

1997-98 SESSION
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

Committee Name:

Senate Committee on
Education (SC-Ed)

Sample:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt01a
- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt01b
- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt02

➤ Appointments ... Appt

➤ **

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

➤ **

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH

➤ **

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ **

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

➤ **

➤ Hearing Records ... HR

➤ **

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ 97hrSC-Ed_Misc_pt06

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ **

CHARTER SCHOOLS IN WISCONSIN



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Wisconsin's Charter School Law As amended October, 1997

118.40 Charter Schools. (1) NOTICE TO STATE SUPERINTENDENT. Whenever a school board intends to establish a charter school, it shall notify the state superintendent of its intention. Whenever one of the entities under sub. (2r)(b) intends to establish a charter school, it shall notify the state superintendent of its intention by February 1 of the previous school years. A notice under this subsection shall include a description of the proposed school.

(1m) PETITION. (a) A written petition requesting the school board to establish a charter school under this section may be filed with the school district clerk. The petition shall be signed by at least 10% of the teachers employed by the school district or by at least 50% of the teachers employed at one school of the school district.

(b) The petition shall include all of the following:

1. The name of the person who is seeking to establish the charter school.
2. The name of the person who will be in charge of the charter school and the manner in which administrative services will be provided.
3. A description of the educational program of the school.
4. The methods the school will use to enable pupils to attain the educational goals under s.118.01.
5. The method by which pupil progress in attaining the educational goals under 118.01 will be measured.
6. The governance structure of the school, including the method to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement.
7. Subject to ~~sub. (7) (a) and (am)~~ and ss. 118.19 (1) and 121.02(1) (a) 2., the qualifications that must be met by the individuals to be employed in the school.
8. The procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and safety of the pupils.
9. The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the school district population.
10. The requirements for admission to the school.
11. The manner in which annual audits of the financial and programmatic operations of the school will be performed.
12. The procedures for disciplining pupils.
13. The public school alternative for pupils who reside in the school district and do not wish to attend or are not admitted to the charter school.
14. A description of the school facilities and the types and limits of the liability insurance that the school will carry.
15. The effect of the establishment of the charter school on the liability of the school district.

(2) PUBLIC HEARING; GRANTING OF PETITION. (a) Within 30 days after receiving a petition under sub. (1m) the school board shall hold a public hearing on the petition. At the hearing, the school board shall consider the level of employe and parental support for the establishment of the charter school described in the petition. After the hearing, the school board may grant the petition.

(b) A school board may grant a petition that would result in the conversion of all of the public schools in the school district to charter schools if all of the following apply:

1. At least 50% of the teachers employed by the school district sign the petition.
2. The school board provides alternative public school attendance arrangements for pupils who do not wish to attend or are not admitted to a charter school.

(c) The school board of the school district operating under ch. 119 shall either grant or deny the petition within 30 days after the public hearing. If the school board of the

sec. 990.01 (26) "Person" includes all partnerships, associations and bodies politic and corporate.

Amend by substituting "a person" for "an individual or group." sec. 990.01 (26) defines "person".

school district operating under ch. 119 denies a petition, the person seeking to establish the charter school may, within 30 days after the denial, appeal the denial to the department. The department shall issue a decision within 30 days after receiving the appeal. The department's decision is final and not subject to judicial review under ch. 227.

(2m) **SCHOOL BOARD INITIATIVE.** (a) A school board may on its own initiative contract with ~~an individual or group~~^{a person} to operate a school as a charter school. The contract shall include all of the provisions specified under sub. (1m) (b) and may include other provisions agreed to by the parties.

(2r) **OTHER INITIATIVES** (a) In this subsection:

1. "Membership" has the meaning given in s. 121.004 (5).
2. "Shared cost per member" means the shared cost under s. 121.07 (6) (a) divided by the school district's membership.

(b) The common council of the city of Milwaukee, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee area technical college district board may establish by charter and operate a charter school or, on behalf of their respective entities, may initiate a contract with an individual or group to operate a school as a charter school. A charter shall include all of the provisions specified under sub. (1m) (b) 3. to 14. A contract shall include all of the provisions specified under sub. (1m) (b) 1. to 14. and shall specify the effect of the establishment of the charter school on the liability of the contracting entity under this paragraph. The contract may include other provisions agreed to by the parties. The chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee may not establish or enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school under this paragraph without the approval of the board of regents of the University of Wisconsin System.

(c) An entity under par. (b) may not establish or enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located outside of the school district operating under ch. 119. A pupil residing within the school district operating under ch. 119 may attend a charter school established under this subsection only if one of the following applies:

1. In the previous school year, the pupil was enrolled in the school district operating under ch. 119.
2. In the previous school year, the pupil was attending a private school under s. 119.23.
3. In the previous school years, the pupil was enrolled in grades kindergarten to 3 in a private school located in the city of Milwaukee other than under s. 119.23.
4. In the previous school year, the pupil was not enrolled in school.
5. In the previous school years, the pupil was enrolled in a charter school under this subsection.

(d) The chartering or contracting entity under par. (b) shall do all of the following:

1. Ensure that all instructional staff of charter schools under this subsection hold a license or permit to teach issued by the department.
2. Administer the examinations under ss. 118.30 (1m) and 121.02 (1) (r) to pupils enrolled in charter schools under this subsection.

(e) From the appropriation under s. 20.255 (2) (fm), the department shall pay to the operator of the charter school an amount equal to the shared cost per member in the previous school year of the school district operating under ch. 119 multiplied by the number of pupils attending the charter school. The department shall pay 25% of the total amount in September, 25% in December, 25% in February and 25% in June. The department shall send the check to the operator of the charter school.

(f) The department shall annually reduce the aid paid under s. 121.08 to the board of a school district operating under ch. 119 by an amount equal to the shared cost per member in the previous school years of the school district operating under ch. 119 multiplied by the number of pupils attending charter schools under this subsection.

(g) The department shall ensure that aid paid to other school district under s. 121.08 is neither reduced nor increased as a result of the payments under par. (e) or the

Add following: ", and if one or more school boards enter into an agreement with the board of control of a CESA to establish a charter school, the charter school shall be located within the boundaries of the CESA.

reduction in aid to the board under par. (f) and that the amount of the aid reduction under par. (f) lapses to the general fund.

(3) CONTRACT. (a) If the school board grants the petition under sub. (2), the school board shall contract with the person named in the petition under sub. (1m) (b) 1. to operate the school as a charter school under this section. The contract shall include all of the provisions specified in the petition and may include other provisions agreed to by the parties.

(b) A contract under par. (a) or under subs. (2m) or (2r) may be for any term not exceeding 5 school years and may be renewed for one or more terms not exceeding 5 school years. The contract shall specify the amount to be paid to the charter school during each school year of the contract.

(c) A school board may not enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located outside the school district, except that if two or more school boards enter into an agreement under s. 66.30 to establish a charter school, the charter school shall be located within one of the school districts. A school board, other than the school board of the school district operating under ch. 119, may not enter into a contract that would result in the conversion of a private school to a charter school.

(d) A school board or an entity under s. 118.40 (2) (b) shall give preference in awarding contracts for the operation of charter schools to those charter schools that serve children at risk, as defined in s. 118.153 (1) (a).

(4) CHARTER SCHOOL DUTIES AND RESTRICTIONS. (a) Duties. A charter school shall do all of the following:

1. If the charter school replaces a public school in whole or in part, give preference in admission to any pupil who resides within the attendance area or former attendance area of the public school.

2. Be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices and all other operations.

(b) Restrictions. A charter school may not be any of the following:

1. Charge tuition.

2. Discriminate in admission or deny participation in any program or activity on the basis of a person's sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability.

(5) CHARTER REVOCATION. A charter may be revoked by the school board or the entity under sub. (2r) (b) that contracted with the charter school if the school board or, if applicable, the entity under sub. (2r) (b) finds that any of the following occurred:

(a) The charter school violated its contract with the school board or the entity under sub (2r) (b).

(b) The pupils enrolled in the charter school failed to make sufficient progress toward attaining the educational goals under s. 118.01.

(c) The charter school failed to comply with generally accepted accounting standards of fiscal management.

(d) The charter school violated this section.

(6) PROGRAM VOLUNTARY. No pupil may be required to attend a charter school without his or her approval, if the pupil is an adult, or the approval of his or her parents or legal guardian, if the pupil is a minor.

(7) LEGAL STATUS: APPLICABILITY OF SCHOOL LAWS. (a) Except as provided in par. (am), a charter school is an instrumentality of the school district in which it is located and the school board of that school district shall employ all personnel for the charter school.

(am) 1. Except as provided in subs. 2. and 3., if a charter school is established under sub. (2m) and located in the school district operating under ch. 119, the school board of that school district shall determine whether or not the charter school is an instrumentality of the school district. If the school board determines that a charter school is an

instrumentality of the school district, the school board shall employ all personnel for the charter school. If the school board determines that a charter school is not an instrumentality of the school district, the school board may not employ any personnel for the charter school.

2. A charter school established under sub. (2r) or a private school located in the school district operating under ch. 119 that is converted to a charter school is not an instrumentality of the school district operating under ch. 119 and the school board of that school district may not employ any personnel for the charter school.

3. Notwithstanding subd. 2., if the city of Milwaukee contracts with an individual or group operating for profit to operate a school as a charter school, the charter school is an instrumentality of the school district operating under ch. 119 and the board of the school district operating under ch. 119 shall employ all personnel for the charter school.

(ar) Nothing in this subsection affects the rights of personnel of a charter school that is an instrumentality of the school district in which it is located to engage in collective bargaining pursuant to subch. IV of ch. 111.

(b) Except as otherwise explicitly provided, chs. 115 to 121 do not apply to charter schools.

(8) AUDIT. The joint legislative audit committee may direct the legislative audit bureau to perform a financial and performance evaluation audit of the charter school program under this section. The legislative audit bureau shall file its report as provided under s. 13.94 (1) (b) by January 1, 2000.

Section 116.032 (1), relating to CESA powers, amended to include provision that a CESA board of control may contract with one or more school boards to operate a charter school.

Section 10. Initial Applicability. (1) The treatment of section 118.40 (7) (a) of the statutes first applies to the legal status of charter schools that are established on the effective date of this subsection.

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
1997-99 LEGISLATIVE SESSION
REQUEST FOR STATUTORY LANGUAGE CHANGE**

TITLE: CESA Authority to Establish Charter Schools

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT LAW AND PROBLEM:

In the spring of 1996, the state superintendent appointed a task force on expulsion to respond to concerns that he heard during a series of educational forums held throughout the state in 1995 and 1996. The charge to the task force was to:

- Review the current trends of Wisconsin public school districts in the area of expulsion.
- Review recent changes in Wisconsin statutes and administrative rules in the area of expulsion.
- Make recommendations to the state superintendent regarding action to be taken in the form of legislative initiative, department initiative, and local school district initiative. Areas to be addressed include, but are not limited to: use of expulsion as a disciplinary measure; length of expulsion periods; conditions of return to school by expelled students; services provided by schools during the period of expulsion; and alternatives to, or prevention of expulsion.

The task force made a number of recommendations under the headings of: prevention; boundaries/parameters; post expulsion services; and collaboration/community partnerships. One of the recommendations related to post-expulsion services is that CESAs should be allowed to operate alternative schools or charter schools.

