

Charter Schools: A Look at Accountability

Accountability in charter schools is a bottom line concern in this new experiment in public schooling. Charter schools receive freedom and autonomy in exchange for improvements in learning and climate. Are charter schools indeed accountable to their constituencies: students, their parents, and the taxpaying public at large? This paper looks at the issue of accountability in three broad categories: student learning; equity concerns, and public accountability. In each category, the goal is to raise points that can, in the long run, lead to the weakening of this experiment. Policymakers owe it to students, their parents, educators and the public to ensure that charter laws and the oversight of charter implementation will lead to strong performance and equitable outcomes for all involved.

Student Learning

- Standards not Clear

There is now general recognition of the importance of setting high standards for student achievement. Yet, not all charter laws require charter schools to develop programs conforming with state or local standards; most charter laws do not require that charters participate in the state accountability system.

- Baseline Data Lacking

Few charter laws require reporting of systematic base-line data on the academic achievement of students before they enroll in charter schools. This makes it difficult to know whether charter students have made improvements over their previous school experience.

- Assessment and Reporting Systems Weak

Charter law reporting systems generally do not provide ways to determine whether students in charter schools are performing as well or better than students in traditional public schools.

Even though it presents challenges to educators attempting innovative approaches, NEA recommends that charter students take state achievement tests so that the public has a way of knowing whether this experiment is indeed leading to learning improvements for large numbers of students.

- **Accountability Plans Lacking**

In Minnesota, a late 1996 report on charter schools stated that fewer than 50% of the charter schools' accountability plans could be implemented as specified without further refinement; only 56% of the schools produced an annual program evaluation report for '95-96 school year; few charter teachers or parents could describe the key indicators of performance for which the school strives.

Analysis of charter legislation shows Massachusetts to have strong language on accountability compared with other state charter laws. Yet researchers for the Consortium for Policy Research in Education in a recent study noted that "it is not evident what level of school performance is good enough for renewal...or whether Massachusetts can close a school for not performing as specified."

A 1997 evaluation of California charter schools revealed that the charter schools examined had measurable academic goals included in their charters. Most reported however that they were not being held accountable for reaching these goals by their sponsoring district or county.

- **Teacher Qualifications**

In recent years, a number of states have enacted measures requiring public school teachers to jump through an increasing number of hoops to keep their certification. Yet many charter laws encourage the hiring of uncertified and unqualified people to teach. While the majority of charter schools are hiring certificated educators, there are still instances where laws would be used to defeat this goal. For example, a proposed re-write of the current Georgia charter law in 1997 would not even have required charter teachers to have a high school diploma.

Equity Concerns

- **Disaggregating the Data**

Overall, research is showing that charter schools are serving low-income and minority group students. However, little research has disaggregated the data to determine whether charter schools are actually exacerbating existing inequities within public education by creating more racial and economic stratification. This is a steady concern whenever systems of choice or options are in place. Neither has research focused on whether schools in different neighborhoods have different resource bases and how that affects educational opportunities and outcomes for students.

In California, the 1997 evaluation of charter schools revealed that on the whole, most charter schools mirrored the ethnic ratios of the districts' non-charter schools regarding all enrolled ethnic groups except for Hispanics. The comparisons between white and Hispanic student enrollment showed rather wide discrepancies. In a fifth of the charter

schools, white students exceeded the average percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in other district schools by more than 25 points.

Also revealed in this same study was the fact that statewide, 43% of charter school students were eligible for the school lunch program. Yet, district level comparisons showed that in more than one-third of charter schools, the proportion of school-lunch-eligible students was 20 percent less than in non-charter schools.

With regard to special education services within charters in California, the study showed that there was a major difference between start-up and conversion schools. A quarter of all start-up schools did not enroll any special education students, compared with only 6 percent of conversion schools which did not.

A similar discrepancy showed in the California evaluation regarding limited English proficient (LEP) students. Statewide, there was only a four percentage point discrepancy in the number of LEP students enrolled at non-charter and charter schools, with non-charters enrolling more LEP students. However, a quarter of the charter schools studied enrolled 20 percent fewer LEP students than did non-charter schools. Again, the discrepancy was starker when comparing start-up schools and conversions. Less than half of the start-up schools enrolled LEP students, compared with 87% of the conversion schools which did.

