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ABSTRACT

In this report, Connecticut's Task Force on Charter Schools recommends enacting legislation to establish six pilot charter schools to begin operation in fall 1994. As public schools or educational programs operating under a State Board of Education charter, charter schools would be: committed to quality student outcomes; staffed and controlled by certified teachers; and open to all students on an equal opportunity basis. The main body of the report consists of specific recommendations using a question-answer-discussion format. Church-related charter schools would not be permitted, and private schools would be ineligible to apply for charters. Like other state public schools, charter schools would be accountable for student achievement and assessment results. Teachers would be empowered to govern their charter school facilities; they would determine their school's curriculum and policies, develop annual budgets, set salaries, establish their own tenure rules, and make all employment decisions. Regulatory control would be minimal. Parents could choose to enroll their children in a charter school or withdraw them if dissatisfied with the school's performance. Because charter schools could draw enrollment from more than one town, they could attract diverse student bodies. For each child enrolled, a charter school would receive payment from the district where the student resides equal to 90 percent of the net current per pupil expenditure. Included are a proposed time line, a copy of the proposed statutory authority, and a report summary.

(MLH)

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ED 357 426

REPORT OF THE
CONNECTICUT TASK FORCE ON
CHARTER SCHOOLS

Prepared for the
Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
and the
Connecticut State Board of Education
Pursuant to Public Act 91-285

February 7, 1992

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The Connecticut Task Force
on Charter Schools

February 17, 1992

Mr. John Mannix, Chairperson
Connecticut State Board of Education

Senator Kevin Sullivan, Co-Chairperson
Education Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Representative Nancy Wyman, Co-Chairperson
Education Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Dear Mr. Mannix, Senator Sullivan & Representative Wyman:

I am pleased to present herewith the Report of the Task Force on Charter Schools, which has been prepared pursuant to Public Act 91-285: An Act Concerning Innovative Educational Programs. Since convening in the fall of 1991, our group has met on nine occasions to explore the concept of charter schools and to consider ways in which it might contribute to the welfare of children and the improvement of public education in Connecticut.

The Task Force has concluded that the charter schools idea is of sufficient merit to warrant the creation of a limited number of pilot Charter Schools. We believe that such pilots would help to determine the degree of teacher and parent interest in alternatives to existing forms of public education. They would also provide tangible evidence of the extent to which charter schools can contribute to the improvement of student performance.

This report represents the view of the majority of the Task Force members who voted seven to one to endorse it. It does not necessarily represent the views of the various organizations with which the Task Force members are associated. These groups reserve the right to make their own comments on the charter schools proposal, either in writing or at public hearings.

Charter Schools represent only one of many ways to improve our public schools. We encourage concerned educators and citizens to continue pursuing other reforms intended to render public education more effective for all of the children of Connecticut.

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We appreciate this opportunity to bring the concept of charter schools to the attention of the General Assembly and the State Board of Education. We look forward to discussing our recommendations with you during the weeks ahead.

Sincerely yours,

Stephen C. Tracy, Chairperson
Task Force on Charter Schools

Members of the Charter Schools Task Force

| <u>Task Force Members</u> | <u>Appointed by</u> |
|---|---|
| Richard Farr Connecticut Association of Boards of Education | Majority Leader of the House of Representatives |
| Brian J. Flaherty State Representative from the 68th District | Ranking House Member of the Education Committee |
| Karen A. Hores Connecticut Education Association | Speaker of the House |
| Marie Iannazzi Principal, Cranberry Elementary School Norwalk, Connecticut | Ranking Senate Member of the Education Committee |
| Lauren Weisberg Kaufman Connecticut Business and Industry Association | President Pro Tempore of the Senate |
| John R. Reed Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents | Minority Leader of the House |
| George Springer Connecticut State Federation of Teachers | Minority Leader of the Senate |

| <u>Task Force Members</u> | <u>Appointed by</u> |
|--|--|
| Betty Sternberg Connecticut State Department of Education | Commissioner of Education |
| Jane Tedder Regional Education Service Center Directors | Majority Leader of the Senate |
| John W. Thompson State Representative from the 13th District | House Chair of the Education Committee |
| Stephen C. Tracy, Chairperson New Milford, Connecticut | Senate Chair of the Education Committee |

REPORT OF THE CONNECTICUT TASK FORCE
ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

Summary

Connecticut's Charter Schools Task Force was established in 1991 by Public Act 91-285: An Act Concerning Innovative Educational Programs. The Task Force was charged with studying the feasibility of establishing Charter Schools under the auspices of the State Board of Education.

The Task Force recommends enactment of legislation to establish six pilot Charter Schools which would commence operation in the fall of 1994.