RECOMMENDATION:

The department agrees with the recommendation of the task force and proposes that CESAs be permitted to operate charter schools, under a charter from a school district or districts within the CESA. The proposal to open a charter school may be initiated by a school district, by a group of school districts, by a CESA, or by a group of parents, teachers, or others who live within the CESA boundaries. Generally, the CESA charter school would meet the same requirements as a school district charter school, although some provisions would be specific to CESAs, as follows:

- General funding of the charter school would be established by a contract with the CESA and the charter district or districts.
- Students who live in non-chartering districts within the CESA and students who live outside the CESA may attend the charter school if the student meets the entrance requirements and if space is available after preference is given to students who live in the school district or districts which grant the charter. Funding for the students from the chartering district or districts would be determined by the contract. The tuition for students who are residents of non-chartering districts or who live in other CESAs would be paid by the school district of residence and the amount of tuition would be determined by the CESA.
- Transportation to the charter school must be paid by the school district of residence, if the student is from a chartering district. If the student is from a non-chartering district or if the student resides in another CESA, the school district of residence must provide or pay for transportation if the student is attending the program as part of an individualized plan for a child eligible for services at a regional service center. Otherwise, the parent is responsible for transportation, although the district of residence may provide the transportation.
- Employees of the charter school would be employees of the CESA and would be required to be licensed in the same manner as employees of school district charter schools.
- A CESA may, on its own initiative, apply for any state, federal or private charter school planning and/or implementation grants.
- The charter school operated by the CESA may apply for any state, federal or private categorical aids or grants which a school district-operated charter school may apply for.

DRAFTING INSTRUCTIONS:

Amend charter school legislation to permit CESAs to operate charter schools, as described above.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 1997

CONTACT PERSON(S):

Mary Jo Cleaver, Policy and Budget, (608) 267-9101
Pauli Nikolay, Assistant State Superintendent, Learning Support: Instructional Services, (608) 266-3361

CHARTING A NEW COURSE

PARENTS AND EDUCATORS LOOK AT CHARTER SCHOOLS IN WISCONSIN

by Kathryn Derene

Federal and state regulations often stand in the way of educational innovation. Charter schools are one way local school districts can break through those restrictions. Parents, educators, school board members, and administrators recently met at Wingspread to consider the possibilities.

Charter schools in Verona, Wis., population 5,992, are simply a matter of choice.

More choice for parents in selecting their child's school; more choice for teachers in selecting appropriate classroom materials and teaching strategies; and more choice for students in how they approach learning.

"We believe that parents should have more choices," says Verona School District superintendent Bob

Gilpatrick. The district is working toward offering "more and more choice," he says, not out of panic that families will abandon the school district, but because choice is likely to help create better schools. Research shows, Gilpatrick says, that "schools that parents believe in create higher outcomes."

Verona recently opened its first charter school, developed by June Coleman, a Verona parent. A second charter school, built around

the "core knowledge" principles of E.D. Hirsch, has also been proposed. The community also is discussing a third charter opportunity to create a multicultural multi-service elementary school.

"In the private sector, we automatically think that we have a choice," says Verona School Board member Patrick Sweeney, "but we don't seem to expect choice in public education." That is changing, however.

Howard Gardner and other researchers have demonstrated that all children do not learn in the same way. Scientific research on how the brain learns has coincided with a growing public perception that many schools are failing. This has intensified the demand among policymakers and parents for more school choice. Charter schools are one way to offer more choices.

What are charter schools? They are public schools that are exempt from many of the state laws and regulations that govern other public schools. Educators and school board members throughout the United States have complained that excessive state regulations restrict their ability to be innovative and to create the educational programs that best suit the needs of their community. While most charter schools are required to meet learning outcomes, or district goals for student achievement, how, where, and when those goals are met is usually left up to the organizers.

Charter school activists are finding that creating a school from scratch is no easy task. A



Learning is as individualistic as these students from La Crosse, Wis., and charter schools offer parents alternative approaches to fit the diverse ways in which children learn

curriculum must be developed, a management structure must be created, a facility and start-up funds have to be found, and an endless list of questions answered: What assessments will be used to evaluate student performance? How will the budget be determined? What should be the relationship between the charter school and the district? What role can the community play in developing a charter school?

Recently 35 charter school activists from across Wisconsin gathered at Wingspread to grapple with some of these questions and to share success stories. Charter schools are currently up and running in five Wisconsin school districts. The first to open was the TEAMS charter school in Stevens Point. Housed within the Stevens Point Area High School, TEAMS (for Teachers Educating and Mentoring Students), offers team teaching, an integrated curriculum, mentoring, community service, and the use of technology throughout the curriculum.

Madison has created two charter schools: Madison Middle School 2000 and an umbrella program for middle- and high-school students who are at risk of dropping out of school. MMS 2000 is managed by a principal and committees made up of parents, students, teachers, and community members. The school focuses on integrated learning in a multicultural setting.

Beaver Dam's charter school opened in December 1994, serving 100 at-risk middle- and high-school students. It is moving toward a fully integrated curriculum that emphasizes project-based learning. The school is located in a former nursing home, which the students helped to renovate.

As other districts have joined the growing waiting list of potential charter school districts, and after lobbying by individuals and groups such as the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB), Wisconsin's charter school law has been modified

ROOTED IN KIDS



Excerpt of comments made at Wingspread by Howard Fuller, former superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools and currently distinguished professor of education and director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University.

I want to begin by sharing with you something that Willard Daggett [of the International Center for Leadership in Education] says: "We must love our children's hopes and dreams and prayers more than we love the institutional heritage of the school system."

It seems to me that what we have to do is find a way to redefine what is public. [Education philosopher] John Dewey struggled with this notion and one of the things he warned against was the great mistake we are making

so that any district in the state can create as many charter schools as it wants. This change, among others, has sparked new interest in charter schools and several districts have begun discussions with their communities about what kinds of innovative schools they might create.

That is why the Wingspread conference was so important, according to the WASB's Senn Brown. By bringing together charter school newcomers with veterans who have already gone through the process, the conference "has made a contribution to the unfolding of

when we turn learning over to the schools exclusively. We have got to create ways to reconnect our kids to the communities that they're from. One of the things the charter movement allows us to do is to begin to talk about a variety of different models for creating learning opportunities for kids so they can be a part of this process of the continuance of democracy.

I frankly believe that a lot of the opposition to charter schools has nothing to do with kids and what is in their best interest. What it has to do with is what is the best interest of the adults who control the existing system. I believed that as superintendent, I said that as a superintendent, and I still believe it. Every day we deal with issues that have to do with the comfort, and ongoing interests—material or otherwise—of adults. Only secondarily do we begin to talk about kids.

If the charter school movement is going to mean anything, it has to be rooted in the needs and interests of the kids and their families, in what is in the public interest, and in the larger issue of democracy.

charter schools—and more opportunities for alternative learning—across Wisconsin," Brown said.

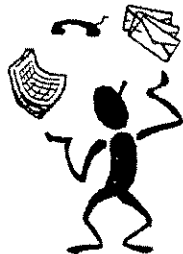
For more information about charter schools in Wisconsin, contact Kathleen Derene, information services coordinator for WASB at 122 W. Washington Avenue, Suite 500, Madison, Wis. 53703, tel. 608 257 2622, fax: 257 8380.

Charter Schools in Wisconsin was sponsored by the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University, the Education Commission of the States, and The Johnson Foundation

March 1996 Conference

WI Charter School Resource Center

Marquette University
Institute for the Transformation of Learning
Schroeder Health Complex, 146
P.O. Box 1881
Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881



October 31, 1997

Dear Charter School Friends:

What makes a charter school a *charter school*? The standard paragraph popping up in newspapers and magazines to describe charter schools goes something like this:

“Charter schools are independent public schools freed from (burdensome) regulations in exchange for accountability for results.”

There are many things that interfere with the public’s ability to understand this as central to the charter school concept. Some state laws insist on saying that charter schools are places for innovation or that they are small experiments meant to test ideas before using them in the regular school. Other threats include efforts to define charter schools by the curriculum they provide or the students they serve. “Aren’t charter schools for at-risk kids?” you’ll hear people ask.

However nothing is more threatening to the charter school concept than a lack of accountability for results. A recent “Policy Brief” published by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education found, “The accountability requirements of the agencies sponsoring the charter schools in the three states studied, . . . were relatively weak. The states required assessment information but rarely required clear performance standards or established consequences. Sponsoring agencies have focused to date more on standards of fiscal management and, to a lesser degree, on general probity and scandal avoidance than on reasonable progress toward schools’ meeting their own student goals.”

As people involved in the charter school movement, we need to hold *ourselves* accountable and keep the integrity of the charter school idea intact. If we don’t, the charter school will be just one more reform effort that failed our children.

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WISCONSIN CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICTS

School District	Charter School	
Thomas Scullen District Administrator Appleton Area School District P. O. Box 2019 Appleton WI 54913-2019 414-832-6126	Appleton Central Alternative School 120 East Harris Street Appleton, WI 54913 LuAnn Coenen (920)832-6136	
Richard Fitzpatrick District Administrator Beaver Dam School District 705 McKinley Street Beaver Dam, WI 53916 (414)885-7300	Beaver Dam Charter School 400 East Burnett Street Beaver Dam, WI 53916 Don Smith (920)885-7423	
Edward Van Ravenstein District Administrator Deerfield Community School District 300 Simonson Boulevard Deerfield, WI 53531-0288 (608)764-8261	Deerfield Alternative High School 300 Simonson Boulevard Deerfield, WI 53531-0288 Barb Noll (608)764-5431	
Lee Hansen District Administrator Eau Claire Area School District 500 Main Street Eau Claire, WI 54701-3770 (715)839-6071	McKinley Charter School 500 Main Street Eau Claire, WI 54701-3770 Holly Hart (715)839-2831	
Michael Johnson District Administrator Kenosha School District P. O. Box 340 Kenosha, WI 53141 (414)653-6320	Paideia Charter School Academy P. O. Box 0929 Kenosha, WI 53141-0929 Ellen Becker (414)554-8605	The Brompton School 1011 Washington Road Kenosha, WI 53140 Patricia Jones (414)652-1339
Richard Swantz District Administrator School District of La Crosse 807 East Avenue South La Crosse, WI 54601 (608)789-7628	School of Technology and Arts 1307 Hayes Street La Crosse, WI 54603 Tarry Hall (608)789-7760	School of Technology and Arts II 1900 Denton Avenue La Crosse, WI 54601 Glen Jenkins (608)789-7670
Douglas Walker District Administrator Ladysmith-Hawkins School District 1700 Edgewood Avenue East Ladysmith, WI 54848 (715)532-5277	Ladysmith Evening Alternative School 1700 Edgewood Avenue East Ladysmith, WI 54848 Debra Morrissey (715)532-5531	
Cheryl Wilhoyte District Administrator Madison Metropolitan Schools 545 W. Dayton Street Madison, WI 53703 (608)266-6235	Affiliated Alternatives 15 S. Brearly Street Madison, WI 53703 Cal Stone (608)266-6006	James Wright Middle School 1717 Fish Hatchery Road Madison, WI 53713 Carolyn Stanford-Taylor (608)267-1144

<p>Steve Koch District Administrator Middleton-Cross Plains Area Schools 7106 South Avenue Middleton, WI 53562 (608)828-1600</p>	<p>Middleton Alternative Senior High 2417 Parmenter Street Middleton, WI 53562</p> <p>Jill Brandl (608)828-1620</p>	
<p>Alan Brown District Administrator Milwaukee Public Schools P. O. Box 2181 Milwaukee, WI 53201-2181 (414)475-8001</p>	<p>Highland Community School 2004 W. Highland Blvd. Milwaukee, WI 53233</p> <p>Meribeth Pinkerton (414)342-1412</p>	
<p>Brad Gillaspie District Administrator North Crawford School District P. O. Box 68 Gays Mills, WI 54631 (608)735-4318</p>	<p>Kickapoo River Institute Route 2 Gays Mills, WI 54631</p> <p>James Lewicki (608)476-2245</p>	
<p>Emery Babcock District Administrator Stevens Point Area School District 1900 Polk Street Stevens Point, WI 54481 (715)345-5444</p>	<p>TEAMS 1900 Polk Street Stevens Point, WI 54481</p> <p>Kendra Allen (715)345-5400</p>	
<p>Robert Gilpatrick District Administrator Verona School District 700 N. Main Street Verona, WI 53593 (608)845-6451</p>	<p>Core Knowledge Charter School 5890 Lacy Road Fitchburg, WI 53711</p> <p>Christine Uelman (608)278-0755</p>	<p>New Century School 420 Church Street Verona, WI 53593</p> <p>June Coleman (608)845-2574</p>

WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL

OCTOBER 13, 1997

MADISON, WISCONSIN

The Kickapoo River Institute builds its curriculum around the environment

By Ron Seely

Environment reporter

GAYS MILLS— Out here, the landscape works its way inside you. The hills rise all around like green walls, and the crooked Kickapoo River winds through the valleys and towns touching everything and everyone with its waters and its scent and, in the spring, its mud.