In Minnesota, a 1996 evaluation of charter schools revealed that half of charter schools enrolled fewer than 20% students of color; half enrolled over 60% students of color, including 5 schools serving 80% or more of students of color. This report stated that “concentrations of students of color and students at risk for school failure are selecting schools that are not funded at the level of schools in the sponsoring school district.”

A 1997 evaluation of twenty-four charter schools in Colorado revealed that when compared with average enrollments in the district schools in which the charter schools were located, 18 of the charter schools had fewer free-lunch-eligible students; 19 had fewer students of color, and 16 had fewer students identified as needing special education services.

In South Carolina, the state board of education reversed the Beaufort County school board's decision to reject an application to open a charter on predominantly white, affluent Hilton Head Island because of concerns that the school could become a white enclave in a district that is half black and half white. The school's founding committee was all white.

- Transportation: Who Goes Where

Providing transportation for programs promoting options in education is one important way to help promote equitable choices. Yet, only half of charter school laws include a transportation provision, usually a reimbursement for low-income parents to drive students to school.

- **Parent Contracts: Could Promote Subtle Discrimination**

Charter schools are noted for their impressive parental involvement. Yet, when mandated, such involvement can have discriminatory effects. California's charter law allows charter schools to mandate a parent contract. A 1995 study by the SouthWest Regional Lab (SWRL) showed that charter schools in low-income areas tended to use parent contracts more often. Two schools actually expelled students because parents failed to live up to the contract. Contracts, according to SWRL study, "are viewed as means of obtaining compliance rather than as a positive vehicle for encouraging the growth of a more inclusive school community."

- **Students with Special Needs Underserved**

In Arizona, only 17 of 46 charters operating in school year '95-96 reported serving disabled children; only 262 of nearly 7,000 students enrolled in charters in Arizona that year were served as special education students.

- **Who's In/Who's Out**

Based on data from school year '95-96 of Massachusetts charter schools, 50% had one or no special needs students; 2/3 had fewer than 10 children with special needs. Only about 7% of children enrolled in charters were identified by schools as special ed students, compared with more than twice that number reported statewide. Of these schools, only 3 schools reported any children with severe disabilities requiring separate special ed programming; more than 75% of the schools were serving no children with severe disabilities.

Sabis International Charter in Springfield, Mass. acquired a school building from the Springfield district. Prior to Sabis running the school, the building had been modified to provide access for children with disabilities, including a specially-designed classroom. The Springfield district agreed to authorize all the students who had been attending classes in this building to enroll in the charter school as "school choice" students except for the students in the special ed classroom.

- **One Size Fits All Special Ed**

The Edison-run Renaissance School in Boston let parents know that the school made special education available in one form only -- full inclusion. Parents were encouraged to remove their children if they believed this model would not meet their children's needs.

More than 16 children with special needs withdrew from one Worcester charter within the first two weeks of the school year in 1996-97.

- State Charter Office: Friend or Foe

The Massachusetts Department of Education has allowed charter schools to encourage parents to waive all their rights under the special education laws and to enter into contracts for services for their children with disabilities.

Public Accountability

- Schools Closing Can Mean Taxpayers Lose

When the Los Angeles-based EDUTRAIN charter school failed due to fiscal improprieties late in 1995, California taxpayers lost more than a million dollars in funds that will never be recovered because the charter law does not require such recovery.

- Gift of Public Funds

Arizona's charter law was modified in 1996 to allow charter schools to take ownership of the equipment or buildings they had purchased with public funds, making it more difficult to retrieve public money if a school closed. The founders of one Arizona charter, Citizen 2000, declared bankruptcy when the state board of education threatened to close the school. School founders were indicted by a grand jury with 31 counts of theft, fraud and the misuse of \$179,000 in public funds. Although most of the money was repaid, some lawmakers have called for a revision of the charter law to prevent such transgressions.

- District Schools Re-absorb Charter Students

Recent reports from Michigan and Arizona show that district schools are having to re-absorb students who were either pushed out of charter schools or who were harmed when charter schools were closed due to mismanagement or other administrative problems. Sometimes, they are not promptly reimbursed for those students.