Charter Schools are Public Schools:

A Charter School is a public school that operates under a charter granted by the State Board of Education. It is committed to quality student outcomes, staffed and controlled by certified teachers, publicly funded and open to all students on an equal opportunity basis.

Because the proposed Charter Schools would be public schools, church related Charter Schools would not be permitted. Existing private schools would not be eligible to apply for charters.

Charter Schools would be Accountable for Student Achievement:

Like any other public school in Connecticut, Charter Schools would be committed to achieving the goals that are enumerated in Connecticut's Common Core of Learning. Charter School students would participate in all required assessment activities, including the state mastery testing program. Testing results would be available to the public as a basis for informed parent choice and as a means of measuring the impact of the Charter Schools on student achievement.

Charter Schools would Empower Teachers:

Charter Schools would be governed by their faculties. Teachers would determine their school's curriculum and policies, develop the annual budget, set salaries, establish their own tenure rules and make all employment decisions. Teachers would decide

whether to employ any administrative or support personnel, and whether to purchase services from other organizations.

The same collective bargaining laws that apply to existing public schools would apply to Charter Schools.

Because Charter Schools teachers would accept an unusual degree of accountability for the performance of their students, they should be provided with considerable autonomy in the operation of their schools. Regulatory control should be held to a minimum, modeled on the requirements imposed through the state's non-public school approval process. Charter School teachers should be able to request the waiver of specific state regulations through their charter applications.

Charter Schools would Empower Parents:

Parents could choose to enroll their children in a Charter School as an alternative to traditional public schools. Parents could withdraw their children if they were not satisfied with the Charter School's performance. As a result, they would be respected as important partners in the educational process.

Charter Schools would Promote Equal Opportunity:

Because Charter Schools could draw enrollment from more than one town, they would be able to attract more diverse student bodies than those of many traditional public schools.

Charter Schools would be Cost Effective:

For every child who enrolls, a Charter School would receive payment from the school district in which the student resides, equal to 90% of the district's Net Current Expenditures per pupil. These payments would be deducted from the district's Educational Cost Sharing grant. Thus the Charter Schools program could be implemented at no new cost to the taxpayer.

Charter School teachers could also apply for and receive funds from other public and private sources.

Introduction

The need for dramatic improvements in public education is widely acknowledged by parents, educators, business leaders and other concerned citizens throughout our state. Clearly, the quality of our lives and the prosperity of our nation will be jeopardized unless our schools respond effectively to the challenge of global economic competition.

Providing a world class education for all of Connecticut's children will require fundamental changes in the ways public schools are structured. The Task Force believes that the charter schools concept represents one approach to the reform of public education that is worthy of consideration and further development.

As defined by the Task Force, the term "charter school" means a public school or educational program that is:

1. operated under a charter granted by the State Board of Education;
2. committed to quality outcomes for students and performance based assessments, consistent with the Connecticut Common Core of Learning;
3. staffed and controlled by certified teachers;
4. publicly funded; and
5. open to all students.

The Task Force believes that the charter schools concept could result in important improvements to public education, for the following reasons:

1. Charter schools would allow for reform and change within the public system.
2. Charter schools would promote professionalism for teachers.
3. Charter schools would provide for a focus on outcomes for students.
4. Charter schools could result in a more responsive system of public education.

5. Charter schools would provide for a more active role for parents and teachers in the creation and implementation of new schools.
6. Charter schools represent a response to dissatisfaction with the present system.
7. Charter schools would invite those now in the system of public education to try new ideas, to stretch, to try things that they may not be able to do under the current system.
8. Charter schools could be a useful vehicle for promoting quality integrated education on a voluntary basis.

A school reform proposal makes sense only to the extent that it provides teachers, parents and students with the wherewithal to improve the quality of learning. The welfare and growth of children must remain the focus of attention. The Task Force urges the Connecticut General Assembly and the State Board of Education to support the pilot Charter Schools program described on the following pages. We believe it could make a significant contribution to the cause of public education in our state.

Task Force Recommendations

The legislation that established the Charter Schools Task Force directed it to address nine particular areas of concern. The following recommendations are grouped in accordance with those nine areas. For each area, we identify the issues that we believe are important and recommend a specific course of action.

1. Governance

Issue: Who should be empowered to grant charters for the pilot Charter Schools?

Recommendation: Charters should be granted by the State board of Education.

Discussion: Vesting the authority to grant charters in the State Board of Education will promote consistency in the approval of applications from across the state. Board action on a charter application would be taken on the recommendation of the Commissioner following staff review.

Issue: What should a charter and charter application consist of?