Sitting inside an old building with the doors thrown open to a warm fall day, you can see nothing but green outside and you can sense the closeness of the wooded hillsides and smell the river. These are things the people here live with, like city people live with sidewalks and curbs.

So much a part of life is this landscape in the Kickapoo Hills that it is now at the heart of a new

school — one of the state's first rural charter schools and the first with its curriculum built entirely around the environment.

The Kickapoo River Institute is a few miles south of Gays Mills, a pleasant stroll from the banks of the Kickapoo in southwestern Wisconsin. It's housed in the old Haney School, once a one-room school but updated in past years with cinder block additions.

The Institute's creator and now its coordinator and primary teacher as well as dishwasher and bus driver is James Lewicki, who has taught in the North Crawford School District for several years but happily took over the task last year of

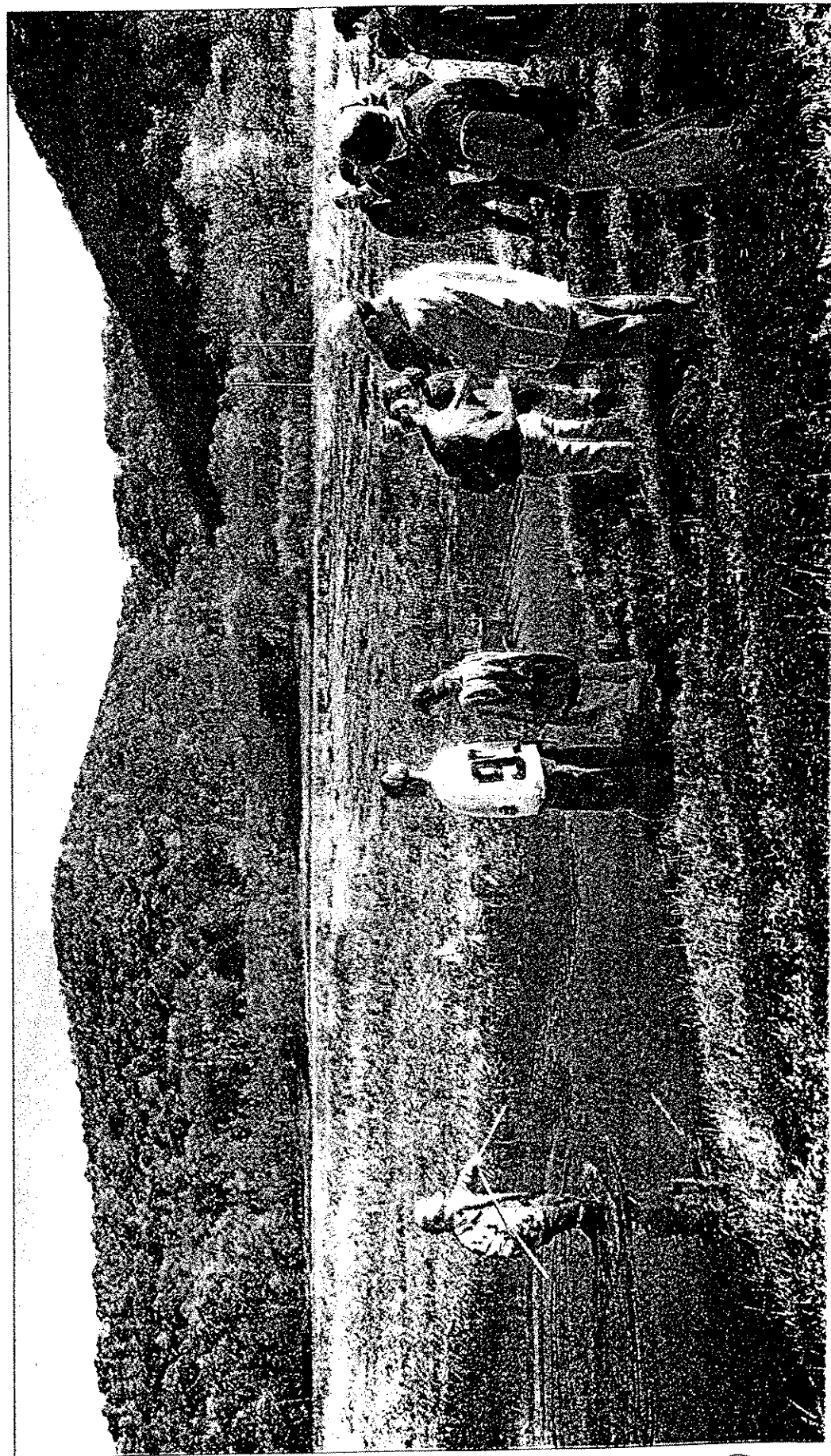
Please see **KICKAPOO**, Page 3A



Top left: As the sun burns through the mist early Friday morning, students wend their way to a field study site in the Kickapoo River Valley. **Above:** Dan Chroninger, a soil conservation technician, teaches students from the Kickapoo River Institute. **Left:** Student Sandi Schwert sketches the scene.

FOCUS

Students explore open-air classroom



Kickapoo

Continued from Page 1A

working up a plan for a charter school for the district and three other neighboring districts. He is assisted by Sylvia Atteinson, a teacher who is as excited about the school as Lewicki is.

Lewicki's preparations came to fruition on Sept. 2 when 21 students walked across the dusty parking lot and into the small school for the first day of classes.

Last Thursday, the students, mostly freshmen and a few sophomores, seemed like they had been together forever; they seemed more a family than a class. They worked in the late morning, their heads bent closely together, charting river flows from measurements they had taken on the Kickapoo the day before. Two students, Jenny Clark and Libby Parr, were busy in the school's tiny kitchen cooking lunch, a chore students share once or twice a week. On their shift, Clark and Parr were simmering a big silver pot of soup made from potatoes and carrots and onions and other vegetables brought in by their classmates.

Lewicki, in shorts and tennis shoes and a knit shirt, stepped out the school's back door after checking on lunch. He waved at the next-door field full of drying corn and at the hills rising, fall's colors just beginning to blaze. The sun beat down and you could smell the nearby pines and warm dirt in the cornfield.

"This valley," Lewicki said, "is our classroom. This valley is our school."

Indeed, Lewicki is so committed to focusing on the land and people's relationship to it that one of the requirements he wrote into the school's charter is that students will spend one-third of their school year outside of the classroom. It's a radical departure from the traditional handful of field trips in most high schools.

Already this fall, Lewicki has led his students on study and work trips to the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center, the Vernon County Land Conservation Office, and a local farm. They have been afield and worked with a wildlife biologist, a soil conservationist, a forester and a trout habitat specialist. They've hiked to the top of a dolomite outcropping for an English class, applied their Spanish to interpreting what they saw in the midst of a prairie of wildflowers, and sat along the Kickapoo for a lecture on the hydrologic cycle.

So far, Lewicki said, this intense immersion into the outdoors has been one of the biggest differences between the new school and the traditional classroom. The students have sometimes missed the comfortable confines of the classroom, but mostly they'd rather be out knocking around the countryside, learning from the land.

"You get to experience what you're learning about," said Israel Zegiel, a sophomore.

"And it's a lot more interesting," chimed in Noah Engel, a freshman.

Though far from traditional, the school's curriculum is based on a plan. Students will study seven courses over the year. They include nature and society; biogeography of the Kickapoo Valley; tools, technology and thermodynamics; energy, ecology and economics; healthy people, healthy places; patterns, procedures and systems; and foundations (the study of reading, writing and speaking).

In each of these courses, the students use a variety of skills—from language skills to biology to math. Early last week, for example, a visiting math teacher worked with the students on the banks of the Kickapoo as they used the Pythagorean theorem to study the flow of the river.

A traditional grading system is used. And students must periodically demonstrate what they have learned to their parents and peers. Parents are very involved and play a large role in running the school; instead of a principal there is a governing council.

Holding the curriculum together is a philosophy Lewicki wove from six weeks of study and reading. He calls it "pedagogy of place." It's part poet and essayist Wendell Berry, part Thoreau, and part more modern Midwestern writers and thinkers such as David Orr and Paul Gruchow. It involves using the bio-region—the landscape as defined by its rivers and hills and other natural boundaries—to teach traditional skills.

Here's how Lewicki describes it:

"A pedagogy of place brings school and community together on a common pathway dedicated to stewardship and lifelong learning. It is teaching by using one's landscape, family, and community surroundings as the educational foundation."

Late Thursday morning, the students found their way into the kitchen, scrounged up an odd assortment of bowls and utensils and served up lunch. The soup was delicious and hot, the cornbread perfectly done.

The dining room was the sloping, grassy hillside behind the school. The students found shady spots among the pines, sitting in circles eating and gossiping. Lewicki sipped his soup from a coffee cup and thought about how he had to practically drag his students away from their work on the flow charts to eat their lunch. It's not something that would happen in a more traditional school, he mused. And that thought made him one happy teacher.

"To me," he said between sips of soup, "that's a sign that this is working."

A traditional grading system is used. And students must periodically demonstrate what they have learned to their parents and peers.

Charter schools created to provide creative learning

The Kickapoo River Institute is one of 17 charter schools in Wisconsin and the latest to open.

The state passed the Charter School Law in 1993, allowing public school districts to open schools that offer different approaches to educating children from kindergarten through high school.

Angela Moresky is conducting a study of Wisconsin's charter schools for the Department of Public Instruction and has visited the schools throughout the state. In general, she said, the schools are meant to offer more flexibility and creativity in learning. They are free from most of the laws that govern traditional schools, although students must still be given the regular reading and assessment tests.

Many states now allow charter schools, Moresky said. It's part of a

movement to give people choice in education, she added.

In Wisconsin, Moresky said, each of the 17 charter schools are different in their approaches. But she added that all the schools have something in common with the Kickapoo River Institute and other charter schools — they all use the local community as a laboratory from which to learn.

Moresky called the schools themselves "living laboratories" in which ideas that prove successful are brought into the larger public school system.

Paul Gillespie, district administrator for the North Crawford School District, said he's excited about the Kickapoo River Institute for that very reason.

"It's an incubator for ideas," he said.

— Ron Seely



State Journal photo/CRAIG SCHREINER

Isaac Trucke's sketchbook contains notes on plant life and a pressed smartweed.

DPI INFORMATION



From the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 125 South Webster Street, P. O. Box 7841, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7841
John T. Benson, State Superintendent, (608) 266-1771 • Greg Doyle, Communications Director, (608) 266-1098; or 1-800-441-4563

DPI 97064
10-21-97

Planning grants awarded to 13 charter school proposals

MADISON—Nine school districts will receive funding to support planning activities for 13 new charter schools in Wisconsin through a \$285,000 supplemental charter school grant the Department of Public Instruction received last summer from the U.S. Department of Education.

