civil Rights, with guidance for charter schools in appropriately:
  - serving children with disabilities
  - serving language minority children
  - recruiting and admitting students

## **SESSIONS FOR PEOPLE WORKING OUTSIDE CHARTER SCHOOLS**

In addition to sessions targeted at people starting and operating charter schools, information and workshops will be available for:

- State-level policy makers
- Charter granting entities
- State education agency staff that work with charter school programs
- Education reformers from outside the charter school movement
- People planning to apply for a charter

The conference will include pre-conference workshops on Sunday for people in the early planning stages. Following the conference conclusion on Wednesday at noon, a series of half-day workshops are scheduled for policy makers, charter granting entities, and technical assistance providers. If you are interested in attending or presenting at the pre- or post-conference workshops, please indicate on the registration form.

## CONFERENCE HOTEL

Renaissance Mayflower Hotel

1127 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Washington, D.C. 20036

Phone: (202) 347-3000 fax: (202) 466-9083

The Renaissance Mayflower Hotel will be the site of all conference sessions and activities. The hotel is located at 1127 Connecticut Avenue, NW in the heart of downtown Washington, D.C. Just four blocks north of the White House and one half block from the Farragut North Metro Station, the hotel is easily accessible to all major attractions. Built in 1925, the Mayflower Hotel sets the standard for elegance and beauty, and has been the site of inaugural balls of United States presidents since Calvin Coolidge.

A special room rate of \$109 plus tax, single or double occupancy, has been obtained for participants.

**Reservations must be made before October 12, 1997** in order to receive this special rate. Simply identify yourself as attending the "Charter Schools National Conference" when calling the hotel at (202) 347-3000.

The hotel is about 15 minutes (10 miles) from the Washington National Airport. Dulles International Airport is about 45 minutes (30 miles) from the hotel. Approximate cost of transportation is as follows:

|                  | <u>National</u>                | <u>Dulles</u>                  |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Via taxi cab     | \$10 - \$12                    | \$45 - \$50                    |
| Washington Flyer | \$ 8 one way<br>\$14 roundtrip | \$16 one way<br>\$26 roundtrip |
| Metro            | \$1.30 - \$1.80                |                                |

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration is limited and by invitation only. Participants should register by October 15, 1997 to ensure space. Invitees responding after October 15 cannot be guaranteed registration. If you have not received an invitation and wish to attend, please call Alex Medler at The U.S. Department of Education, (202) 205-9786.

There is no conference registration fee. Conference registration does not include lodging, non-scheduled meals or travel. Charter school operators seeking possible travel subsidies should check with their charter school contact at their state department of education

## REGISTRATION FORM

Charter Schools National Conference

November 3-5, 1997

Washington, D.C.

Please print or type (may photocopy):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

(Your social security number is needed for security purposes, only, in the event of special speakers.)

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School/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

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Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please enroll me in:

- ☐ The Charter Schools National Conference
- ☐ Pre-conference workshops
- ☐ Post-conference workshops

☐ I would like to be a presenter or resource person.

Topic of expertise \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 EASY WAYS TO REGISTER

By Phone: (405) 325-3760  
(800) 203-5494



By Fax: (405) 325-7075



By Mail: National Conference Logistics Center  
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555 E. Constitution, Suite 208  
Norman, OK 73072-7820



☐ Special Needs: The U.S. Department of Education and The University of Oklahoma are committed to making their facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If special needs or accommodations are needed, please notify us at least three (3) weeks in advance of the conference.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Qs and As for Charter Schools Report

#### States and Laws

##### *1. Report lists principles of bills, does that mean you endorse these principles?*

No, it does not. There are several principles that the Department believes all charter schools must be held to. Charter schools must:

- maintain and reach high academic standards;
- be held accountable for results;
- contribute to equity in education;
- practice sound management; and
- share the lessons they learn with all schools.

However, when it comes to many of the policies that establish charter programs in states, the Department defers to the states in how they establish their programs. This report only includes these aspects of charter laws to provide a context for examining activity in states.

##### *2. This report describes many different kinds of laws. Does this study determine if there are certain policies that make a difference. For example, you can see that Michigan and Arizona have created more schools in a shorter period of time. Is that because their laws allow entities other than local districts to create charters? If this is so important, what can we do to encourage all states to have these kinds of laws?*

We think these are decisions that state legislatures will have to make. If later, evidence shows some differences in charter laws that lead to students learning more, or to greater access for all children, then we should make sure that the states have this information.