Recommendation: A charter application should include:

- The philosophy, mission and purpose of the proposed school, and a description of the instructional approach and comprehensiveness of the school's offerings.
- Information about the background, qualifications and certification of the teachers who propose to create the school;
- A general description of the school's organization, in terms of ages or grades

to be taught and the total enrollment to be served;

- a highlighting of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and understandings called for in Connecticut's Common Core of Learning which the school will address;
- a description of enrollment procedures which will ensure public notice and open access for all students, without regard to wealth, race, handicap or past academic performance.
- a description of the means by which student learning will be assessed, including participation in all state mandated testing and performance assessment programs, and the ways in which results will be used for purposes of program improvement;
- a plan of governance.
- evidence of outreach and support. including consultation with local or regional boards of education.
- a description of the means by which the school intends to meet facilities, transportation, health and welfare requirements.
- a five year plan for developing and sustaining the school's operation.
- a list of any state regulatory waivers that the school may wish to request.

Issue:

What role should Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) play in the development of proposals for pilot Charter Schools?

Recommendation:

Teachers wishing to apply for a charter to operate a pilot Charter School should receive assistance from and submit their proposals to the RESC in their area of the state. The most promising charter proposals should then be submitted to the State Board of Education on

the recommendation of the Board of Directors of each RESC. (2)

Discussion: This approach will insure higher quality proposals and will provide for a distribution of pilot programs around the state.

Issue: How many pilot Charter Schools should be approved?

Recommendation: A total of six pilot schools should be approved, to begin operation in the fall of 1994. Each RESC should be invited to recommend up to three charter applications. Depending on the merits of the applications, the State Board of Education should seek to approve pilot schools in several regions of the state. (3)

Discussion: Because the Charter Schools concept does not prescribe any one model of how a school should be run, it is important that several pilot Charter Schools be placed in operation. If just one pilot is offered, the impression might be created that it is the only kind of Charter School that is possible. Also, six pilots will provide a richer picture of how the Charter Schools concept should be refined and how it might contribute to the future of public education on Connecticut.

Issue: What should be the role of local boards of education in the pilot Charter Schools effort?

Recommendation: Charter applicants should share their proposals with local boards of education in the areas from which they intend to draw students. Local boards should be afforded the opportunity to comment on the Charter application.

Discussion: Consultation and cooperation between Charter Schools and local boards of education should be encouraged. However, local boards should not have the authority to "veto" the creation of a Charter School.

Issue: For what period of time should the charters for the pilot Charter Schools be valid?

Recommendation: Five years.

Discussion: An interim review of the pilot Charter Schools, including a review of student performance, should be conducted by the State Department of Education after three years of operation. After five years, each of the pilot schools should be examined, either directly by the State Department of Education, or by an accrediting agency acting on behalf of the Department. The focus of the examination should be on the School's compliance with the provisions of its charter and on the performance of its students. On the basis of the examination, the State Board of Education should vote whether or not to renew the charters.

Issue: Under what circumstances should a charter be revoked or not renewed?

Recommendation: The State Board of Education should be empowered to revoke the charter of a Charter School if the school was found to be in violation of a provision of the charter, or if, over a period of years, the school's students were found not to be making reasonable progress in their learning. A school whose charter is being considered for revocation should be given adequate notice and opportunity to correct any problems or challenge any alleged violations prior to the loss of the charter.

Issue: Could an existing private school become a Charter School?

Recommendation: No.

Discussion: Charter Schools are public schools. They are open to enrollment by all students without tuition and without selectivity on the basis of wealth, race, handicap or past academic performance. Therefore, charter applications

should be accepted only from certified educators who wish to create new public schools, either on their own or in conjunction with local school districts.

Issue: Should church related Charter Schools be permitted?

Recommendation: No.

Discussion: Because they are "public schools", Charter Schools should be held to the same restrictions regarding separation of church and state as apply to other public schools in Connecticut.

Issue: How should the Charter Schools themselves be governed?

Recommendation: Decisions as to the internal governance of Charter Schools should be left up to the teachers who create them. The governance plan should be spelled out in the charter application. Essentially, Charter Schools should be governed by their faculties, in a manner described by the teachers who create them.

Discussion: Some Charter School applicants may decide to have all decisions by vote of the faculty; some may favor the election of representatives from the faculty to make decisions; others may wish to elect a "managing partner" to make certain decisions. There are many other possibilities. The essential point is that, as with other professional partnerships, decisions about governance should be left up to the professionals who create the organization.

2. Organization

Issue: How should Charter Schools be organized?

Recommendation: Decisions as to the organization of each Charter School should be left to the teachers who establish the school. Key organizational plans (including the grade levels or age levels of children to be served and the approximate size of the school's enrollment) should be spelled out in the charter application.

Discussion: Again, an important part of treating teachers as true professional lies in empowering them to make their own decisions about the organization of their school. Rather than prescribing one best model, the state should encourage teachers to develop a variety of organizational approaches.