The 13 grant recipients were among 27 proposals requesting \$652,946, more than double the amount allocated for planning grants. The maximum planning grant was \$25,000 and does not obligate the school district to establish a school. Districts receiving planning grants were:

Antigo School District
Chrysalis Academy, \$22,560

Fond du Lac School District
The Fond du Lac Area Charter School, \$25,000

Menomonie Area School District
Dunn County Alternative School, \$16,000

Milwaukee Public Schools
Advanced Learning School, \$16,000
ASSATA High School, \$25,000
The Central City Cyberschool of Milwaukee, \$25,000
Silver Spring Neighborhood Center Academy, \$25,000
Youth Leadership Academy Center, \$25,000

Oconto Falls School District
Jefferson Alternative Learning Center, \$25,000

St. Francis School District
Project Opportunity, \$19,778

Sun Prairie Area School District
Charter House Middle School, \$13,788

Superior School District
Superior Charter School, \$21,874

Woodruff Joint District #1
J T Charter School, \$25,000

"These charter school proposals show the strong interest Wisconsin school boards have in developing innovative options for educating children in their districts," said State Superintendent John T. Benson. "The charter school movement is growing in Wisconsin, a testament to the commitment communities have to finding local solutions to meet the needs of their children."

Charter schools can implement experimental programming without many of the requirements state laws and rules place on regular schools. They cannot charge tuition, must be nondiscriminatory and nonsectarian, and must comply with federal provisions that govern schools. Local school boards can establish an unlimited number of charter schools.

The \$285,000 in planning funds was part of a \$500,000 supplemental charter schools grant the DPI received in June. The balance of the supplemental grant provided implementation funds to 11 existing charter schools. Last January, the DPI awarded \$825,000 in federal charter school funding for charter school planning and implementation. An additional grant is anticipated this fall for the second year of a three-year federal program to expand charter schools.

Wisconsin currently has 17 charter schools operating in 13 school districts. Another 20 to 30 districts are in various stages of planning for charter schools.

CONTACT: Local school districts

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State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction

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John T. Benson
State Superintendent

Steven B. Dold
Deputy State Superintendent

1997 CHARTER SCHOOLS FEDERAL GRANTS IMPLEMENTATION AWARDS

APPLETON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT \$19,700
Appleton Central Alternative School

- This alternative school for students in grades 8-12 will include an adapted curriculum for basic skill development and credit deficiencies, high school diplomas, and HSED/GED certificates.
- The curriculum will focus on academics, career/vocational opportunities and the learner outcomes.

BEAVER DAM UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT \$43,000
Beaver Dam Charter School

- This at-risk school serves students in grades 6-12 and provides for career exploration, employability skills, high school or HSED/GED completion, and a job skill certificate.
- Personal/social development is the second major program component of the school.

DEERFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT \$23,680
Deerfield Alternative Charter School

- The purpose of this school is to increase the number of students who experience success in school and graduate with the skills for post secondary education or job placement.
- Students in the program are in grades 9-12 and are referred to the program through the Deerfield Student Support Team.

EAU CLAIRE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT \$60,300
McKinley Charter School

- This program serves students in grades 6-12 who are at-risk or who have been expelled from school and are attempting to complete a high school diploma or an HSED/GED program.
- The school provides an integrated academic, vocational and behavioral program for all students.

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LA CROSSE \$46,704
School of Technology and the Arts (SOTA)

- The SOTA program serves students ages 5-10 with the educational program based on five constructs.
- These constructs include multi-aged continuous progress classrooms, performance assessments, customized programming, staff-parent governance, and an emphasis on the arts and technology.

LADYSMITH-HAWKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT \$35,715
Ladysmith Evening Alternative School

- Students in grades 11 and 12 are enrolled in this school which focuses on summer and evening classes for students who are at-risk in a regular school setting.
- The course of study includes integrated social studies and English, math, science, career exploration, community service and recreational sports fitness.

MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT \$75,252
Affiliated Alternatives

- Affiliated Alternatives is made up of four programs serving a largely at-risk population in grades 7-12.
- Students have 6 classes a day in the academic areas along with active learning projects and integrated, applied studies.
- Enrichment classes focus on artistic, social and occupational development.

MIDDLETON-CROSS PLAINS AREA SCHOOLS \$37,270
Middleton Alternative High School

- Students in grades 9-12 are in this program which focuses on multiple intelligences, flexibility, cooperative learning, meeting individual needs, and fostering self esteem.
- Two full-time and two part-time staff work with 60 at-risk students.

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS \$70,992
Highland Community School

- The Highland Community School is a neighborhood-based, parent run, early childhood Montessori program for children ages 2 1/2 through 9.
- It provides a nurturing environment for an economically and culturally diverse group of children on Milwaukee's west side with parents empowered to become involved in their children's education.

STEVENS POINT AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS \$41,500
TEAMS

- Sophomores through seniors are served in this program focusing on a curriculum that is integrated across all content areas and school-to-work.
- This program is designed for the non-traditional learner and includes students with disabilities ranging from cognitive/emotional to physical handicaps.

VERONA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT \$24,700
New Century School

- The New Century School was Wisconsin's first elementary level, parent initiated charter school.
- It is based on a multi-age, cooperative learning concept with academics such as language arts, fine arts, social studies, science and math programs as well as foreign language basic to the overall curriculum.

VERONA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT \$46,300
Verona Core Knowledge Charter School

- The Core Knowledge program serves children in grades K-7 based on a direct instruction model of learning.
- Direct instruction is based on the belief that every child can learn when the instruction is appropriate and that failure of a child to learn is a failure of the instruction, not the child.



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction

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John T. Benson
State Superintendent

Steven B. Dold
Deputy State Superintendent

1997 CHARTER SCHOOLS FEDERAL GRANTS PLANNING AWARDS

APPLETON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT \$15,000

The Academy

- The Academy Charter School for students in grades K-8 will be built on a foundation of research including Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, excellence in the performing arts, distance learning and technology, and a classic core curriculum.
- Charter school planning will include teams of community experts in the field, teachers, parents, students, and business and industry members.

KENOSHA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT \$20,000

Northland School

- The Northland Charter School will focus on basic skills and a traditional curriculum in grades K-6.
- The basic skills will include instruction in language arts, history, geography, science and math with enrichment through the study of art history and the languages of other cultures.

KENOSHA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT \$5,000

Paideia Charter School Academy

- The Paideia Academy will include students in grades 6-8 with a focus on block scheduling, multi-age groupings, curriculum integration, and parent and community involvement.
- The learning environment will stress basic math skills, complex thinking and reasoning skills, writing, communications, literature, science and the fine arts.

LAC DU FLAMBEAU \$25,000

Ishpijise School

- This charter school, including students from all grade levels, will focus on advanced learners with evidence of high performance in creativity, intellectualism, artistry, and leadership.
- The school will follow Howard Gardner's theories of multiple intelligences with student directed learning and technology playing key roles in the learning environment.

LANCASTER COMMUNITY SCHOOLS \$25,000

Personalized Path Program

- This charter school, developed as an alternative school for students in grades 7-12, is committed to educating students in essential academic skills and to helping students develop personal skills and attitudes necessary for successful life pursuits.
- Students would be in classes Monday through Thursday for a total of 180 days focused on bringing school and work together in a more meaningful way.

MARSHALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS \$18,123

Dane County Transitional School

- The Dane County consortium intends to implement a charter school program for at-risk youth, ages 15-18, in sixteen Dane County area school districts.
- The program will integrate service learning concepts and the development of a family empowerment program which builds family capacity among at-risk youth and their families.

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

\$16,521

Opportunities Industrialization Center of Greater Milwaukee Charter School

- Students in grades 11-12 will participate in this program focusing on meeting high academic standards, self-discipline, respect, accountability, high self-esteem, competitive performance, interpersonal communications, stability and personal growth.
- The curriculum will be consistent with the Wisconsin Educational Goals.

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

\$25,000

Transcenter Charter School

- This school will challenge the definition of a "school." It will come out of the activities of three communities around Milwaukee . . . NOVA campus on the northwest side, Shalom campus north of Marquette, and El Puente campus on the south side.
- These sites, for at-risk students, will focus on combining academics with school-to-work and a strong social skills component.
- The research of Gardner, Slywester and Hayes-Jacobs will inform this charter school philosophy.

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

\$25,000

YWCA Charter School

- This school will specialize in students in grades 4-8 with an emphasis on careers that are non-traditional for women and people of color.
- The curriculum will help students achieve a vision of their place in the world and address the steps necessary to gain the skills to succeed in high school, post secondary and the world of work.

NORTH CRAWFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

\$21,893

Kickapoo Environmental Studies Institute

- The goals of the Kickapoo Environmental Studies Institute will build a strong knowledge base with an integrated emphasis on environmental studies and the humanities for students in high school.
- Students will demonstrate a process of active learning as outlined in the Wisconsin Learner Goals and Outcomes.
- As an adjunct program, the Institute will serve the KICKAPOO Watershed Area by providing an academic resource center for K-12 home-based students.

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF RIVER FALLS

\$25,000

River Falls Charter Middle School

- The charter school program will serve middle school students ages 12-14.
- The curriculum and instructional practices will be based on collaborative learning, community building skills, lifelong learning, strong academics and accountability for results.

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF STURGEON BAY

\$12,100

Feasibility Study – Multi-Age Grouping K-5

- This multi-age charter school will contain an early childhood unit, a primary unit, and an intermediate unit for students.
- The research of Elkind and Gardner will undergird the philosophy and the implementation of the Dimensions of Learning model.
- A Goals 2000 grant is supplementing their planning and implementation.

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WEST ALLIS-WEST MILWAUKEE

\$25,000

West Allis-West Milwaukee Charter School

- The charter school will initially serve students in grades 7-9.
- The program will have two primary components to meet the students' academic and affective needs.
- The program will also provide students and their families with access to community resources such as counseling, social skill development and a comprehensive therapeutic component.

DPI INFORMATION



From the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 125 South Webster Street, P. O. Box 7841, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7841

John T. Benson, State Superintendent, (608) 266-1771 • Greg Doyle, Communications Director, (608) 266-1098; or 1-800-441-4563

DPI 96066

9-17-96

Benson announces federal charter schools grant

MADISON—Wisconsin will be among those states receiving federal funds to expand charter schools. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction will receive up to \$825,000 per year for up to three years to support planning and implementation activities in local districts.

“Many times local efforts to start charter schools have been slowed or halted because of money,” said State Superintendent John T. Benson. “This federal grant will provide the funds to help Wisconsin communities launch more charter schools to serve local needs.”

Currently, Wisconsin has 11 charter schools with another 20 to 25 districts in various stages of planning for additional schools. The state’s grant application, one of 23 considered for funding, calls for two-thirds of the money to be allocated for initial implementation grants and one-third to be used for planning grants. Applicants for grants will use the same planning documents that are submitted to their local school boards for charter status. In addition, grant applicants must provide a detailed budget, historical narrative and overview of the program and its development, and a description of how the school will reflect the ethnic and racial population of the community and how it will include students with disabilities.

“Charter schools provide an important opportunity for parental choice within the public school system,” Benson said. “This funding will help Wisconsin improve academic success for students through innovative charter schools.”

Wisconsin’s charter schools grant period is expected to be from Nov. 1, 1996, to Oct. 31, 1997.

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Charter Schools In Action

A Hudson Institute Project

June 1997

Final Report, Part 1

Charter Schools As Seen by Those Who Know Them Best: Students, Teachers, and Parents

By Gregg Vanourek, Bruno V. Manno, Chester E. Finn, Jr., and Louann A. Bierlein

Executive Summary

(1) Charter schools are havens for children who had bad educational experiences elsewhere—low-income children, “at-risk” children, minority children, children with learning disabilities and behavior problems, etc. They (and their parents) report that they’re doing better than in their previous schools (if they were in school at all). These improvements are reported across the board: for children of all ages, races, and genders; for children from public, private, and “home” schools; for children with learning disabilities, limited English proficiency, and other special needs; and children from families in all income brackets.

- Among students performing “poorly” in their previous school (as judged by their parents), nearly half are now doing “excellent” or “above average” work.
- The number of students doing “excellent” or “good” work rose 23.4% for African-Americans and 21.8% for Hispanics after enrolling in charter schools. Similar gains were made by low-income students of all races.

(2) Charter schools are very popular with their primary constituents: their students, parents, and teachers. Pupils are interested in their school work, pleased with their teachers, and likely to return next year. Their parents are satisfied and engaged. Their teachers prize what the school is doing, like working in it, and believe it is succeeding.