In Lansing, Michigan, early in 1998, the superintendent took a stand against immediately accepting students who were pushed out of a Lansing charter school because they had committed various offences, including assault on school personnel. The superintendent stated that requiring district schools to provide an education for students deemed too dangerous for the charter school allows the charter schools "the ability to exercise a selection process excluding difficult students and dumping them into other public schools." The superintendent reported previously accepting "hundreds of students" who have transferred from charter schools over the last several years.

In Arizona in early 1998, the closure of a charter school for alleged mismanagement forced the Mesa district to accept fifty-one students. Because of the way state payments are made for students, Mesa will not be eligible for funding for these students for the remainder of this school year. The charter for the closed school had been granted by the Window Rock school district located hundreds of miles from Mesa.

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NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

**TESTIMONY
OF THE
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

**ON
CHARTER SCHOOLS**

**PRESENTED BY
BOB CHASE
PRESIDENT**

**BEFORE THE
EARLY CHILDHOOD, YOUTH AND FAMILIES SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE COMMITTEE**

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 16, 1997

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Bob Chase, and I am the President of the National Education Association. NEA represents 2.3 million teachers and other education employees in our nation's public elementary, secondary, vocational, and postsecondary schools. I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you this morning about NEA's Charter School Initiative, which we refer to as CSI, and the impact of the charter school movement on public education.

Let me state from the outset that NEA has had policies in place since 1993 in support of charter schools. NEA believes that charter schools can become a positive vehicle for reform within public schools, depending on how they are developed, funded, structured, and governed.

More than two years ago, NEA introduced the Charter Schools Initiative, one of six major NEA school restructuring projects to which we are devoting significant time and resources. CSI is aimed at creating new charter schools staffed by elementary, middle, and high school teachers who are NEA members and who will study and share the outcomes of this project with the public.

NEA is focusing its charter activity within existing public school frameworks with professional educators serving public schools. We have contracted with a team of researchers from the University of California at Los Angeles that is documenting the start-up operations and will be assessing progress as the schools develop. We are planning the development of pilot projects to ensure the sharing of learnings from these schools with other charter and mainstream schools.

Through CSI, we work with parents, school staff, and community members throughout the country to lend technical assistance in the creation of quality public charter schools. CSI sites are located in five project sites located in Hawaii, California, Connecticut, Colorado, and Arizona. Schools associated with CSI will serve as a source of creative and innovative ideas for NEA and its state affiliates, public policymakers, and educators.

Our sites are diverse, but they are driven by the central themes of student achievement, professional development for teachers, and community involvement. By student achievement, we mean that students will achieve at high levels; assessments will be consistent with the school's purpose; and faculties will be accountable for student learning. Our professional development focus will help to ensure that teachers

can progress as professionals, working with new pedagogical approaches and learning more about school site governance. CSI schools advance community involvement through innovative strategies to encourage the participation of all parents; by encouraging citizens to learn about the school and develop feelings of ownership; and by making the community a resource for the school and vice-versa.

Our CSI sites are:

- Lanikai Charter School, Kailua, HI -- an interdisciplinary, multicultural, and multilingual curriculum.
- San Diego Charter School, San Diego, CA -- a K-12 community-based school scheduled to open in the fall of 1998. The school plans to guarantee its graduates college admission or a career path entry-level job.
- CIVA Charter School, Colorado Springs, CO -- this school model is designed to emphasize Character, Integrity, Vision, and the Arts (CIVA) and to bring the family back into education.
- Integrated Day Charter School, Norwich, CT -- a unique partnership of parents, educators, students, and community is central to this school's developmental approach to learning.

Because NEA's main goal is to learn from this project and share its findings with traditional public schools, we have developed a detailed inquiry plan that will guide the assessment and documentation of the schools. We believe that when charter schools are created along the lines that our members have chosen -- professional educators applying best-practices and teaming with parents and community members - - that they do indeed offer hope for positive changes within our public system as a whole. More detailed information on CSI and individual sites is included as an appendix to this statement.

An Overview

Notwithstanding our involvement in charter schools through CSI, we have ongoing concerns about several aspects of charter schools. NEA is concerned that the charter movement may be attracting some whose intent is not necessarily focused on creating quality public schools.