3. Enrollment

Issue: What should the enrollment of a Charter School be?

Recommendation: The size of a charter school should be determined by the faculty.

Discussion: A group of professionals should be allowed to determine the number of clients that it wishes to serve.

Issue: Should a Charter School serve only students who live in the town in which it is located?

Recommendation: Charter School enrollments should not be limited by town boundaries. Any student who is a resident of Connecticut should be allowed to enroll in a Charter School.

Discussion: Since Charter Schools operate under the authority of the State Board of Education, they need not restrict enrollment to any particular town. Also, because their enrollment areas can extend beyond town boundaries, Charter Schools can help achieve the goal of equal opportunity by attracting more diverse student bodies than those of traditional public schools.

(4) School Supervision & Staffing

Issue: Who should be allowed to apply for and receive a charter to operate a Charter School?

Recommendation: Individuals who have received certificates to teach in the state of Connecticut from the Department of Education.

Discussion: Requiring that charter applicants hold state teaching certificates provides assurance that Charter School faculties consist of individuals who have met the same educational and training requirements as teachers in traditional public schools. While a Charter School faculty might choose to employ non-certified individuals to serve in paraprofessional or support positions, the "charter" faculty members who govern the school should hold Connecticut teaching certificates.

Issue: What should the minimum size of a Charter School faculty be?

Recommendation: Two certified educators.

Discussion: A minimum size of two would provide for the benefits of teamwork and collaboration, while not being overly restrictive.

Issue: Within a Charter School, should teachers be permitted to teach outside of their areas of certification?

Recommendation: Yes. Areas in which teachers intend to provide instruction should be described in their charter application.

Discussion: Because Charter Schools are likely to be relatively small, they probably would not employ a sufficient number of specialists to meet all traditional certification requirements. Therefore, beyond requiring possession of a state teaching certificate, specific certification area requirements should

be waived. Such waivers are justified by the fact that Charter Schools are outcome oriented. The emphasis is on the performance of the students, not on the certification endorsements of the faculty.

Issue: What sort of supervisory or management positions should exist in a Charter School?

Recommendation: Decisions about supervisory or management positions should be left up to the teachers who create each Charter School.

Discussion: The very word "supervision" reflects a non-professional view of teaching (as in "teachers are people who need to be supervised"). The Charter Schools idea reflects a professional view of teaching (as in "teachers are people who are in charge of their schools; they do not need to be 'supervised'").

The decision as to whether any management or administrative positions are needed in a Charter School should be up to the faculty of the school. Any such administrators would be employed by and would report to the teachers, rather than the other way around.

Issue: What protection should be extended to current public school teachers (in terms of tenure, seniority, benefits, etc.) who wish to establish a Charter School?

Recommendation: Teachers currently practicing in the public schools of Connecticut should be entitled to a two year leave of absence from their positions in order to found a Charter School. Said leave should be without compensation, since teachers would be compensated through their Charter School. Teachers should have the option of purchasing insurance coverage from their school districts at the applicable COBRA rates during their period of leave. At the end of the two year period, teachers would either return to their former teaching posts (at the same point that they left their districts in terms of tenure, seniority and pay) or, if they

chose to continue with the Charter School, they would resign from their school district position.

Discussion:

Practicing teachers should be provided with a "safety net" in case their venture with Charter Schools does not work out. At some point, however, a teacher would need to decide whether or not to abandon the relative security of a traditional teaching position for the control and autonomy of the Charter School.

Issue:

Should the Charter Schools program enable home schooling parents to receive funds for the education of their own children?

Recommendation:

No.

Discussion:

The Charter Schools proposal is intended to support the creation of new public schools open to all children. It is not meant to provide a subsidy for home schooling.

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(5) School Facilities

Issue: How and where will Charter Schools be housed?

Recommendation: Decisions regarding facilities for a Charter School should be made by the teachers who operate it.

Discussion: Like all other important decisions, decisions about facilities for a Charter School should be made by the teachers who obtain the charter.

A Charter School faculty might decide to lease space from an existing elementary or secondary school, from a college or university, or from some other source. Charter applicants should include information about their facilities plans in the application.

Issue: What requirements should be imposed on facilities for charter schools?

Recommendation: Charter schools should be held to the same building code, fire, safety and sanitation requirements as are currently required of private schools that seek state approval.

Discussion: Between the time that a charter is awarded and the time that a Charter School begins operation, the specific facility would be identified and made available for inspection by local and state officials. The same mechanism that the State Department of Education has in place for the approval of facilities for non-public schools should be used for the approval of Charter School facilities. This process covers fire, safety, health, welfare and sanitation requirements. (See A Summary of Connecticut Statutes and Regulations Relating to Non-Public Schools, State Department of Education, December, 1990.)