But in terms of alternative sponsors, let me add one point. There are states that give the local school districts the primary, or only, responsibility for granting charters. Some of these states are having a lot of charters form as well. Colorado and California are both states where practically every charter is eventually approved and granted by the local district, and these states will have 50 and 122 schools next year. Florida passed legislation last year, and while some critics were disappointed that local school boards had so much influence in that state, there will be nearly 40 charters approved for operation next year. I think it is still too early to say what kind of charter school laws should be passed.

#### School Size

##### *3. Why are they so small?*

This is a very encouraging aspect of the charter school movement. There could be several reasons.

## NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Some charters start small, and plan to grow over time. For these schools, the small average size could be a function of how new the charter movement is. Five years from now the average charter school could be larger.

In other cases, people have opened charters specifically because they want their children to have smaller schools. Some parents and teachers involved in charter schools are hoping to provide more intimate and orderly learning environments, where instruction can be more personalized for each student.

***4. According to your report, most charter schools have fewer than 200 students. Could this be the source of success in charter schools? Or is it their increased flexibility?***

It is too early to say which aspect of charters is likely to cause success. They share many advantages that previous research has demonstrated leads to successful schools, but they also have several new barriers that most schools don't have to face as they strive to improve. (We can go into these if you want more detail, pluses include size, focus and shared vision, shared responsibility and control of staff and budget; minuses include lack of funds, facilities issues, business challenges, and politics of self-governance.)

Charter schools come in a variety of forms, including some that have more than a thousand students. We are looking into the factors that influence success in charter schools. School size may certainly contribute to the success of the smaller charter schools --small schools research would certainly indicate that this would be an important factor. Our hope, however, is that increased flexibility will lead to innovations in charter schools and that our research will help determine those factors that lead to success so that they can influence other public schools.

***5. Do charter schools represent a significant reform, if they only serve a few thousand children total?***

Charter schools are only one part of our overall strategy for education reform. We believe they are one mechanism for implementing high standards, professional development and accountability. However, despite their relatively small size, this is a movement that is growing very quickly. President Clinton has called for the creation of over 3000 charter schools in over a decade. Nearly 500 schools operated last year, and another 200 or so will be open in this fall. Their impact can also be much deeper than the children in the individual schools. They are expected to, and are beginning to, have a broader impact on the rest of public schools. For some of the people involved in the charter movement, it is this broader impact that is the whole reason charters exist at all.

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***JUSTIFICATION FOR THE LEVEL OF FUNDING***

***6. Why are they getting so much money, attention and resources if they serve so few kids?***

Not all charter schools are this small, and to be honest, they are not receiving a great amount of money.

First, many charter schools are quite large; for example, a couple of Los Angeles schools serve more than a thousand students.

Second, the start-up grants that these schools receive from the Department average around \$30,000 to \$40,000 each. Compared to the overall cost of opening and operating a school, these grants represent a relatively small investment.

However, if these schools succeed, and if they are finding new ways of operating public schools, we may be able to use their successes elsewhere. In part, these schools can serve as laboratories for the rest of public education.

***7. If so many charter schools are converted from existing schools that were already open, why are you asking to spend \$100 million on their supposed "start-up" costs?***

Charter schools, whether converted from existing schools or starting from scratch, have significant start-up costs. Schools that are starting from scratch have to develop their plans, ensure that their buildings meet health and safety codes, hire staff, develop a curriculum, offer professional development, and all the other many activities associated with starting a new school. Public schools that convert to charter school status may already meet health and safety codes, but they still have all of the start-up activities associated with opening a new school, including hiring staff, offering training, developing a curriculum, recruiting students, etc. According to our survey, 68 percent of newly created schools and 46 percent of pre-existing schools cited lack of start-up funds as a barrier to implementing charter schools.

***8. What is the Federal role in supporting charter schools? Aren't start-up funds something that should be provided by states?***

A majority of charter school developers said that the lack of start-up funds was the greatest barrier to starting their school. Federal funds help stimulate the establishment of charter schools, and they are critical for improving the quality of charter schools. We see the charter schools program as a partnership between the Federal government and States. States could certainly offer start-up funds, but many are not so we are responding to the needs of new schools to have start-up capital. Federal funds have the added benefit of giving new charter schools resources for planning without drawing from resources within the local educational system. Thus Federal start-up funds may help lessen the

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conflict that can occur when a school district is impacted by the opening of a new school.