Certain sectors of Wall Street have begun to make public their strategies for making huge profits from public school operations, including charter schools. Venture capitalists have targeted our public schools as the new money-making marketplace. A

recent Wall Street Journal article noted: “There’s a new strategy in the race to make money managing public schools: the fast-growing charter school movement.” These entrepreneurs see particular potential in charter schools because of their deregulated nature. They employ profit-making strategies that are based on keeping employee salaries as low as possible by hiring uncredentialed and inexperienced people. But are these motives in keeping with what is in the best interests of children, especially when so many of these companies have no record in education? For-profit companies are counting on policy-makers to open the education market and use America’s children as blue chips. Our children deserve better. Within this context of charter laws allowing for-profit operations, we point to two examples showing potential problems:

- The Gaddie family, which once ran a proprietary school shut down by bankruptcy and federal oversight investigators, was granted charters to run several schools in Arizona. The charters were revoked only after a public outcry about the company’s past record.
- The Edison-run Boston Renaissance Charter School has had numerous complaints from parents about below-par classwork and incompetent administration. The parents felt they had no recourse when the school’s board of trustees turned a deaf ear to their complaints.

NEA will continue to oppose the granting of charters to for-profit operations because of what we believe is the inherent conflict between profit-making and educational quality.

Accountability

Accountability to the public should be at the core of any charter school plan as it is with CSI sites. After all, charter schools receive state and local, as well as federal, tax dollars. Yet even as we recognize the importance of setting high standards for student achievement, not all charter laws require charter school programs to conform to state or local academic standards. No law requires reporting of systematic, base-line data on the academic achievement of students before enrolling in the charter school, making it impossible to determine the progress, if any, of these children. Further, charter laws do not require charter school students to take state assessments, thereby making it difficult to compare their achievement with students in other public schools.

A recent report from Minnesota showed that only 56 percent of its charter schools produced an annual program evaluation report last year and that few charter teachers

or parents could describe the key indicators of performance for which their school strives. There needs to be adequate oversight by state departments of education to ensure that charter schools provide the public with data on their progress. The recent federal charter study proved inconclusive in determining whether all charter schools are providing a high standard of education, or whether they have increased student achievement.

Researchers for the Hudson Institute noted in their 1996 report “Charter Schools in Action: What Have We Learned?” that charter laws are “stronger on theory than practice when it comes to accountability and evaluation.”

Equity

NEA has concerns about equity issues for charters. Studies have shown that while charter schools are serving large numbers of minority and low-income students, these students may in fact be in more segregated settings than they were in their traditional schools.

In Minnesota, half of charter schools enroll fewer than 20 percent students of color, while the other half enroll more than 60 percent students of color. The Minnesota

Interim Evaluation on charters notes that “concentrations of students of color and students at risk for school failure are selecting schools that are not funded at the level of schools in the sponsoring school district.” As of last year in Colorado, two-thirds of African-American, Hispanic, and low-income charter students were enrolled in four of the state’s 32 charter schools.

If this pooling pattern continues, we must see to it that charter laws assure an equal distribution of educational opportunities in charter schools, regardless of the community in which they are located. Targeting start-up funds to schools in poor areas may be a way to help overcome this problem. Regardless of whether a public school is a charter or mainstream school, student equity must share bottom-line status with student achievement and learning. These concerns are inextricably linked. Charters, as with any market-based reform, can let equity fall by the wayside without specified accountability and oversight procedures in place.

Special Needs Students

Equity concerns around special needs students in charter schools are particularly key, given that preliminary research shows that many charters are not accepting or

adequately dealing with the needs of special education or non-English-speaking students. Problems have surfaced in several states:

Massachusetts offers several glaring examples. One private company granted a charter in Boston informed parents that only one form of special education was available -- full inclusion. The school urged parents to remove their children if they believe this model would not meet their needs. The Disability Law Center, which litigates special education matters in Massachusetts, has heard from many parents across that state about concerns for their children with disabilities in charter schools. The Center has become concerned that a pattern is developing in Massachusetts with problems in admissions to charter schools and in the delivery of appropriate services for children who are admitted.

A recent survey of charter schools in Arizona showed that only 4 percent of Arizona's charter school students were being served as special education students. Nationwide, that figure is between 10 to 12 percent. A researcher wrote in a recent edition of *Educational Leadership* that "in almost all cases the state boards [in Arizona] were approving charters without knowing how the school would provide special

education.” Like public schools, no charter school should be allowed to deny admission or to dilute services to children with disabilities.