(6) Funding Sources

Issue: Where should the money for Charter Schools come from?

Recommendation: Primary funding for each Charter School should come from the local school districts in which the Charter School's students reside.

Discussion: This proposal is similar to the means by which student participation in vocational agriculture programs is currently financed. When a student decides to enroll in a vo-ag program, the school district in which the student resides is billed for the tuition.

There are two advantages in requiring local school districts to provide funding for students who enroll in Charter Schools:

1. By allowing education dollars to follow the student, the Charter Schools plan can be implemented at no new cost to state or local taxpayers.
2. Because existing districts would "lose" dollars with every student that attends a Charter School, districts would have an incentive to improve the quality of their programs so that parents would not choose to remove their children to a Charter School. This incentive for quality represents an important benefit for the majority of students who would continue to attend traditional public schools.

Issue: How should the payments to be paid to a Charter School by a local school district be calculated and collected?

Recommendation: The local school district should pay an amount equal to 90% of its Net Current Expenditure Per Pupil for each of its resident students who is enrolled in a Charter School.

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Current operating expenses for each Charter School should be funded by the state, at a level equal to 90% of the Net Current Expenditures of the districts in which its students reside. These funds would be directed to the Regional Educational Service Centers for the regions in which the Charter Schools are located. The state should recover this cost in the following year by deducting it from the Educational Cost Sharing grant payments to the districts in which Charter School students reside.

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Discussion:

This approach has several advantages:

- It leaves local school districts with a significant balance with which to cover "fixed overhead" -- costs that do not necessarily go down just because a few students leave for a Charter School. Districts would not give up 100% of their Net Current Expenditure, but only 90%. Also, the Net Current Expenditures calculation excludes significant local district expenditures for construction, transportation and special education. 100% of these resources would be retained by local districts.
- It accounts for regional variations in costs and educational expenditures.
- It assures that charter schools will not operate at a financial advantage vis-a-vis traditional public schools. (In fact, Charter Schools would have to be more cost effective than traditional public schools, since they would operate on less money per pupil than that spent by the local districts in which their students reside.)
- It assures that teachers and parents who are involved in Charter Schools will continue to be concerned about adequate funding for "traditional" public schools. One of the criticisms of "parent choice" is that it would undermine support for existing public schools because parents who had enrolled their children in schools of choice would no longer care about the

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funding of public education. By connecting Charter School funding to per pupil expenditures in local school districts, we insure continued financial support for traditional public schools on the part of Charter School participants.

- Deducting Charter Schools costs from ECS grants for the year after a pupil enrolls in a Charter School would enable local districts to anticipate the impact of Charter School enrollments on their revenues and expenses, rather than being caught by surprise in the current year. !!

If the state's fiscal circumstances improve for the 1994-95 fiscal year (the year in which the proposed pilot Charter Schools would commence operations), consideration should be given to establishing a grant program that would further cushion the impact of Charter School enrollments on local districts. (8)

Issue:

Should Charter Schools be allowed to charge tuition to the parents of the children whom they enroll?

Recommendation:

No.

Discussion:

Since Charter Schools are public schools, they should not charge tuition to the parents of children whom they enroll. Since Charter Schools would receive substantial funding via local school districts, tuition charges to families should not be necessary. Also, a "no tuition" approach is important because it helps to insure equal access to Charter Schools for children whose families are not in a position to pay.

Issue:

Should a Charter School be allowed to receive grants from public and private sources?

Recommendation:

Yes.

Discussion:

Like any other public school, a Charter School should be able to apply for and receive state and federal grants, foundation awards and private gifts consistent with its mission. Such assistance should be allowed up to the point where the Net Current Expenses of a pilot Charter School equals the highest Net Current Expenditure among the school districts from which it draws its pupils. If the pilot Charter Schools are to be replicated in other communities in future years, it is important that their success not be attributed to unusually high levels of spending.

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Issue:

Should successful charter applicants be provided with "seed money" with which to help organize and launch their Charter School?

Recommendation:

Yes. Charter School applicants should be encouraged to apply for planning funds through existing state grant programs, including the Interdistrict Cooperative Grant. It is recommended that funds for the Interdistrict Grant be expanded from the current \$2 million to \$2.5 million, and that 5% of these funds be set aside for the planning of Charter Schools consistent with the purposes of the grant. Applicants should also be encouraged to seek planning funds through other state and federal programs, and from private sources.

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(7) Multicultural Performance and Outcome-Based Education in Accordance with the Connecticut Common Core of Learning

Issue: What requirements should Charter Schools be held to with respect to goals for student learning?

Recommendation: Charter Schools should be required to address the outcomes described in Connecticut's Common Core of Learning. Charter applicants should affirm their commitment to the Common Core in their application and describe the particular aspects of the Common Core that they plan to emphasize.