### **Conversions and from Scratch Schools**

***9. With all of these private conversions in Michigan, Arizona, Colorado and Minnesota, are we just funding a voucher program in a different way? Aren't these the same schools? What makes them public schools? Are they really open to everyone? How many of these charters are converted private schools?***

It is important to remember that these schools are becoming public schools. Under a voucher system, private schools can still charge tuition, remain sectarian, and be selective in their admissions. As a charter school, a converted private school may no longer charge tuition, they can't be sectarian and they can't be selective in their admissions.

Most importantly, these schools are ultimately accountable to public entities. If they don't perform, and operate by principles of public education, they can, and hopefully will, be shut down. We need to work with states and districts to make sure that is happening. This is very different than private schools receiving vouchers.

***10. Many charter schools are converted public schools. Are they really different, or are they making any significant changes?***

**(Gerry, need a better answer here, see the highlighted profiles for some examples.)**

Some of the country's most successful charter schools are converted public schools. They include the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, Fenton, and schools like Horizon. (Tell the Horizon, Vaughn Story, etc.)

***11. At the bottom of page 30, the report describes a converted school. By converting to a charter, this school was able to save money by purchasing services from vendors rather than the school district. With this savings, they were able to reduce class size. If smaller class size is desirable, shouldn't all schools convert to charters in order to save money and be able to reduce class size? Why do schools have to convert to charters in order to save money and reduce class size?***

If charters are successful in saving money, we may be able to take lessons and apply them more broadly. That is one of the advantages of charter schools.

However, some of the things that charter schools do to save money involve hard choices. As schools of choice, parents choose these schools because they are willing to accept some advantages while losing some aspects of traditional public schools. For example, some charters don't have big sports programs, bands, or theaters.

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### **Discrimination**

***12. One of the problems in inner cities is flight from the public schools. Do you think that charter schools might draw students and resources away from public schools?***

These are public schools. Additionally, they draw people back into public schools who had left the schools. Some states have between 10 and 14 percent of the students in charter schools that weren't in the public system before they enrolled in charters. These students are dropouts, delinquents, teen mothers, people coming from home schooling situations, and students coming back from private schools to attend charter schools. These people all represent families, who are also becoming reinvested in public education.

***13. What happens to the students that are left behind?***

The idea is to change the whole system, not just the charter schools. Charters may put pressure on the whole system to change. Imagine, if every school had a coherent vision of high levels of student learning, where every adult in the building was accountable for all students learning, where every child and every parent wanted to be in that building with those teachers, and where the school did what they thought was necessary to ensure all its students learned? It's not just about what happens in the charter schools. This is the vision that is behind our activities for all schools in Goals 2000, IASA, etc.. Second, it's not a giant investment, it is venture capital to leverage changes in the amount of energy, enthusiasm and hard work people can put into our public schools.

We should not excuse any community from not improving all schools. Charter schools are part of the public school system and, if successful, can provide lessons to help other public schools improve.

Charter schools may create greater pressure to improve all schools. School boards, faced with tough questions from charter schools, may ask similarly tough questions of all schools, and if they do, perhaps they will not accept failing schools anywhere in their district, that's the hope. It is too early to know if it will work.

When public schools convert, it is not just the schools that are already at the cutting edge. Some of the successful converted public schools started out at the bottom of their districts list, in terms of performance and attendance, and have made amazing progress. That is something that brings along the kids, whom the traditional school system had already left behind, and tolerated leaving them there.

In addition, the kids who are "left behind" can sometimes get on with other reforms. (Explain a "release valve" affect, and the ability to implement a reform in a district that a minority of parents would have been able to stop otherwise. The charter takes a slightly different direction, and the community needn't be torn apart over a philosophical difference between a few adults on the school

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board. Horizon story)

***14. Could charter schools lead to resegregation of education? I see that exhibit 14 indicates concentration of minority children in a handful of charter schools.***

Racial and ethnic concentration is an issue we have to look at more, but we are examining it in a new study. It is too complex to say what is going on. Some charter schools do have high concentrations of minority students, while others do not. This is happening in public schools as a result of residence patterns and other factors as well. It needs to be examined in traditional and charter schools.

