

# **Wisconsin Charter Schools: Legislative Council Special Committee on Charter Schools**

Brian Pahnke, Assistant State Superintendent  
Robert Soldner, School Management Services Director  
September 26, 2006

# Charter Schools-Legislative History

1993

- New state charter school law allows 10 school boards to establish up to 2 charter schools in each district. All charter schools must be approved by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

1995

- Legislation removes statewide and school district cap on the number of charter schools that may be created and the State Superintendent's approval of their creation.
- Other legislative changes include:
  - Allowing two or more school boards to enter into contracts to establish charter schools.
  - Requiring the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) school board to approve or deny petitions it receives to create a charter school within 30 days after it holds a public hearing. Also, charter school petitioners denied by MPS are allowed to appeal a denial to the State Superintendent.
  - Allowing MPS to convert private schools into charter schools.

# Charter Schools Legislative History (cont.)

1997

- Legislation authorizes UW-Milwaukee, City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee Area Technical College to create charter schools (“independent” charter schools) within Milwaukee that enroll pupils from Milwaukee.

1998

- All school boards in Wisconsin are allowed to convert private non-religious schools into charter schools.
- All school boards are provided with the authority to determine whether a charter school is an instrumentality of the school district or not.
- School boards are also allowed to contract with CESAs to establish charter schools.

1999

- Legislation allows “independent” charter schools to become eligible for state special education categorical aid.

# Charter Schools Legislative History (cont.)

2001

- Legislation authorizes UW-Parkside to establish or contract to establish an independent charter school in Racine.

2003

- Woodlands School in Milwaukee is authorized by state law as an independent charter school (UW-Milwaukee is authorizer) to enroll certain pupils that do not reside in Milwaukee.

2005

- Prior year attendance requirements for enrollment in independent charter schools in Milwaukee and Racine are eliminated.



# Current Wisconsin Charter School Laws

Generally, Wisconsin charter statutes:

- Outline what a charter school can and cannot do;
- Specify who can sponsor or authorize a charter school and the requirements that must be followed to do so;
- Identify what must be included in a contract between an authorizer and the charter school;
- Note the conditions that allow an authorizer to revoke a charter; and
- Clarify the legal status of a charter school and its employees.



# Current Wisconsin Charter School Laws

## Charter school contracts:

- Have 16 specific items, including 15 items in a petition filed to create a charter school and the amount of funding paid by the authorizer to the charter school for each year of the contract.
- May be for any term not exceeding 5 school years. At the end of the term, the authorizer granting the charter may renew the school's contract.
- May include one or more school boards and a CESA.

# Current Wisconsin Charter School Laws

Under Wisconsin law, charter schools are exempt from most state requirements; however, they must do the following:

- Participate in the state assessment system;
- Complete the annual School Performance Report;
- Count their students for membership in the Local Educational Agency (LEA);
- Require all teachers be licensed by the DPI; and
- Be nonsectarian in their programs, admissions, employment practices and operations.

# Current Wisconsin Charter School Laws

In addition, Wisconsin charter schools are legally required to:

- Be open to all students in the district (charter schools are prohibited from discrimination);
- Follow all federal and state health and safety requirements of public schools; and
- Not charge tuition to attend.





# Charter Schools Data (1996-97 to 2006-07)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Charter Schools</b>
1996-97	13
1997-98	18
1998-99	40
1999-00	63
2000-01	86
2001-02	109
2002-03	129
2003-04	134
2004-05	161
2005-06	183
2006-07	188

# 2006-07 Charter Schools Data-Authorizers

<b><u>Authorizer</u></b>	<b><u>Total Eligible</u></b>	<b><u>Total Actual</u></b>
School Board	425	94
Universities/Technical Colleges	3	2
Municipalities	1	1

# 2006-07 Charter Schools Data by Authorizer

<u>Authorizer</u>	<u># of Charter Schools</u>
School Boards	173
UW-Milwaukee	9
City of Milwaukee	5
UW-Parkside	1
Overall Total	188

# 2006-07 Charter Schools-Instrumentality Status

## Types of Charter Schools

## # of Charter Schools

School Board-Instrumentality of District	151
School Board-Non-Instrumentality of District	22
Non-School Board-Non-Instrumentality (Independent Charter Authorizers)	15
Total	188