Discussion: An important aspect of any public school is the commitment to pursue certain publicly endorsed goals for student learning. Fortunately, Connecticut issued a very clear statement of its goals for learning in 1987, in the form of the Common Core of Learning. The Common Core includes important expectations in the realm of multicultural education under the heading of "Understandings and Applications". These expectations should apply equally to all public schools in the state, including Charter Schools.

Issue: How will student outcomes be measured?

Recommendation: Students in Charter Schools should be subject to the same performance measures as required by the state for all other public school students. This should include the existing mastery testing program, as well as new forms of assessment (portfolios, etc.) that may be required in the future.

Beyond the performance measures required by the state, the faculty of each Charter School should be encouraged to establish additional means by which to assess and report the progress of their students. These assessment strategies should be set forth in the charter application.

Charter Schools should be required to report the results of student assessments to the parents of their students, to the State Board of Education, to the school districts in which their student reside, and to the public at large.

Student performance data should be available to the State Department of Education, to colleges and universities and other organizations for research purposes.

Discussion:

A key premise of the Charter Schools idea is that it will result in improved learning for students. Therefore the assessment and reporting of outcomes is essential. Parents will want this information so that they can make intelligent decisions about whether to enroll their children in a Charter School. Research findings about the performance of Charter School students could inform and improve practices in traditional public schools.

Issue:

What instructional strategies and materials should Charter Schools be required to employ?

Recommendation:

None.

Discussion:

Charter Schools should be required to address the goals of the Common Core and to participate in state assessment programs. However, the means by which they organize and deliver instruction should be left up to their teachers.

Charter Schools legislation should not prescribe any particular instructional methodology. Charter Schools should be encouraged to seek improvement through a variety of instructional approaches. The Charter Schools plan should promote ownership and commitment on the part of teachers by allowing them to teach in the manner that they believe will be most effective in achieving the goals of the Common Core. Charter Schools teachers who plan to emphasize a particular instructional approach should describe that approach in their charter.

(8) Parental Participation

Issue: Who should decide to enroll a child in a Charter School?

Recommendation: The decision to apply for membership in a Charter School should be left up to each child's parent. Parents should retain the right to remove their children from a Charter School and return them to the public school serving their community.

Discussion: Parent choice is critical to the viability of the Charter School concept for three reasons:

- Because Charter Schools may be different from traditional public schools, it would not be appropriate to compel a family to participate. Participation should be voluntary on the part of families as well as teachers;
- Because Charter Schools would be run by teachers, parents could not turn to a board of education or an administrator to correct those aspects of school operations to which they might object. In the absence of the traditional political/bureaucratic forms of accountability, parents need the right to enroll their students in the Charter School of their choice and to withdraw the student if they see fit. It is through choice that Charter Schools assure responsiveness and accountability to parents without a bureaucratic structure to tell teachers how to teach.
- We believe that parents who have had a real say in the selection of a school for their children are more likely to support the school and help it to be successful.

Issue: What if parents are not well informed about the educational choices available to them in Charter Schools?

Recommendation:

Regional Education Service Centers should provide parents with relevant information about the Charter Schools in their areas.

Discussion:

It would be useful for parents to have access to information about Charter Schools in some common format, including the contents of the school's charter and data about student performance. Charter Schools themselves could be expected to provide various forms of information and orientation in order to attract enrollment.

Issue:

How often should a parent be allowed to change the enrollment of a child into or out of a Charter School?

Recommendation:

Children who are enrolled in a Charter School should be expected to remain there for at least a semester. Students who wish to enroll in a Charter School should be allowed to do so only at the beginning of the fall or spring semester. These arrangements would minimize the disruption the would result from children moving between Charter Schools and regular public schools during the year.

Issue:

What forms of parental participation should be required in the operation of a Charter School?

Recommendation:

None.

Discussion:

The faculty of each charter school should determine the forms that parental participation will take, in consultation with the parents.

Mandated forms of parent involvement are only necessary in schools in which the parents have no choice and therefore no real power.

The Task Force believes that professional educators, not parents, should run a Charter School. By providing parents with the power of choice, the Charter Schools plan assures that parents will be treated with respect and involved in the operation of the school in an

appropriate manner. A Charter School that fails to do so risks losing enrollment and resources.

We believe that parents who have exercised the power to choose a school for their children will feel more involved and committed to the school than will parents who have no choice, even without a mandatory "parent advisory council".

Issue:

What about children whose parents, for whatever reason, do not look out for their best educational interests?

Recommendation:

A public school administrator, teacher or counselor should be able to nominate a student for enrollment in a Charter School, provided that the approval of the student's parents is obtained. (11)

Also, the Department of Children and Youth Services should have the authority to nominate a child for enrollment in a Charter School whenever the Department has intervened in a case of family neglect.