We need to keep these concerns in mind as we move toward the creation of more charter schools across the nation. While charters may offer the potential for positive change, the truth is that we just don’t know yet how well many of the existing ones work.

Federal Involvement

The federal involvement in charter schools began with a new grant program enacted in 1994 as part of the Improving America’s Schools Act, that provides start-up funds to public charter schools. The appropriation for this program has grown significantly over its short lifespan. But we do not have detailed information of how individual charter schools are raising student achievement, providing equitable access and services, and informing other public schools about positive reforms and innovations. The U.S. Department of Education and Congress can take a lead in pressing for accountability and quality.

Some in this committee have expressed concerns that a few charter schools are not receiving their fair share of federal categorical grant funds. While these concerns should be investigated, it is important at the same time to determine if the charter schools are in fact complying with the letter and the spirit of those federally targeted programs.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you again for this opportunity to present NEA's views on charter schools and to detail our Charter Schools Initiative. Charter schools will no doubt remain on the policy agendas of our states and the federal government for some time to come. We believe it is important that policy-makers continue to monitor them so that we may be able to retain the best of what they have to offer our public education system.

National Education Association

Charter Schools Initiative: A Joint Project of NEA's

National Center for Innovation and Center for the Advancement of Public Education

CHARTER SCHOOLS INITIATIVE (CSI) SITE DESCRIPTIONS

September 1997

NEA launched its Charter Schools Initiative (CSI) in 1995 to assist members interested in creating new public schools, and to document and assess what can be learned when educators undertake this task. To date, the project is working with sites on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, San Diego, California, Phoenix, Arizona, Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Norwich, Connecticut. NEA members in these locations, working in conjunction with community members and in some instances with local universities, are creating schools which differ in form and purpose, but which have several common elements. They are:

- designed to promote high levels of achievement for all students, including those with disabilities or those needing special education services;
- structured to promote professional development opportunities for school staff,
- developed in conjunction with community stakeholders.

NEA and its state and local affiliates are providing technical assistance to these project sites. This assistance ranges from consulting on effective community outreach techniques; pedagogy and methodology; fiscal and budgetary matters; employee relations issues, and governance questions.

NEA has hired a team of researchers from the Graduate School of Education at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) under the direction of Dr. Amy Stuart Wells. The researchers have been documenting the planning, design and start-up activities at each sites. They also will be assessing progress at the schools.

Brief overviews of each project site follow.

The BRAVO Academy

Phoenix, AZ

The BRAVO Academy (Boldly Reaching out the Adolescents Through Viable Opportunities) is a new-start charter school. It is slated to begin operations in 1998-99. The Academy is a collaborative venture between Arizona State University, the Phoenix Union High School District, Bank of America, and the Arizona Education Association.

The school will enroll approximately 200 students, grades 7-9. BRAVO's special focus will be creating a successful middle school transition for students. The school will draw its enrollment from the inner-city where students who transition from elementary to high school often are not successful. As many as 35% drop out of school between the 8th or 9th grade.

The school's academic program will integrate core subjects with life skills. In this way, students will experience learning that reaches beyond classroom walls (e.g., school-to-work, community service, civic participation). In addition, the BRAVO Academy will provide students with social and emotional support. Students also will explore health, nutrition, and physical development in a non-traditional program delivered through business partnerships and satellite learning.

Because the charter school will serve an inner-city, high-poverty student population, the school will work to involve students' families in school life. The school's philosophy is that all students can transition successfully to high school, especially if their families are part of the educational process and are supported by the school.

Through a partnership with Arizona State University, the school will operate as a professional development school. This will afford the staff the opportunity to promote urban renewal through the charter school, and through it, to other public schools. The school will provide a training ground for preservice teacher candidates, teaching interns, and practicing teachers in surrounding districts. This professional development environment will offer opportunities to recruit teachers to urban settings, reach out to community colleges, and expand opportunities for future teacher programs at the high school level.

The school will be staffed by certified teachers who are employees of the school. Arizona does not have a collective bargaining law but it has state-mandated, site-based decision making. In many schools, the scope and type of decisions they make are quite limited. BRAVO will expand the scope of school-based decision making. Currently it is exploring ways for parents and community members to participate in meaningful ways in developing employee contracts and in establishing an operational design for the school.