Some were concentrated as non charters; or they are located in communities that are ethnically homogeneous, where the parents may be more frustrated with their community schools, and doing more to create schools. It's too complex to sum up quickly based on these initial studies.

Much of the concentration that is going on is due to residential segregation, and that is affecting all of education, charters are just a symptom of that. It is disturbing however it happens.

We're concerned about this, and we plan to study it more.

***15. I see that in Massachusetts, Michigan and Minnesota there are charter schools serving very high proportions of students of color. Would I be allowed to start a charter school that would serve predominantly Irish-American children? Once we start allowing schools that are racially or ethnically homogeneous, where does it stop?***

No, you could not start a school for Irish-Americans if you denied admission to anyone else. You could start a school that attempted to interest students in learning, and it could include a deep examination of the achievements of Gaelic culture, as part of a way of entering all the areas of academic learning that must be addressed by a successful charter school.

There are schools for deaf students, charter schools for drop-outs, schools for kids who want to learn in active settings, and schools that best serve kids who need order, discipline and desks in straight rows. It is O.K. to create schools that look different from one another, and focus is a plus, but discrimination should never be tolerated.

***16. Are you concerned about patterns of racial concentration at a school? What if these are the result of deliberate policies that favor or exclude some races or classes of students?***

This first year study claims that it "did not find evidence that charter schools engage in discriminatory admissions practices." However, it's too early to say for sure what is going on. If any schools are discriminating, that's too many. The challenge is to stop that without curtailing the innovation that is going on, and without interfering with legitimate choice by parents.

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At this point, you can find an anecdote for everything in the charter world, good and bad. That's why we need to work on better research and evaluation, but this is just a first step.

### **Special Education and LEP and disadvantaged students**

**(Gerry, we are working on new answers to special ed and Title I questions)**

***17. It looks like educators in Minnesota are trying to take special ed students out of mainstream education by placing them in charter schools. Isn't the trend to place special ed students in regular classrooms? Are you trying to reverse that? For example, 15 schools have over 25% special ed students and 2 have 100%.***

Some of these are very unique schools. Minnesota has a school for the deaf. It is the only school in the state where children can learn American Sign Language and still sleep at home each night.

Other schools are for drop outs, kids who weren't in any stream, they were completely out of the water.

***18. On page 22, the report states that some charter schools are reluctant to classify students as special ed students, because they think all students should receive individualized education plans. Couldn't they use this as a way of covering up previous instances of counseling special ed kids out of the school, or as a way of justifying delivering inadequate services to children with special needs? We realize the researchers say this would be difficult to determine, but isn't that your job?***

Yes, and we are examining this issue. We have another BAA out just for this topic.

Not enough data is available yet to determine, also there are cases of schools serving these kids with alternative delivery and high expectations.

Also, since charters are accountable for results, if they don't educate these kids they will hopefully be closed.

***19. As long as schools are stating a fear of going bankrupt if a child with expensive needs shows up at their school, isn't it likely that many of these schools respond to this pressure by illegally discriminating against these kids and encouraging them to go elsewhere? Even if they accept the students, since they don't have the money, are the students really getting the services they deserve?***

Again, we hope to learn more, this could be, or it could be other things going on.

In Colorado they buy an insurance from districts, (pat Grippe story)

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Maybe they need to form BOCES, or regional service districts, of charters

(Maybe there needs to be a pool of federal resources charter schools can draw onto to help defray these costs, so that charters are no longer afraid of the impact kids can have on their small budgets. The important thing is that these students receive the services they need. )

That's why we're working with sponsors, schools and SEA's, and conducting activities such as a major conference this fall that will help schools network among themselves and work on solutions. We also have Broad Agency Announcement to solicit work by technical assistance providers.

***20. Two-thirds of all charter schools claim that they are eligible for Title I funds, yet only one-half claim to receive them. What are we doing to ensure that disadvantaged students are getting the resources they deserve in charter schools? If schools feel like they're not getting the resources that should come with disadvantaged students, are we creating incentives for charter schools to not serve these students – to discriminate against them?***

*(Gerry, we are working on answers to this question)*

### Who Starts Charter Schools and Why

***21.If three-quarters of the charter schools were created by one or two leaders, what happens when these leaders leave? I thought these were supposed to be broad-based partnerships? Why are only one in four charter schools involving broad coalitions?***

It is a lot of work, if professionals take the lead in many, that's not so bad. However, if their turnover remains high that could generate problems.