Discussion:

Any program of school choice should provide for the involvement of children who cannot rely on their parents to choose for them. Educators or DCYS representatives who believe that such children would be better served by a Charter School than by the traditional public schools to which they are assigned should be able to act on the children's behalf.

(9) Statutory or Regulatory Waivers

Issue: What statutory or regulatory waivers should be extended to Charter Schools?

Recommendation: In general, Charter Schools should be held to the same mandates as any other public schools with respect to student outcomes, assessment, health, fire and safety codes. Beyond that, regulations related to the manner in which a school should be operated and the manner in which instruction should be organized should be waived.

Discussion: Charter School teachers are entitled to a remarkable degree of professional autonomy because they voluntarily accept a remarkable degree of professional accountability. Unlike a traditional public school, a Charter School can lose its charter if it fails to live up to the charter's provisions. Unlike teachers in a traditional public school, teachers in a Charter School can lose resources and income if they fail to live up to the expectations of parents. Therefore, every effort should be made to avoid telling them how to conduct their business. The limited set of requirements that are imposed on private schools through the state school approval process should serve as a model for the approval of charter schools. (See A Summary of Connecticut Statutes and Regulations Relating to Non-Public Schools, State Department of Education, December, 1990.)

Charter Schools teachers who believe that a particular rule will interfere with their ability to achieve success with their students should be given the opportunity to make the case for its waiver as a part of the charter application process. Waivers are not intended to enable Charter Schools to avoid their obligations to students. Rather, they are intended to enable Charter Schools teachers to meet those obligations in more effective and creative ways. (12)

Charter Schools would need to comply with the requirements of any grant program through which they receive assistance. (13)

(10) Other

Issue: Should the collective bargaining laws that apply to public school teachers apply also to teachers in a charter school?

Recommendation: Yes.

Discussion: As professional educators, teachers in Charter Schools should have the same right to affiliate with a collective bargaining organization as any other teacher.

Issue: Should teachers in a charter school have the opportunity to earn tenure?

Recommendation: Yes. The process by which Charter School teachers earn tenure should be determined by the faculty of each Charter School, so long as the process is at least as demanding as that contained in current state law. The tenure process should be set forth in the charter application. (14)

Discussion: Consistent with our belief in teacher empowerment, we believe that Charter School teachers should determine their own tenure rules, rather than have a uniform system imposed upon them. Some charter school faculties may wish to have teachers earn tenure automatically after a fixed period of service. Others may wish to have tenure granted by a vote of the faculty. Many other approaches are no doubt possible.

Issue: What about the many "nuts and bolts" aspects of school operation that are typically handled by administrators? Would Charter School teachers have to assume these duties?

Recommendation: No. Charter Schools would be free to "out" or "sub contract" for services like transportation, business operations, custodial services, etc. They may wish to purchase these

services from a local school district, a Regional Education Service Center, a college or university, or some other source.

Issue: What about insurance for Charter School employees?

Recommendation: Charter School employees should have the option of enrolling in insurance and benefit programs offered by Regional Education Service Centers.

Discussion: The Service Center arrangement accounts for the fact that most Charter Schools will be too small to obtain cost effective benefit packages for their employees. However, as with most other aspects of Charter School operations, if the faculty of a Charter School feels that it can make better arrangements outside of the Service Center program, it is free to do so.

Issue: What sort of a planning or start up period would be required to get a Charter School off the ground?

Recommendation: A Charter School faculty should be provided with a period of several months following the granting of a charter to plan and organize their school before actually commencing operations. (See the proposed pilot program time line, attached.)

Issue: If legislation authorizing the establishment of pilot Charter Schools were to be enacted during the 1992 session of the General Assembly, how much time would be required before the first pilot school could open?

Recommendation: It is recommended that the pilot Charter Schools begin operation in the fall of 1994.

Discussion: A two year period would be required for the development of regulations, review of charter applications, detailed planning by the teachers who are awarded charters, and the enrollment of students. (See time line on page 26.)