- Three-fifths of students report that their charter school teachers are better than their previous schools’ teachers.
- Over two-thirds of parents say their charter school is better than their child’s previous school with respect to class size, school size, and individual attention from teachers. Over three-fifths say it is better with respect to teaching quality, parental involvement, curriculum, extra help for students, academic standards, accessibility and openness, and discipline.

(3) Families and teachers are seeking out charter schools primarily for educational reasons: high academic standards,

small classes, a focus on teaching and learning, educational philosophies that are closer to their own, and innovative approaches to instruction.

- When asked why they chose charter schools, the top answers from parents are: small size (53.0%), higher standards (45.9%), educational philosophy (44.0%), greater opportunities for parental involvement (43.0%), and better teachers (41.9%).
- The top reasons for teachers are educational philosophy (76.8%), wanting a new school (64.8%), like-minded colleagues (62.9%), good administrators (54.6%), and class size (54.2%).

(4) Satisfaction levels are highest for all three groups when it comes to educational matters (curriculum, teaching, class size, etc.) and lowest when it comes to non-educational matters (food, facility, sports, etc.), indicating that charters are deploying their limited resources on “the basics.”

- When students were asked what they like about their charter school, the most frequent answers were: “good teachers” (58.6%), “they teach it until I learn it” (51.3%), and “they don’t let me fall behind” (38.5%).
- Two-thirds of parents thought their charter school has a more satisfactory class size, more individual attention, better teaching, and a stronger curriculum than their child’s previous school, compared to just 2-3% who thought these were worse.

(5) The teachers feel empowered. Charter school teachers are a diverse lot, but nearly all are finding personal fulfillment and professional reward.

- Over 90% of teachers are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with their charter school’s educational philosophy, size, fellow teachers, and students; over three-quarters are satisfied with their school’s administrators, level of teacher decision-making, and the challenge of starting a new school.
- Only 2.7% of charter school teachers say they “hope to be elsewhere” next year.

(21)



Overview of Charter Schools

Last Updated: 10-7-97

Below is an overview of the charter school movement, with selected references to organizations and resources that provide helpful information to those practitioners, policymakers and members of the public just beginning to look at charter schools.

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- [Definitions](#)
- [National Statistics](#)
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- [News Articles and Other General Information](#)

I. Definitions

Although they share some characteristics in common, charter schools are defined in many ways. One might consult state and federal legislation, for example, and find that the legal definitions found in these statutes are different in many ways from the theoretical or conceptual definitions offered by the general public, policy analysts, researchers, the media or advocates. Still different may be the definitions of those who actually operate or oversee charter schools. While definitions vary, below you will see many similarities:

- From "[Charter Schools: Creating Hope and Opportunity for American Education](#)," by Joe Nathan, *Jossey-Bass*, 1996:
 "Charter schools are public schools, financed by the same per-pupil funds that traditional public schools receive. Unlike traditional public schools, however, they are held accountable for achieving educational results. In return, they receive waivers that exempt them from many of the restrictions and bureaucratic rules that shape traditional public schools. The charter school movement brings together, for the first time in public education, four powerful ideas:
 - Choice among public schools for families and their children
 - Entrepreneurial opportunities for educators and parents to create the kinds of schools they believe make the most sense
 - Explicit responsibility for improved achievement, as measured by standardized tests and other measures
 - Carefully designed competition in public education
- From "[Charter Schools Issue Brief](#)," Education Commission of the States, 1996:

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"Charter schools create an alternative form of public schooling. The goal of charter schools is to lift restraints from public schools so they can pursue innovative teaching methods that will improve student performance. They are designed to give significant autonomy to individual schools and, in turn, to hold those schools accountable for results. A charter is essentially a contract, negotiated between those people starting the school and the official body authorized to approve the charter. The charter spells out how the school will be run, what will be taught, how success will be measured and what students will achieve. As long as the school meets the terms of its charter, it is free from many of the rules and regulations that apply to other public schools. And, unlike other schools, if a charter school fails to meet these terms, the charter can be revoked and the school closed."

- From Education Week's Charter Schools Page, part of their collection of Issues pages:
"The basic charter concept is simple: Allow a group of teachers or other would-be educators to apply for permission to open a school. Give them dollar for dollar what a public school gets for each student. Free them from the bureaucracy that cripples learning and stifles innovation at so many public schools ... The school generally operate[s] under a 'charter' or contract with the local school board or the state. And while exempt from most state and local laws and regulations, to gain charter renewal, the schools must prove that their students have gained the educational skills specified in that initial contract."
- From "More on Charter Schools," by Carlos and Yamashiro, WestEd, 1996:
"Charter schools are usually created through a formal agreement between a group of individuals and a sponsor (e.g., a local school board, state department, or an independent governing board). Designed by state legislators to deregulate and decentralize education, the charter school concept is intended to empower parents and those 'closest to the classroom' with the flexibility to innovate. As an incentive, charter schools either receive blanket exemptions from most state codes and district rules regarding curriculum, instruction, budget, and personnel, or they may apply to waive requirements one by one. In return, most charter schools are expected to meet certain accountability requirements, such as demonstrating student achievement and participating in state testing programs."
- From "So You Want to Start a Charter School?" by Millot and Lake, University of Washington/RAND, 1996:
"The 'basic bargain' embodied in charter school legislation is 'autonomy for accountability.' On the autonomy side of the bargain, the defining features of charter school statutes are the right of those operating an individual public school to control decisions the legislature has deemed critical to the success of a school's educational program, and the guarantee of that right for some number of years ... On the accountability side are the operators' responsibilities to improve student performance and meet a public trust in public education. Charter schools are held accountable to the market for economic viability and parent satisfaction and to government for financial stability, student performance and the operation of a public agency. The

bargain is documented in a legally binding agreement called a 'charter.'"

For the technical or legal definition of a charter school in your state, consult your state's charter school legislation, which can be found through our [Resource Directory: State-Specific Information](#). If your state does not have charter school legislation or is not listed in our directory, the National Conference of State Legislatures has links to all [state legislatures on-line](#).

II. National Statistics

Since 1991, 28 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have passed charter school legislation (AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, KS, LA, MA, MI, MN, MS, NC, NH, NJ, NM, NV, PA, RI, SC, TX, WI, WY), and many other states have pending legislation to enact charter schools, including NV, OH, OR, OK, WA and others.

According to the [Center for Education Reform](#), which tracks various school improvement efforts throughout the country, more than 80,000 students attend nearly 500 charter schools as of Fall, 1996 -- with many more approved and not yet ready to open. Arizona leads the nation in number of charters, with 164 schools currently in operation and others approved and in the planning phase, followed by California with 109.

Several other national organizations are following the growth of the charter school movement, keeping an up-to-date national count of charter schools and tracking state legislative initiatives and issues, including the following:

- **National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)** - NCSL, an organization serving state lawmakers and legislative staffers, provides "research on critical state issues, informative publications, provocative meetings and seminars, an unparalleled legislative information database, a voice in Washington, D.C., and an expert staff to assist legislators and staff in solving difficult problems." Example items which may be of use are: their page of links to [state legislatures' web sites](#); state-by-state lists of [legislative calendars/sessions](#); and a state-by-state analysis of [legislative partisan make-up](#) since the 1996 elections.
- **Education Commission of the States (ECS)** - ECS, a nonprofit, non-partisan, nationwide compact of states and territories, assists governors, state legislators, and state education officials develop policies to improve the quality of education. ECS has written, sponsored and published several documents on charter schools. Along with their [Charter School Issues Brief](#), which provides an overview of charter schools and the related policy issues, ECS also has a policy brief that discusses charter school finance issues from a state and school perspective entitled, [Emerging Issues in Charter School Financing](#) by Bierlein and Fulton. In the [December '96 issue](#) of Education Watch, a periodic briefing series, charter schools are discussed in terms of the issues remaining for policymakers drafting or considering charter legislation.

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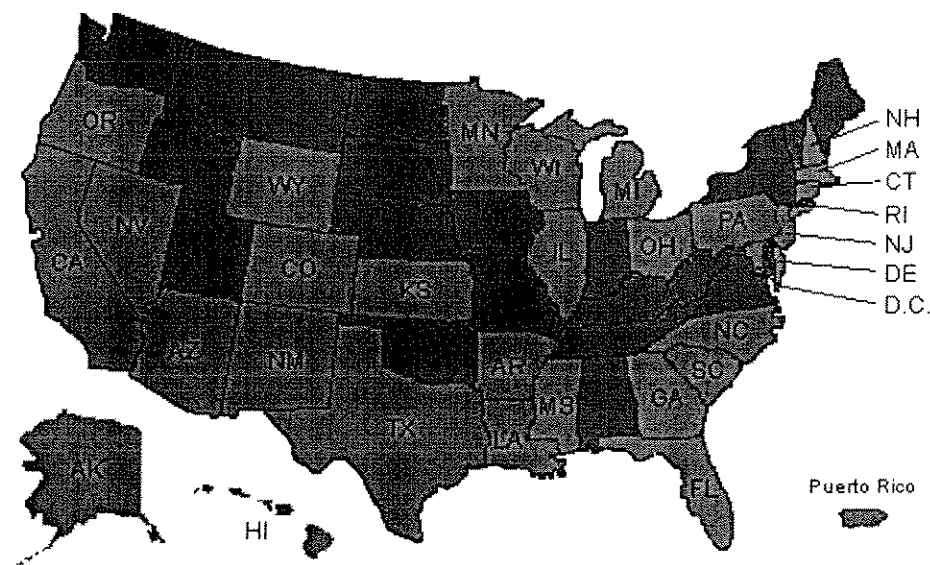
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■ State and School Profiles

Click on the map below to see information on each state and its schools:



■ School Profiles Sorted by Category

Many charter schools across the country have entered profiles of themselves on the US Charter Schools web site. To see these profiles, click on one of states above or on one of the groupings below. If you are looking for a specific school, try our [School Search](#) page.

- [Complete List](#) - provides a complete listing of all the charter school profiles listed on this site.
- [Recently Entered](#) - provides a listing of all the schools which have entered profiles of themselves since Oct. 15, 1997.
- [Schools with Web Sites](#) - provides a listing of all the charter

school profiles which have links to active web sites.

- [Charter Schools in Development](#) - provides a listing of schools which describe themselves as still being in the early stages of development.

■ More Information

The State & School Profiles contains profiles of states across the country with charter school legislation. It also contains profiles of individual charter schools either in operation or in development. These school profiles are created by the schools themselves or compiled by the staff of the US Charter Schools web site from published sources. You may view both the state and school profiles by using the state map above. You may also search for a school, or groups of schools, through our [School Search](#) page.

We have recently added [New Features](#) to our school profile service. If you would like to add your own school to our list of school profiles, go to [Create a New Profile of Your School](#). If you would like to be added as an editor to an already existing school profile, go to our [Editor Registration Form](#).

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Conference Overview

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 districts 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 of charter schools, 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

home

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WHAT ARE CHARTER SCHOOLS?

Charter schools are independent public schools that are freed from bureaucratic and regulatory micromanagement to design and deliver programs tailored to educational excellence and the needs of their community. They are held accountable not for compliance with reams of rules, but for how well they educate children in a safe and responsible environment. They can be started by parents, teachers, community groups or other organizations or individuals interested in creating a better educational opportunity for children. They are sponsored by local and state school boards, colleges and universities, and other community agencies interested in fostering innovation and excellence in schools. Students choose to attend, and teachers choose to teach at charter schools. They bring a healthy, competitive atmosphere to the public school system, in which schools are judged on academic and operational fitness, and educators and families have the opportunity to foster and participate in the highest, broadest levels of academic potential and excellence. Perhaps one of the most compelling testaments to the success of charter schools is the tens of thousands of students on waiting lists to get in.