BRAVO is recruiting experienced staff members with expertise in peer coaching/ mentoring who are interested in seeking certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

CIVA Charter School Colorado Springs, CO Site

The CIVA Charter School opened in September 1997. The school's charter was developed by the Colorado Springs Education Association in collaboration with the Colorado Education Association. The local sponsor is Colorado Springs District Eleven.

Grounded in a fundamental belief that every student is capable of high-quality work, the CIVA School will develop competencies and skills that enable students to pursue any higher education or career path. More specifically, it will develop rigorous standards for all students, encourage teachers to use diverse teaching methods to meet the needs of every student, ensure that students achieve the state goal of 95% attendance, and meet or exceed the state's objective of a 90% graduation rate.

Students will study traditional academic subjects (e.g., English, math, history, and social studies), but teachers will team teach so students examine issues and topics across traditional subject lines. Students will create products that demonstrate their understanding and ability to apply what they have learned in real world situations. They will develop projects, solve problems as part of a group, demonstrate their findings, and exhibit their work. In addition, all students will engage in the arts, including music, writing, design and architecture, the fine arts and crafts, and other performing arts.

The framework for school operation requires students, families, and teachers to make a commitment to give their best effort in all areas of the program. Working together, they will set academic goals for each student as well as goals in five areas viewed as key to each student's development (the courage to accept challenges, the integrity to be oneself, concern for others, curiosity to explore life and meaning, and leadership in making the school and community work). In addition, at least one family member must commit to CIVA School precepts. This involves writing a statement of character goals and working to achieve them; participating in family weekends, parent seminars, retreats with students and school staff, and helping the school reach out to other CIVA parents. The school's Family Learning Center will coordinate families' participation.

To track and report progress, the school will use an assessment system that combines the best features of student- and school-designed assessments with district and state assessments. Working with the local school district's planning, evaluation, and measurement department, the CIVA School plans to create a framework for gathering achievement data that is common across district schools, can be easily understood, and has credibility within and outside the district and community.

Staffed by teachers who are employees of the local school district, the CIVA School will operate under a number of waivers from state rules and regulations as well as agreements concerning language in the teacher contract. These waivers and agreements will provide the school with latitude in personnel evaluation, curriculum, school calendar, length of school day, and student grading.

Integrated Day Charter School Norwich, CT

The Integrated Day Charter School, a newly created K-6 school, opened its doors in September 1997, beginning with the earliest grades. The charter school is supported by the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) and sponsored by the Connecticut State Board of Education. Its founders represent a diverse group of teachers, parents, and community members.

A popular alternative in the Norwich area, as the school's waiting list for fall admissions attests, the Integrated Day Charter School is providing a developmentally appropriate program for its students. Students will pursue their studies inside and outside the classroom; work on long-term projects that span subject areas; become involved in the school and broader communities; and learn skills needed to work effectively with others.

While the charter school's curriculum will adhere closely to the local school district's curriculum, instructional and delivery methods differ dramatically from district schools. For example, students will be organized into family units consisting of mixed-age classes (i.e., kindergarten, grades 1 and 2, grades 3 and 4, and grades 5 and 6). Beginning in kindergarten, students will conduct personal research and present information they have gathered to their peers; manage their time and make choices about a series of tasks they are expected to complete; and take part in community service projects. And although narrative report cards will be used in place of traditional grades, students will be expected to meet the school district's grade-level language and mathematics standards.

To allow time for all that it intends to accomplish, Integrated Day will extend each school day by one hour. Instruction will take place in a variety of forms, including large and small groups individualized instruction and one-to-one tutoring. Art, music, physical education, foreign language instruction, technology exploration, career awareness programs, and musical presentations will be held the last period of the day. Field trips and all tutorials for students needing extra support will take place after the extended school day.

A key goal of Integrated Day is to form an alliance among students, their families, and the school. Families will be involved in establishing academic and non-academic goals for their children, and they will be expected to stay actively involved in their children's education. In fact, parents are strongly encouraged to volunteer time to the Integrated Day Program. Recognizing that many parents work outside the home, volunteer tasks are not limited to in-class support, but include activities parents can complete after-school hours and at home to support their children.