PROPOSED TIME LINE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
PILOT CHARTER SCHOOLS

The Task Force proposes the following schedule for the establishment of pilot Charter Schools:

| <u>BY DATES:</u> | <u>ACTION REQUIRED:</u> |
|--------------------------------|---|
| June, 1992: | Enactment of Legislation permitting establishment of "pilot" Charter Schools. |
| September, 1992: | State Department issues Requests for Proposals for the planning of pilot Charter Schools. |
| November, 1992: | Deadline for potential Charter Schools founders to submit planning applications. (15) |
| November, 1992 to April, 1993: | Regional Education Service Centers conduct workshops for and provide advice and assistance to potential charter applicants. |
| April, 1993: | Deadline for submission of charter applications to Regional Education Service Centers. |
| June, 1993: | The Board of Directors of each RESC nominates up to three charter applications to the State Board of Education for approval. Nominations may be submitted in priority order. (16) |
| July, 1993: | Issuance of provisional charters to six pilot Charter Schools by the State Board of Education. (17) |
| August, 1993: | Charter Schools begin parent information and recruiting efforts. |
| December, 1993: | Deadline for submission of enrollment applications to Charter Schools by interested parents. |
| January, 1994: | Student bodies for pilot charter schools established; Local school districts informed of enrollment of students in Charter Schools. |

July, 1994: Charter Schools receive final approval to begin operations, based on site reviews conducted by State Department of Education. The Department may provide a school with a 60 day grace period for correction of any deficiencies noted as the result of a site review. 18

September, 1994: Pilot Charter Schools begin operation.

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Substitute House Bill No. 5631

State of Connecticut
House of Representatives



House of Representatives, April 25, 1991. The Committee on Education reported through REP. WYMAN, 53rd DIST., Chairman of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (a) Within the limits of
2 available appropriations, the commissioner of
3 education shall establish a four-year
4 demonstration program to encourage local and
5 regional boards of education to develop innovative
6 programs for educational improvement. The
7 demonstration program shall be conducted for four
8 consecutive school years in one rural school, one
9 suburban school and one urban school. Local and
10 regional boards of education may file an
11 application to participate in the program in such
12 form and at such time as the commissioner shall
13 require. Each application shall include a plan
14 developed by the superintendent of schools, or his
15 designee, the school principal and teachers
16 employed in the school for which such application
17 is made. Proposed plans shall provide for (1)
18 performance and outcome based education in
19 accordance with the Connecticut common core of
20 learning adopted by the state board of education
21 and (2) an evaluation process to measure academic
22 progress and school improvement resulting from
23 participation in the program. For purposes of the

24 demonstration program, the commissioner may waive
25 requirements under chapters 164, 166 and 168 of
26 the general statutes and regulations adopted
27 pursuant to said chapters, provided each
28 application shall identify (A) the specific
29 statutes or regulations from which a waiver is
30 requested, if any, and (B) the manner in which
31 each waiver is expected to assist in achieving
32 specified educational benefits. Local and regional
33 boards of education may cooperate with businesses
34 and nonprofit organizations in developing and
35 implementing such plans and may receive and expend
36 private funds for purposes of this section.

37 (b) The commissioner shall submit an interim
38 report on the demonstration program to the joint
39 standing committee of the general assembly having
40 cognizance of matters relating to education by
41 December 31, 1994, and a final report by December
42 31, 1996.

43 Sec. 2. (a) There is established a task force
44 to study the feasibility of groups of ten or more
45 certified teachers, school administrators and
46 other school professionals establishing and
47 maintaining charter schools with the approval of
48 the state board of education. The task force shall
49 consider and make recommendations concerning
50 requirements for such charter schools, including
51 (1) governance, (2) organization, (3) enrollment
52 policies, (4) school supervision and staffing, (5)
53 school facilities, (6) funding sources, (7)
54 multicultural performance and outcome-based
55 education in accordance with the Connecticut
56 common core of learning adopted by the state board
57 of education, (8) parental participation and (9)
58 statutory or regulatory waivers.

59 (b) The task force shall consist of the
60 chairpersons and ranking members of the joint
61 standing committee of the general assembly having
62 cognizance of matters relating to education, or
63 their designees, the commissioner of education, or
64 his designee, a representative of the Connecticut
65 Business and Industry Association appointed by the
66 president pro tempore of the senate, a director of
67 a regional education service center appointed by
68 the majority leader of the senate, a member of the
69 Connecticut State Federation of Teachers appointed
70 by the minority leader of the senate, a
71 representative of the Connecticut Education

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72 Association appointed by the speaker of the house
73 of representatives, a representative of the
74 Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
75 appointed by the majority leader of the house of
76 representatives and a representative of the
77 Connecticut Association of School Administrators
78 appointed by the minority leader of the house of
79 representatives. Appointments shall be made by
80 August 15, 1991, and the chairpersons of the joint
81 standing committee of the general assembly having
82 cognizance of matters relating to education shall
83 convene the first meeting by August 30, 1991.

84 (c) On or before January 15, 1992, the task
85 force shall report, in accordance with the
86 provisions of section 11-4a of the general
87 statutes, its findings and recommendations to the
88 state board of education and the joint standing
89 committee of the general assembly having
90 cognizance of matters relating to education.
91 Sec. 3. This act shall take effect from its
92 passage.

93 Committee Vote: Yea 27 Nay 0