THE PRINCIPLES

Choice: Charter schools give families an opportunity to pick the school most suitable for their child's educational well-being. Teachers choose to create and work at schools where they directly shape the best working and learning environment for their students and themselves. Charter sponsors choose to support schools that best serve the needs of students and the community.

Autonomy: Charter schools are freed from the traditional bureaucracy and regulations that divert a school's energy and resources toward compliance rather than excellence. Instead of jumping through procedural hoops and over paperwork hurdles, educators can focus on setting and reaching high academic standards for their students.

Accountability: Charter schools are judged on how well they meet the student achievement goals established by their charter, and how well they manage the fiscal and operational responsibilities entrusted to them. If they fail to deliver, they are closed. If they cannot attract parents to entrust their children to their school, they are closed.

THE PRACTICE

Operators: Charter schools provide the opportunity for anyone concerned about quality education for children to become directly involved. They may be started by parents, educators, or other individuals or groups in the community who see an educational need and want to address it. Museums, civic groups, industry and service organizations, and teachers and parents have all successfully launched charter schools.

Chapter 1: What Is a Charter School?

CHARTER SCHOOLS AROUND THE NATION Charter Schools Operating or Approved to Open September 1997

	Schools In Operation	Schools Approved to Open
Alaska	15	
Arizona	247	7
California	125	7
Colorado	49	
Connecticut	12	
Delaware	3	4
District of Columbia	3	1
Florida	34	6
Georgia	21	
Hawaii	2	
Illinois	8	
Kansas	1	6
Louisiana	6	
Massachusetts	23	2
Michigan	110	25
Minnesota	25	4
New Jersey	13	3
New Mexico	5	
North Carolina	34	
Pennsylvania	6	
Rhode Island	1	1
South Carolina	1	2
Texas	19	1
Wisconsin	17	
Total	780	69

The Charter School Workbook

Parties in Control of States' House, Senate, and Governor's Office When Charter School Bills Were Passed				
State (Year Law Passed)	Rank	House	Senate	Governor
Minnesota (1991)	6	D	D	D
California (1992)	15	D	D	R
Colorado (1993)	14	R	R	D
Georgia (1993)	28	D	D	D
Massachusetts (1993)	5	D	D	R
Michigan (1993)	2	split	R	R
New Mexico (1993)	27	D	D	D
Wisconsin (1993)	20	D	D	R
Arizona (1994)	1	R	R	R
Hawaii (1994)	26	D	D	D
Kansas (1994)	25	R	R	D
Alaska (1995)	21	R	R	D
Arkansas (1995)	29	D	D	D
Delaware (1995)	4	R	D	D
Louisiana (1995)	10	D	D	D
New Hampshire (1995)	16	R	R	R
Rhode Island (1995)	23	D	D	R
Texas (1995)	8	D	D	R
Wyoming (1995)	24	R	R	R
Connecticut (1996)	18	D	R	R
District of Columbia (1996) ¹	3	R	R	D
Florida (1996)	12	D	R	D
Illinois (1996)	17	R	R	R
New Jersey (1996)	13	R	R	R
North Carolina (1996)	7	R	D	D
South Carolina (1996)	9	R	D	R
Mississippi (1997)	30	D	D	R
Nevada (1997)	22	D	D	D
Pennsylvania (1997)	11	R	R	R
Ohio (1997)	19	R	R	R
Totals		D = 15.5 ² R = 14.5 ²	D = 16 R = 11	D = 14 R = 16
Totals for Stronger Laws	20 States (1-20)	D = 8.5 ² R = 11.5 ²	D = 9 R = 11	D = 9 R = 13
Totals for Weak Laws	10 States (21-30)	D = 7 R = 3	D = 7 R = 3	D = 7 R = 3

¹ District of Columbia legislation was passed by the U.S. Congress (both houses Republican) and signed by President Clinton

² Decimal reflects the split in the Michigan House.

Sources: Phone conversations with officials from each state, National Council of State Legislatures.

Charter School Legislation: State Rankings

Criteria	← STRONG →										← WEAK →																			
	AZ '94	MI '93	DC '96	DE '95	MA '93	MA '93	NC '96	TX '95	SC '95	LA '95	FL '96	PA '96	NJ '96	CO '93	CA '92	NH '95	IL '96	CT '96	OH '97	WI '93	AK '95	NV '97	RI '95	WY '95	KS '94	HI '94	NM '93	GA '93	AR '95	MS '97
Year Law Passed	5.0	4.3	3.7	3.3	3.3	5.0	4.3	4.7	3.0	5.0	4.7	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	1.7	2.0	1.0	1.7	5.0	2.3	3.0	1.0	5.0	0.7	1.0	0.0	5.0	5.0	0.0
Number of Schools affected	5.0	5.0	4.7	2.3	3.3	4.7	4.3	3.0	3.7	2.7	0.7	2.0	3.3	3.3	3.0	0.7	1.0	1.3	2.7	1.3	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.7	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.0
Multiple charter authorities	4.7	4.7	5.0	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.7	4.3	3.7	3.0	4.3	4.0	4.0	5.0	4.7	3.7	3.0	5.0	3.0	4.3	4.7	1.0	0.0	4.3	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Explicit charter approvals	5.0	4.7	4.7	4.7	5.0	4.7	4.3	4.7	4.3	4.7	4.7	5.0	4.3	5.0	4.0	3.7	3.3	4.0	2.7	4.7	5.0	2.0	4.3	4.0	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
New state offered	5.0	5.0	2.7	3.0	4.0	2.7	3.0	3.0	1.7	2.3	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.0	2.7	0.0	1.7	2.3	4.7	2.3	1.3	5.0	0.0	1.7	1.0	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0
State and federal without federal evidence of fiscal support	4.3	2.7	4.7	4.7	3.0	4.7	3.7	4.7	4.0	4.7	4.7	2.0	1.0	0.7	2.7	4.7	4.0	0.3	3.0	2.7	0.0	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	4.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	1.3
Legal / operational authority	4.7	5.0	4.7	5.0	4.7	2.7	2.7	3.0	2.3	5.0	3.0	4.0	4.7	2.7	3.0	3.7	2.7	1.7	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unlimited full private funding	3.3	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	2.0	4.7	3.7	5.0	5.0	4.0	2.7	2.0	2.3	3.0	0.0	3.0	3.7	2.7	1.7	3.3	3.3	4.0	0.0	0.3	4.0	4.3	0.7	0.3	0.0
Local Autonomy	4.7	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.7	4.0	4.3	5.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	3.3	2.0	5.0	3.3	5.0	2.7	1.7	4.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	2.0	0.0	0.0
Parent / non-affiliate / beginning / separate / shared work funds	5.0	4.0	4.7	4.7	4.3	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	1.0	3.0	3.7	2.7	4.3	3.7	4.7	3.7	2.0	2.3	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	46.7	45.3	44.7	42.0	42.0	39.7	39.3	38.7	37.7	36.3	35.3	35.3	34.0	33.7	32.7	27.7	27.7	27.3	27.0	25.3	21.0	18.0	15.0	15.0	11.3	10.7	10.0	8.7	5.7	1.3
Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Note: The scores on this table are based on the current status of each law through July 1997. Assessments to the original law, state-based regulations, legal rulings, adjustments of education incorporation and actual implementation have all been factored into the ranking. Each score is based on a scale of 1 to 5. Based on how that state's provisions under the criterion support or restrict the development of a significant number of autonomous charter schools (strongly support = 5, strongly restrict = 0), or in the case of recently passed laws, the law's likely impact on the number of schools. States are listed from left to right from the strongest charter law score (42.0 to the weakest 1.0). The laws are also divided into two sub-categories: "strongly effective laws" which do not are likely to support or restrict significant development of autonomous charter schools, and "weak" or "ineffective" laws which have not, and are unlikely to, lead to significant charter activity. See the following page for a more detailed explanation of the criteria and rating system. See also analysis of individual states' laws for further explanation of specific provisions.

For more information on the laws, visit the Center for Education Reform's website at <http://www.edreform.com>.

This table was compiled by the Center for Education Reform, President, The Center for Education Reform, Linda Brown, Director, Pioneer Institute Charter School Research Center, and Charles Finn, John M. Olin Fellow at the Hudson Institute. The average of the 30 states' total scores are used for the final score for each criterion, and their sum provided final law scores by which each state was ranked. States with the scores were ranked according to secondary factors influencing the effectiveness of their law.

Published by The Center for Education Reform, October 1997.
 Edited by Mark Bascobert, formerly of the Indiana Education Policy Center.

The Charter School Workbook

Wisconsin (1993, amended 1995) <i>(The 20th strongest of the nation's 30 charter laws.)</i>	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	no limit
Number of Schools Operating	13
Additional Schools Approved (As of July 1997)	4
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	local school boards
Eligible Applicants	any person (local school board may also start charter schools)
Types of Charter Schools	converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based-schools)
Appeals Process	none
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	50% of teachers in a school or 10% of teachers in a school district must sign a petition, except for board-initiated charter schools, which may open without the signature process
Recipient of Charter	applicant
Term of Initial Charter	up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	yes from state; no from district
Legal Autonomy	no
Governance	specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	yes
Charter School Allowed to Earn a Profit	charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	not addressed
Facilities Assistance	not addressed
Technical Assistance	no
Reporting Requirements	charter schools must file same reports with department of public instruction as other public schools must file
Funding	
Amount	negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter; district is permitted to spend more on charter schools than regular public schools
Path	through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter
Start-up Funds	no state funding; federal charter school funding is being applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	charter school teachers are district employees who may remain covered by district bargaining agreement or negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body; in Milwaukee charter school teachers are not district employees and may negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body or work independently
Certification	required, but if search for licensed teacher is unsuccessful, a special charter school license is available for persons with bachelor's degree in their field who take 6 credits of training each year and are supervised by a teacher with a regular license
Leave of Absence from District	not necessary (charter school teachers remain employees of the district except in Milwaukee, where leave is specified in charter)
Retirement Benefits	yes, except in Milwaukee
Students	
Eligible Students	students in district
Preference for Enrollment	for conversions, students in attendance area of former public school
Enrollment Requirements	legislation mentions enrollment requirements, but department of education interpretation is that charter schools may not use academic ability criteria, they may, however, define certain other criteria for enrollment, such as at-risk criteria
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	not addressed
At-Risk Provisions	local school boards must give preference in awarding charters to schools designed to serve children at-risk
Racial Balance Provisions	specified in charter
Mandated Assessments	statewide assessments; also, charter must describe method by which student progress toward state educational goals will be measured
Other Features	
Districtwide Charter and Multi-District Charters	a district may convert all of its schools to charter schools, if at least 50% of teachers in the district approve and the local school board provides alternative public school arrangements for students who do not wish to attend charter schools or are not enrolled; multi-district charters are also permitted

How the States Stack Up: Breakout of Significant Charter Law Provisions

Number of Schools

- **States that allow a high or unlimited number of new (start-up) charter schools:** Arizona, Colorado, California, Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin, Wyoming
- **States that significantly limit the number of new (start-up) charter schools that may be established:** Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Rhode Island
- **States that allow only public school conversions:** Arkansas, Georgia, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Mexico

Sponsorship

- **States that establish multiple sponsors or an effective appeals process:** Arizona, Colorado, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas
- **States which restrict chartering authority to a single public agency (generally the local school board), without providing a binding appeals process:** Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming

Eligible Applicants

- **States in which charters have been granted to for-profit organizations, or in which charter schools have contracted with for-profit organizations to operate their school:** Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina
- **States that allow only public schools or public school personnel to start charters:** Arkansas, Georgia, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Mexico

Funding

- **States that guarantee full operational funding:** Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina
- **States that do not guarantee full operational funding:** Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Wisconsin, Wyoming

The Charter School Workbook

Waivers from Regulations:

- **States that provide automatic blanket waivers from state and district regulations:** Arizona, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas
- **States that do not provide automatic blanket waivers from state and district regulations:** Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, Wyoming

Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules

- **States that automatically exclude charter school teachers from existing collective bargaining unit or district work rules (teachers may work independently or negotiate as a separate unit with the charter school):** Delaware, District of Columbia, Michigan (for non-local-board-sponsored charters), New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Texas (for state-sponsored charters)
- **States in which charter school teachers are permitted but not required to be part of the existing collective bargaining unit or district work rules:** Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey (for start-up schools), North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina (for start-up schools), Wisconsin
- **States that do not allow charter school teachers to be exempt from collective bargaining or district work rules:** Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Hawaii, Michigan (for local-board-sponsored charters), Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey (for conversion schools), New Mexico, Rhode Island, South Carolina (for conversion schools), Texas (for locally-sponsored charters), Wyoming

Teacher Certification

- **States that allow charter schools freedom from traditional teacher certification requirements (* requires special waiver or circumstance):** Arizona, California, Colorado*, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia*, Illinois, Kansas*, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin*

Sources for state charts: Legislation from each state; telephone conversations with officials and charter experts from each state.