Staffed by teachers who will be employees of the charter school, Integrated Day will follow the policies outlined in the local teacher contract.

Ixcalli Charter School San Diego, CA

The Ixcalli Charter School (hearth in the Incan language) will open during the 1997-98 school year. The charter for this newly created school was developed by the San Diego Teachers Association (SDTA) in collaboration with the College of Education, San Diego State University (SDSU). The school is sponsored by the San Diego Unified School District.

Ixcalli will enroll students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, beginning with students in grades 6-8 in its first year of operation. The schools will primarily serve students within the boundaries of the Crawford High School attendance area, but it is open to all students in the San Diego Unified School District. Ixcalli's students will mirror the diversity of the district's students in terms of language, culture, and socioeconomic status.

The school's goal is to: (1) qualify graduates for entry into post-secondary institutions without the need for remedial courses; or (2) provide graduates with opportunities for an occupation with career potential. To accomplish this goal, Ixcalli will implement the nine principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, establish a compact of academic goals for each student, and match each student with a mentoring adult who provides academic support and encouragement.

Ixcalli has structured its curriculum around six academic levels of student study covering approximately twelve years and culminating in a Senior Institute. To be promoted from one level to the next, students must complete an exhibition process, a series of performances covering several weeks that include demonstration of district performance standards in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, applied learning, and a study area of the student's choice. The six exhibition levels follow a developmental sequence; they are not age-specific. Students may take more than one "school year" to pass a level. Teachers primarily work with students at one level preparing them to meet the exhibition criteria at that level. Promotion from the school's Senior Institute requires successful completion of both college level placement exams and senior exhibitions.

Prior to admission at Ixcalli, students, parents (or mentoring adult), and a school representative will sign a compact outlining responsibilities and academic goals for all parties. Families also will play a key role in school governance. To date, they have played a major role in designing the charter school.

In addition, Ixcalli is a Professional Development School in collaboration with the SDSU College of Education. The school will take responsibility for preparing interested teachers for certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, conducting school-based research with SDSU faculty, and modeling research-based professional practices for other district activities. The charter school staff operate within the parameters of the SDTA-SDUSD agreement, with waivers related to personal evaluation, school calendar, and academic freedom.

Lanikai Charter School Lanikai, HI

At the center of Lanikai's philosophy is the school motto "Ka'ohao", which means "joining together" in Hawaiian. A pre-existing school of 360 students in grades k to 6 that converted to charter status in spring 1996, the Lanikai Charter School is part of the Hawaii State Department of Education. Its charter was developed in conjunction with the Hawaii State Teachers Association.

In keeping with its motto, the school offers students a curriculum that is interdisciplinary, as well as intercultural and interlingual. In addition to weaving together academic subject areas with the arts, science, and the humanities, Lanikai plans to reformulate the school's schedule to integrate foreign languages into the regular curriculum. Children will study Spanish, Japanese, French, or Hawaiian in multi-month blocks that promote an understanding of culture as well as foreign language proficiency.

Charter status has given the school the freedom to make many changes. For example, Lanikai recently instituted multi-age classrooms, a Big Brother/Big Sister program in which upper-grade students support primary-grade students, and a visiting mentor program. Mentors visit the school regularly to instruct students in their particular areas of expertise. Mentors also direct the children in community-based projects.

Lanikai is transforming itself from a mainstream public school to a charter school by using Total Quality Learning (TQL) Principles, especially TQL's emphasis on, and practical techniques for, continuous improvement. Each classroom, for example, is encouraged to have a class purpose and a TQL checklist to which students can refer daily.

Although Lanikai is using, and will continue to refine, a wide variety of student assessment tools, it also will administer state-required assessments so the performance of its students can be compared to students in other public schools. Alternative assessment tools used by the school include student portfolios, individual and group projects, student reflection and self-evaluation, teacher observations, and peer assessment.

The school also will use the state's content standards to guide curriculum. Lanikai will implement these standards through the Wilhelm Schole model which provides the conceptual framework for the school's interdisciplinary curriculum.

Teachers at Lanikai will continue to be governed by the collective bargaining agreement, except that teachers who subscribe to the school's philosophy are given preference in the hiring process. The school will also continue to hire its own principal.

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