Remember, in many cases these schools are small schools, where 1-2 leaders may be O.K.

There is also a difference between leadership and involvement, thousands of people are donating 100,000's of hours.

***22. It says on page 28 that only 12.7% of the schools serve special needs kids, and that only 9.5% of the schools were opened to involve parents. Is that acceptable? I thought these were public schools that are supposed to serve everyone. They're starting to look more and more elitist with these numbers.***

(The previous question could come from misinterpreting the table on page 28. Schools leaders were asked to explain the reasons why they created the school. They could list more than one choice. Or later, they were asked to say which was the most important reason. If someone interpreted the question as "what was the only reason" why you opened the school, they might ask the following

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inappropriate questions. (A scholar of special education interpreted the earlier ECS survey along these lines and wrote up a similar set of conclusions based on this mistaken/perverse analysis).

This analysis is wrong.

People could answer more than one, it is not the only reason, all usually say their school is designed to serve all children.

### **Profit Making/Finances**

*23. Many of the schools that were preexisting private schools, said they became charters for financial reasons. Are these for-profit companies making money out of tax dollars? Where is the profit coming from? Is it from discriminating against students that cost more to teach, scrimping on services or facilities, or paying teachers even less? Are charters just a cover for private companies to take money from public education.*

Non-profits often contract with for-profit entities, like many LEAs are allowed to do under state laws.

This is not just going on in charter schools, but in many districts as well.

Overall, this is not a lot of money, but there is growing interest, we don't know how it will play out.

Financial reasons are not always profit, sometimes it is just a little bit more operating funds that allow increased levels of service.

*24. If charter schools can make a profit, why can't other public schools make a profit? And, if charter schools are running a profit, while operating with less money than traditional public schools, then, are we over funding education in this country? Is it stupid to pour another \$100 million into these schools if some of them are putting money in the bank with what we give them now?*

Other public schools do this too, it could be a problem everywhere. But we are concerned.

If they save money we hope to take lessons and apply them elsewhere.

Most won't make a lot of money, they're all reporting a lack of funds, and a need for finances and start-up money, not a problem with too much money and no place to invest it.

### **Autonomy**

*25. What types of regulations, if waived, would benefit charter schools?*

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Charter schools seem to benefit from the removal of State regulations. In fact, our report indicates that Federal rules and regulations were perceived to be a barrier to only six percent of the charter schools surveyed. The types of State regulations that would benefit schools if waived, really depends on the type of State regulatory climate. For instance, some States have a more centralized curriculum, so charter schools will have greater autonomy over their curriculum. Others have more administrative controls, so charter schools could benefit from flexibility on school management rules such as scheduling, purchasing requirements, or age of students served. Or charter schools might benefit from greater autonomy over their school finances. The actual regulations will vary by State.

### General Questions

#### ***26. What is the downside of charter schools?***

Charter schools are not the silver bullet solution to educational problems. Certain pitfalls are inherent in the start-up of any new program or idea. For example, some schools could mismanage funds or try to profit at the expense of students. As the system gets up and running, however, these schools can be detected and closed. Closure in mid-year could disrupt students. Charter schools will need to have a strong accountability system so that these issues are surfaced and addressed. Another pitfall is that, if charter schools are not supported, and therefore fail, the parents and teachers involved in the charter school will make up a whole new constituency of people disenfranchised with the education system.

### Questions That Might Generate Controversy

#### ***27. "Illegal" schools in Colorado***

***Page 15 the Study shows that two-thirds of the pre-existing schools in Colorado were private schools that converted to charter status. This is prohibited according to Colorado law. If this particular state can't even hold schools accountable, (or hold district sponsors accountable) for a simple rule that prohibits the conversion of private schools, how can we expect to adequately monitor other equally important aspects, like discrimination, religious instruction or tuition?***

At least one of these schools is located in a former private school building. The school's original directors closed a private school, dissolved its board of directors, and then donated the facility to a new team of people (a team that did include some members of the previous private school's board). These people applied for a charter as a new group. Now this is quite likely what is happening with these schools.

However, these are issues that need to be examined, and there is an added level of responsibility that comes to everyone involved, including chartering authorities, SEAs, and the Federal government. All of us must find ways to make sure that charter schools are meeting the requirements and laws set before them. Just because they are deregulated, does not mean they can do whatever they like.