Cal Potter

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Charter fiasco

The demise of a Valley charter school has left parents and officials of the school, the sponsoring district and the state Education Department pointing fingers at each other. But taxpayers who invested nearly \$1 million in the Arizona Career and Technology High School also have a bone to pick.

State lawmakers should be demanding to know how this could happen and waste no time correcting what appears to be a shocking gap in accountability.

As revealed on Sunday by *Tribune* reporters Nikki Riordan and Kirk Mitchell, ACT's operator, Reed Gaddie, had been turned down in 1995 by the state Board of Charter Schools following a background check. But Gaddie opened ACT last fall anyway after going through another, circuitous, channel.

The Window Rock School District granted the school's charter to Mesa attorney Russell O. Riggs, who handed it over to Gaddie about the same time Riggs came under investigation for allegedly mishandling trust funds. Riggs has since pleaded guilty to theft charges and been disbarred.

ACT closed last month after teachers and other employees resigned when they didn't get paychecks. Meanwhile, some concerned parents had pulled their children from the school.

The state Education Department may demand that Window Rock repay the state up to \$500,000. But Window Rock

District Superintendent Paul Hanley responds: "If (ACT) didn't manage correctly, where is that Window Rock's fault?"

And, incredibly, under the state's lax charter-school law, he may be right.

According to state School Superintendent Lisa Graham-Keegan, "I think there's a problem when people don't use good judgment. The system won't cure that for you. . . . That same system allowed for the creation of some really high-quality charter schools."

But pointing to successful charter schools doesn't excuse flaws in the law that allow fiascos like ACT.

The issue took on added urgency on Monday when a second Valley charter school sponsored by Window Rock, the Alternative Learning Center, closed.

Given his prior brushes with the law, Gaddie should not have been allowed to get control of this school and hundreds of thousands of tax dollars. If state law required background checks to be on file with the state before a school is allowed to open, ACT would not have opened.

The law must also require strict oversight of attendance and financial records so any hint of impropriety is investigated immediately. To further protect taxpayers, the Legislature should consider a bonding requirement for charter schools.

In the meantime, law enforcement officials need to thoroughly investigate ACT to find out if any laws were broken.

Mesa Tribune
March 14 1995

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Chart

Charter school setup is all wrong

Higley wades in

While scandal and administrative headaches have scared some districts out of the charter school business, the tiny Higley district here in the East Valley is jumping in in a big way. And "business" appears to be the operative word here.

Higley officials say frankly that chartering schools is a good way to make money.

That is why the Window Rock School District got into chartering schools around the state several years ago. With the state paying \$4,400 per charter school student, Window Rock took a management fee and passed the rest along to the charters.

Trouble is, there apparently wasn't much management being done from Window Rock. One of its Mesa schools that closed, Arizona Career and Technology Academy, is now being audited for alleged irregularities in its attendance records.

The headaches and potential legal troubles have prompted Window Rock into getting out of the chartering business. The tiny Ganado School District, also located in northeastern Arizona, has dropped its charter schools as well.

The Sequoia School in Mesa, one of those dropped by Ganado, may be among many charter schools sponsored by the Higley School District, which currently has only one school and 250 students. Under a plan approved by the school board this week, Higley soon could be responsible for educating 3,000 students.

And why is this tiny district taking on such a big project?

Explains Superintendent Larry Likes: "This is a way to go out and make some money."

The arrangement involves a private accounting firm opening an office in the Higley School to keep track of the charter schools' records and millions of tax dollars. Likes says he'll visit each school four times a year to make sure everything is on the up-and-up.

There is something very wrong with this picture. If Arizona's burgeoning charter-school experiment is to be saved from scandal and ensuing public backlash, "charter" must mean more than a cursory business arrangement.

Chartering a school implies a commitment to quality education and rigorous oversight to make sure every tax dollar is accounted for. Yet under Arizona's dangerously loose charter school law, all of that is merely implied.

Don't blame Higley school officials for seeking ways to boost the district's meager revenues. Arizona's schools are among the worst-funded in the nation. That problem, too, needs to be fixed.

Charter schools' most die-hard supporters in the Legislature insist an unregulated "market" will weed out the bad ones while boosting educational quality throughout the state. The flaw in that reasoning is that, unlike businesses, charter schools have a guaranteed revenue stream collected by the state; all they have to do is show enrollment numbers on a piece of paper.

In light of the ACT Academy fiasco and the obvious potential for abuse, the Legislature would be seriously remiss if it did not act now to provide meaningful oversight of charter schools.

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Mesa Tribune
January 22 1998

Starbuck

Charter school woes tax district

Student transfers can drain resources; official suggests bonding requirement

BY NIKKI RIBDAN
THE TRIBUNE

At least 51 students from a closed charter school are going to classes in Mesa, but the money to pay for them isn't.

And that has Mesa Unified School District officials upset at a system that allows large numbers of charter students to transfer

midyear into district schools without funding for the remaining semesters.

"When a charter school closes, they need to reimburse whoever picks those kids up. Or when one (a charter school) goes through significant trauma where the kids are leaving, they should adjust for that," said Chuck Essigs, assistant superintendent of business services and government relations for the district.

Arizona Career and Technology High School in east Mesa closed Friday after allegations of mismanagement. The school was one of three sites opened in 1997 under a charter sponsored by the Window Rock Unified School District.

The funding problem occurs because charter schools are paid the same year students attend, while districts are paid for students a year after they attend. The state allocates about \$3,800 a

year for each high school student, no matter what sort of public school they attend.

"No matter how you look at it, we're going to be short one year of funding," Essigs said. "We're never going to get paid for the (remaining) 75 days of education this year."

Essigs suggested that the state require charter schools be bonded so public schools could be reimbursed if the charter school goes bankrupt.

"We're a large school district, but 51 kids coming all from one charter school on no notice (is difficult). And we have to take them," Essigs said.

Mesa Superintendent Jim Zahriss said the district wants "to do the best we can for the kids," but the funding problems are coupled with the lack of Arizona Career and Technology transcripts.

It could be labor intensive if students transferring from the school must take summer school, get extra academic help such as tutoring or visit often with counselors, he said.

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Arizona Republic
March 15, 1997

School founder took \$126,000, state says

By H. Matern
The Arizona Republic
The founder of a bankrupt Phoenix charter school used more than \$126,000 in taxpayer money to buy a home for her mother and repay debts and buy jewelry for herself, according to a state audit.
Larinda White Venable, founder and principal of Citizen 2000, is named in an investigative report by the state Auditor General's Office.

Citizen 2000, one of the state's first charter schools, closed and filed for bankruptcy last month.
The state audit found that Venable spent \$126,843 in state money for a down payment on her mother's Billmore-ara house, to repay personal debts and to buy jewelry, meals, movie tickets, flowers and swimming-pool supplies.
Venable, who could not be reached for comment, has denied using the school's

money improperly, saying she was just repaying herself for loans she made to the school.
The auditor general's report said misusing school money could constitute a Class 4 felony under Arizona law. The report has been turned over to the state Attorney General's Office, which has been conducting its own investigation of Citizen 2000.
"We are aware of the information contained in the report, and we will deal

with it accordingly," said Katie Dwyer, a spokeswoman for Attorney General Grant Woods.
Citizen 2000 opened in 1995 at 1819 N. Central Ave. with about 500 students. It was one of Arizona's first 40 charter schools, which are touted by supporters as innovative alternatives to regular public schools.
Charter schools, which generally are smaller than regular public schools and

stress parental involvement, receive public money but are exempt from many state regulations. They are largely autonomous when it comes to hiring teachers and developing academic programs.
Venable was criticized during Citizen 2000's first year for paying herself a \$90,000 salary and for hiring some of her relatives, including her mother and sister.

Arizona Republic
April 10 1997

Tighter rein on charter schools backed

Senate gives tentative approval

By Hal Mattem

The Arizona Republic

Legislation that would tighten the oversight of charter schools and limit the number of new ones received preliminary approval Wednesday from the state Senate.

The bill also would change the way the state disburses money to charter schools and would prohibit them from taking ownership of property purchased with public funds.

Most of the restrictions were added to House Bill 2162 by Sen. Mary Hartley, D-northwest Phoenix, who expressed concerns that charter schools were not being held accountable enough financially or academically.



Sen. Mary Hartley

The passage of Hartley's amendments came as a surprise to charter school supporters, who have managed to fight off such restrictions in the past. They said the restrictions would erode the ability of charter schools to operate more innovatively than regular public schools.

But Hartley said the changes would do nothing to harm charter schools that are operating successfully.

— See SENATE page B3

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Arizona Republic
February 11 1998

Charters

District 1st to shut all its charters

By Kelly Pearce
The Arizona Republic

Window Rock Unified School District entered the charter-school business two years ago to make money.

Now faced with financial troubles and allegations of mismanagement at some of the charter schools, the Navajo Indian Reservation district is the first in Arizona to close all its charter schools.

The decision to quit has angered parents of Window Rock charter-school students and again fueled a debate over the accountability of charter schools.

"They're supposed to be the ones who know what they're doing," said Kelley Peters, whose 15-year-old autistic daughter attends Mesa's Alternative Learning Charter School, part of a chain sponsored by

— Please see WINDOW ROCK, Page 415

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Mesa Tribune
January 4, 1998

Charter schools \$

Danger lurks in charter schools

BY GARY ORFIELD

The charter school movement has swept the country, offering what many say is a simple, low-cost answer to the educational crisis.

If bureaucracy and rigidity are to blame for failing schools, then why not contract groups of educators and businesses to run their own schools, using public money?

Well, it's not that simple. Charter schools are not the panacea their supporters make them out to be. Indeed, these schools are not well regulated and often fail to serve students or their communities well or fairly.

Furthermore, the flexibility and innovation ideally offered by charter schools can be achieved within public school systems and with fewer risks.

Advocates of charter schools, such as Lisa Graham Keegan, Arizona's superintendent of education, stress that charters upgrade educational standards by forcing schools to compete against one another and by attracting new players who can provide new and challenging environments for learning.

Since 1981, when a Minnesota law pioneered state charters, such schools have grown in popularity. There were 252 operating in the 1995-1996 school year; there were 428 by early 1997.

Support for them comes from high places and cuts across party lines. President George Bush favored charter schools. Last year President Clinton proposed doubling the charter school budget, and the Republican-controlled Congress approved an increase of almost 60 percent.

This support is misplaced. A charter, after all, is not an educational program. It is a school that uses public money to advance a privately defined vision of education. In one school that vision may be a

Although charter schools are required to obey the same federal regulations that apply to public schools, recent research shows that some do not provide for disabled children, while others ignore the rights of students who need instruction in English as a second language.

positive plan put into place by dedicated teachers. In another, a biased or sectarian group may have a disturbing agenda.

Last July, for instance, the Los Angeles school board narrowly avoided granting a charter to Scientologists who failed to disclose their religious orientation in their application and who planned to include the writings of L. Ron Hubbard in the curriculum. The charter was blocked almost by chance — a school board member and local reporters investigated rumors about the applicants' backgrounds and beliefs.

In Michigan, charter schools have misused public money. One school bought equipment, furniture and supplies without first soliciting competitive bids as required by state law. Another spent more than \$500,000, nearly half its budget, on illegal building renovations.

In Washington, D.C., the Board of Education considered revoking the charter of a school there after its principal assaulted a journalist.

And in Arizona, Keegan's own state, numerous schools lost their charters because of questionable fiscal dealings by the officials running them.

Of course, problems exist in public schools as well. But at least there are more systems in place to detect corruption or unapproved curricula. Renegade charter schools would be much harder to rein in.

Although charter schools are required to obey the same federal regulations that apply to public schools, recent research shows that some do not provide for disabled children, while others ignore the rights of students who need instruction in English as a second language.

Charters can limit choices even as they appear to offer them. In theory, students can choose to enroll in a particular charter school as long as there is space. In reality, those lacking their own means of transportation are at the mercy of mass transit, which is not always available. As a result, charter schools in affluent neighborhoods remain inaccessible to poor and disadvantaged children.

Charter schools in the inner city are beset with troubles. According to a study by The Detroit Free Press in 1997, test scores at some charters in high-poverty neighborhoods in Michigan were very low, with the Detroit schools performing below the city's already substandard average. Vaughn Next Century School, a charter school in Los Angeles praised by President Clinton, reported average test scores in 1997 that fell below the 30th percentile on the Stanford Nine tests used by the Los Angeles schools.

These children might have been better

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served had they been able to transfer to good suburban or magnet schools.

This leads to the most important reason why the emphasis on charter schools is misplaced. Their aims can be realized within public school districts.

Magnet schools, to name one example, have been in operation for more than 20 years and offer many of the same possibilities as charters but more equitably and on a larger scale. Most of these schools provide transportation for students who can't get there themselves. And magnet schools are usually committed to helping achieve successful voluntary desegregation.

Another alternative is the small-school movement, which calls for unsuccessful larger schools to be broken up into a number of innovative smaller schools. The idea has been successful in New York City and elsewhere.

Still another success has been the reconstitution process, pioneered in 1983 in an African-American neighborhood of San Francisco. This program emptied out failing schools and brought in energetic new staff members. They created new schools within old buildings that students from other areas of the city were eager to attend.

Of course, success stories like these don't guarantee the equal distribution of educational opportunity that our public school system sorely needs. But these approaches at least permit major reforms without the risks or the limitations of the charter process.

Gary Orfield is a professor of education at Harvard University.

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Mesa Tribune
February 11 1998

Charter*

Troubled charter school sued

Teachers, bus drivers seek \$200,000 judgment

BY NIKKI RIORDAN
THE TRIBUNE

Teachers and bus drivers are fighting back with a lawsuit for more than \$200,000 against operators of a failed Mesa charter school, saying they are owed back wages.

The 13 former employees are suing Reed Gaddie, the director of Arizona Career and Technology High School, for back wages, benefits, bonuses and summer pay.

"He took us for more than just wages here. He took our lives away," said former teacher and plaintiff Paul Johnson. "It all came down to Reed Gaddie."

Also named as defendants in the lawsuit, filed Feb. 3 in Maricopa County Superior Court, are Staci Gaddie and Arizona Vocational Technology. Arizona Vocational Technology is the limited liability company which operated the charter's three sites: Arizona Career and Technology, Destiny Advance Learning Center in Globe and Community Campus in Phoenix.

In a report published Sunday, a *Tribune* investigation into Arizona Career and Technology found mismanagement

and lack of oversight. Paul and Janet Johnson believe they are owed more than \$7,000 each in back wages, benefits, bonuses and summer pay promised in their contracts.

"We don't have any personal vendetta against Reed Gaddie ... but we don't work for free. We want our money," said Janet Johnson, who taught computer classes at Arizona Career and Technology. She now teaches at Fountain Hills High School.

Angela Wilson, the plaintiffs' lawyer, is confident a judgment will be rendered in her clients' favor. But she questions whether they will ever get

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MESA TRIBUNE
JANUARY 20 1998

★ *Chantel Shover*

Lessons from charter school mess

The normally tranquil halls of learning have been anything but tranquil the past few days at the Arizona Career and Technology High School in Mesa.

After the money dried up, after the teachers left because they weren't being paid, after the charter school all but collapsed, parents moved in to keep the place going and students camped out all night to make sure it wouldn't be closed.

It is a nasty situation, one that involves the high stakes of children's educations and futures. It also is a situation that contains several lessons.

First: Those who operate charter schools (in this case it was the Window Rock Unified School District, but it could be anyone) should be held strictly accountable for how they run the places. This particular crisis was brought on by shockingly shoddy record-keeping at the school; it was impossible to know even how many students were showing up for

class on a given day.

Second: Parents ought to make sure before signing their kids up for a particular school that it does meet basic educational and management standards. One of the parents said in the wake of this fiasco, "I guess it's a live-and-learn experience." True indeed. The old saying of look before you leap applies.

Third: This one meltdown does not in itself discredit the charter school movement. It appears to be an anomaly, inasmuch as other charter schools seem to be thriving and producing good results.

Fourth: The Legislature should provide some emergency funding for school districts that must accommodate the displaced students when a charter school suddenly closes.

If educators and parents learn those lessons, then the disaster at Arizona Career and Technology will have had at least some beneficial fallout.



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF MEMORANDUM

One East Main Street, Suite 401; P.O. Box 2536; Madison, WI 53701-2536
Telephone (608) 266-1304
Fax (608) 266-3830

DATE: January 27, 1998
TO: REPRESENTATIVE LUTHER S. OLSEN
FROM: Jane R. Henkel, Deputy Director
SUBJECT: LRBs0403/2, An Assembly Substitute Amendment to 1997 Assembly Bill 631, Relating to Charter Schools

This memorandum provides an analysis of LRBs0403/2, an Assembly substitute amendment to 1997 Assembly Bill 631, relating to charter schools. 1997 Assembly Bill 631 was introduced by you and others; cosponsored by Senator Darling and others. LRBs0403/1 was prepared at your request.

The Assembly Education Committee held a public hearing on Assembly Bill 631 on December 2, 1997. It will hold an executive session on the Bill on January 27, 1998.

A. ASSEMBLY BILL 631

Assembly Bill 631, as originally introduced, makes the following changes to current law:

1. Under current law, a school board may contract with an "individual or group" to operate a charter school. Assembly Bill 631 authorizes a school board to contract with a "person" (includes an individual, partnership, association or politic or corporate body) to operate a charter school.

2. Current law provides that a school board may not enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located outside the school district, except that if two or more school boards enter into an agreement under s. 66.30, Stats., to establish a charter school, the charter school shall be located within one of the school districts. Assembly Bill 631 provides that if one or more school districts enter into an agreement with the board of control of a cooperative educational service agency (CESA) to establish a charter school, the charter school must be located within the boundaries of the CESA. The Bill also expands the powers of CESAs to authorize them to contract with one or more school boards to operate a charter school.

3. Current law prohibits a school board, other than the Milwaukee Public School (MPS) Board, from entering into a contract that would result in the conversion of a private school to a charter school. Assembly Bill 631 amends this prohibition so that it applies only to the conversion of a private, *sectarian* school. (Under the Bill, as under current law, no prohibition on the conversion of private schools to charter schools applies to MPS.)

4. Current law requires a school board to give preference in awarding contracts for the operation of charter schools to those charter schools that serve children at risk. Under 1997 Wisconsin Act 27 (the Biennial Budget Act), this requirement also applies to charter schools established by the common council of the City of Milwaukee, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee or the Milwaukee Area Technical College District Board. Assembly Bill 631 repeals this requirement.

5. Current law provides that all charter schools, except for MPS charter schools, are instrumentalities of the school district in which they are located and the school board of those districts must employ all the charter school personnel. (In MPS, the MPS Board shall determine whether or not the charter school is an instrumentality of the school district.) Assembly Bill 631 repeals this provision.

B. LRBs0403/2

LRBs0403/2 makes the following changes to Assembly Bill 631 as originally introduced:

1. Applies to the MPS the same provision, relating to the conversion of a private, sectarian school to a charter school, that applies to other charter schools. As a result, the MPS Board may not enter into a contract that would result in the conversion of a *private, sectarian* school to a charter school. (This modifies item A., 3., above.)

2. Provides that, for all charter schools, the school board shall determine whether or not the charter school is an instrumentality of the school district. If the school board determines that the charter school is an instrumentality of the school district, the school board shall employ all personnel for the charter school. If the school board determines that a charter school is not an instrumentality of the school district, the school board may not employ any personnel for the charter school. This is similar to the provision that currently applies to MPS charter schools. Also, the draft clarifies that the charter school teachers who may participate in the Wisconsin Retirement System are those who are employed in charter schools which are instrumentalities of a school district. (This modifies item A., 5., above.)

JRH:jt:rv;jt

WCSA

Wisconsin Charter School Association

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Strengthening Education Through Innovation & Public School Choice

TO: SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS
FROM: Terri McCormick President WCSA

SB 383

I support SB 383 as a first step measure, for defining public charter schools within the existing public school structure in the state of Wisconsin.

As President of the Wisconsin Charter School Association, I draw your attention to the 1994 Bipartisan Congressional Record dated September 28, 1994 H10089, H10090, H10091 Part C-Public Charter Schools, sec. 10301: Findings and Purpose of Public Charter Schools:

"(a) Findings. - The Congress finds that

"(1) enhancement of parent and student choices among public schools can assist in promoting comprehensive educational reform and give more students the opportunity to learn challenging State content standards and challenging State student performance standards, if sufficiently diverse and high-quality choices, and genuine opportunities to take advantage of such choices, are available to all students.

As Wisconsin state legislators: you must ask yourself how the current Wisconsin Education system plans to "enhance parent and student choices." How does Wisconsin assist its public school districts in promoting comprehensive educational reforms based on student achievement. And finally, which programs in the state offer "high-quality choices and genuine opportunities for all students."

The answer to these questions lie, in part with SB 383. SB 383 would expand the public charter school law in the following ways:

- a. Authorizes a CESA board of control to contract with one or more school boards to operate a charter school. (Offering collaborative opportunities with other educational professionals)
- b. Repeals current law that prohibits a school board from contracting with a charter school resulting from the conversion of a private, nonsectarian school. (Offering a broader definition of public schools serving all children)

- c. Repeals the current law's requirement that a charter school must be an instrumentality of the school district and the school board shall employ all personnel for the charter school. (Creating more opportunities for professional teachers and educators in the administration and collaboration stages)
- d. Authorizes a school board to contract with a partnership, individual, association or corporate entity to operate a charter school. (Providing more choices to school boards in order to meet the needs of a diverse student population)
- e. Eliminates the current law's requirement that a school board give preference to contracting with charter schools that serve children at risk. (Creating consistent definitions of public charter schools with that of President Bill Clinton and Secretary of Education Richard Riley.)

Without SB383 as a first step, the state of Wisconsin can not hope to meet the demanding Federal Department of Education criteria for public charter school funding. Public charter schools challenge all public school counterparts to *look within* in order create quality public innovations, and quality public school choices that will meet the needs of all students.

As President of the WCSA, I urge you to vote for SB 383 as a first step toward meeting the needs of all students in the state of Wisconsin. Public Charter Schools may not discriminate against any student, for any purpose. Public charter schools must willingly be held accountable for student academic performance. Please support Wisconsin public schools through your support of Wisconsin public charter schools.

I urge you to remember the Congressional definition of public charter schools, and the rigorous accountability standards placed on these public entites. Please continue to ask yourselves as legislators how you may help foster the growth of innovation in public education, through the development of public charter schools.

Thank you,

Terri McCormick

Terri McCormick
President of the Wisconsin Charter School Association