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### **28. Selecting Students in oversubscribed Schools**

***This study indicates that only 39% of schools with excess demand used a lottery to select students, 41% used a first-come-first-serve system, 10% used a combination, 10% used some other method, (see page 20). I believe the Federal legislation says we will only fund those that use a lottery. By my rough calculation, if 400 of 480 schools are receiving federal funding, and meanwhile only 200 of 480 schools use a lottery, do you know which of the remaining 280 schools are illegally receiving federal funding? What do you plan to do about this? And what should we do with these schools using combinations or “other methods”? (page 20)***

This is an issue we are working on

These numbers are only for oversubscribed, so it is not out of the total of all 480 schools. It is not an accurate analysis to say that this percentage reflects all schools. Others focus on at-risk students, and screen to serve kids who dropped out, or who are adjudicated, these would be “other”, or non-lottery type settings. You might want to examine the legislation so that these kinds of schools are not precluded from receiving Federal funds.

It is also not clear how many are oversubscribed, or if they are growing over time, and may not have dealt with this issue yet.

Ideally all would be lottery, unless they are serving a special population, for which they have specifically designed the school. The task is to work with states and districts to make sure that they are holding schools to the appropriate standards of conduct, and we can use Federal funding as a lever in that work. We will continue to look into this, and attempt to make sure everyone has access.

***29. How can you explain the lower rate of special education students in charters? Are charter schools serving students with special needs, or with those who pose greater challenges? (See page 23 for the main summary comparisons). It appears that either charter schools are counseling out special needs students or else they are under reporting the number of special needs students that they have in their schools. For example, 7.4 percent of students enrolled in charters schools received special ed services prior to attending the charter schools as opposed to 10.4 nationally.***

There are several possibilities, it varies from state to state. Some states are serving a larger proportion of these students in charters. If this (the charter movement) is an experiment, we need to examine those states more closely and see what is best to take from one state and work to replicate these things elsewhere.

But there could be several reasons:

Many students are coming to charter schools (10 to 14%) who weren't in public schools before. These kids may not have been diagnosed, or weren't in programs previously. This along, might account for much of the difference. Thus, maybe the kids with special needs are in the charters, but

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the labels haven't come with them.

Some parents are reluctant to report their child's label to the new school, because they are hoping to leave that behind and have a fresh start. (This is likely to raise problems later, when push comes to shove, and parents want the protections, and extra services.) In fact, some schools report over representations of kids with mild learning disorders, who wouldn't have received IEPs, but who were underachieving, and facing challenges in reading, or attention.

The availability of resources at traditional public schools in big districts may make parents reluctant to pick these new schools as they start up. Parents might be reasonably skeptical, and choosing to go with successful traditional public schools that have demonstrated an ability to meet their child's needs.

Many are choosing, it's just a little less.

***30. Some charters, according to your study, are counseling parents to send kids with special needs to other schools that can better serve their needs. Isn't this illegal? What are you doing about that? Do these "public" schools receive funding? (Page 22) Why aren't charters serving as many LEP students as traditional public schools?***

**(Need a better answer here)**

There is one level in which some of this might be legal. (check on this ). Some charters are part of the district legally, and a school in a district can tell parents that another school in the district provides the least restrictive environment, or better services, and suggest, or the child to go elsewhere. If charters are not separate legal entities, they may be doing the same thing many traditional public schools would do when facing these challenges.

If this is not the case, then there is work that needs to be done. We must work with sponsors on stewardship issues.

The issue of LEP students, points to importance of providing technical assistance to communities, so that all people would be able to organize charters. We are spending money on BAA for demonstration project for outreach, and cross-fertilization, so that many other players can explore, and perhaps use the charter mechanism to improve and make schools that serve all kids.

There is a growing interest among all sorts of communities, some examples (NAME, Urban league, etc.)

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**Questions Without Prepared Answers**

*31. Why is there such a high teacher turnover in charter schools?*

*32. You want 3000 charter schools by the year 2000. What is a realistic number of how many there will be by then? What is the real goal, what are you trying to accomplish?*

*33. Why would states limit or not limit the number of charter schools?*

*Gerry – arguing for caps will not get us to 3000 by the year 2000.*

*34. How many charter schools have been closed so far, and why? What happens to students when charter schools close?*

*35. Name five charter schools that aren't working? (If he can't name them) If you can't tell me, are you monitoring them well enough? Are we out on a limb here? If there are some, what is being done about that?*