DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 715 EA 031 433

TITLE	Charter Schools.
INSTITUTION	Wisconsin Center for Education Research, Madison.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	24p.; Theme issue. Published biannually.
AVAILABLE FROM	Center Document Service, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1025 W. Johnson St., Room 242, Madison, WI 53706. Tel: 888-862-7763 (Toll Free); Tel: 608-265-9698; Fax: 608-263-6448. For full text: http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/pub_online.htm.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	The Newsletter of the Comprehensive Center-Region VI; v5 n1 Spr 2000.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; *Accountability; Administrative Organization; *Charter Schools; Economic Factors; Educational Change; Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; *Financial Support; Public Schools; *School Culture; *Teacher Improvement

ABSTRACT

This document deals with the topic of the charter-school movement. Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood's article focuses on selected, key aspects of papers commissioned by the Comprehensive Center-Region VI from experts in the charter-school movement. It discusses the potential for enhanced teaching and learning in charter schools, management issues that can affect the success and development of charter schools, accountability, and key considerations for policymakers. Eva Kubinski's article consists of an interview with Dr. Wayne Sanstead as to the reasons why North Dakota does not have charter schools. Audrey Cotherman's piece compares the vast differences in state laws governing charter schools. Kent Peterson's contribution discusses the purposes of school culture to sharpen the focus of staff and students, to build commitment and sense of community, to foster motivation to achieve valued ends, and to encourage productivity and learning. Stephen Kailin discusses seven common qualities that seem to characterize successful schools. Web resources on charter schools are provided. (Contains 27 references.) (DFR)

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COMPREHENSIVE CENTER-REGION VI

[charter schools]

Volume 5, No. 1 Spring 2000

COMPREHENSIVE CENTER-REGION VI
WISCONSIN CENTER FOR EDUCATION RESEARCH
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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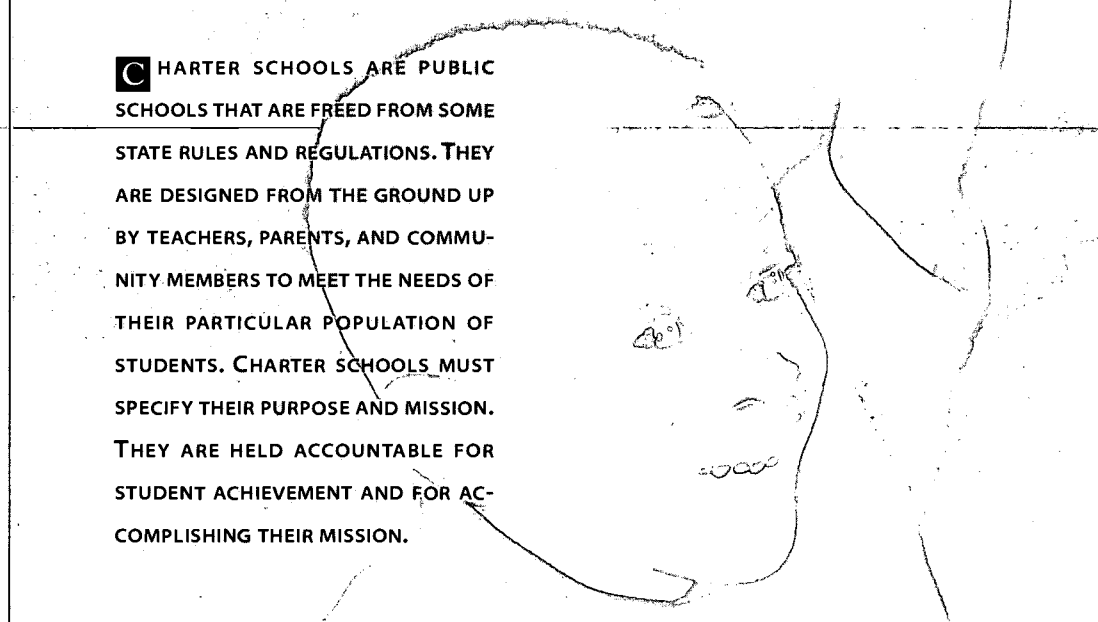
FROM THE DIRECTOR:
BEYOND THE CONTROVERSIAL IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT ARE FREED FROM SOME STATE RULES AND REGULATIONS. THEY ARE DESIGNED FROM THE GROUND UP BY TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THEIR PARTICULAR POPULATION OF STUDENTS. CHARTER SCHOOLS MUST SPECIFY THEIR PURPOSE AND MISSION. THEY ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND FOR ACCOMPLISHING THEIR MISSION.



Like many earlier school-based educational innovations, the charter schools movement has experienced its share of controversy. During the fall of 1999, both *Education Week* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* contained numerous articles focused on a controversial aspect of this movement, usually concerns about the recruitment of a diverse student population. While not denying that some people associated with individual charter schools use well-known code when talking about students — for example, referring to "certain elements" whom they are trying to escape — it is also true that many urban charter schools have an explicit antiracist mission or a mission to provide enhanced opportunities to students whose educations would be otherwise constrained. As evident in a cursory reading of any major newspaper, parents who live in the nation's inner cities are adamant in wanting quality educations for their children, and many of these same parents support charter schools as

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CHARTER SCHOOLS: DIFFERENT MISSIONS, COMMON ISSUES

[anne turnbaugh lockwood]

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ON OCTOBER 22, 1998, PRESIDENT CLINTON SIGNED INTO LAW THE CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION ACT OF 1998. THIS NEW LAW SIGNIFIES THE RAPIDLY ESCALATING NATIONAL PREMIUM PLACED ON CHARTER SCHOOLS AND UNDERSCORES THE HOPE MANY EDUCATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS HAVE INVESTED IN THIS INCREASINGLY POPULAR EDUCATION REFORM. THIS LEGISLATION, IN FACT, ENCOURAGES CHARTER SCHOOLS TO PROLIFERATE. AS PART OF THIS LEGISLATION, STATES THAT HAVE INCREASED THE NUMBER OF HIGH-QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOLS, HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR OWN SUCCESS, WILL FIND THEIR EFFORTS REWARDED WITH FEDERAL FUNDS (U. S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 1998).

A few facts about charter schools reveal their increasing visibility:

- According to one report, thirty-four states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had charter school laws as of September 1998, although not all states had charter schools in operation (U. S. Department of Education, 1998). Other states are working on, or have passed, legislation permitting charter schools — although educators in a state may not yet have founded one.
- As of the 1997-98 school year, 717 charter schools enrolled more than 162,000 students nationwide (U. S. Department of Education, 1999).
- California had the most charter school students — 55,764, which represented one percent of the total public school enrollment in the state.
- During the same school year, Arizona, the second highest-enrolled state, had approximately 25,128 students in charter schools — more than three percent of the state's public school enrollment (U. S. Department of Education, 1999).
- As of September 1998, the total number of operational charter schools nationwide numbered 1,050 (U. S. Department of Education, 1999).

Although charter schools legislation has been approved in the majority of states, policies influencing the development and success of these schools are variable. **Policymakers need to consider the following** as they work on charter school legislation and regulations for their states:

1. ***Charter schools are supposed to be diverse and flexible.*** What is more, *charter school* means different things in different states (U. S. Department of Education, 1998). It also can mean different things in the same state, depending on whether the charter school is newly created or is a conversion school (a school that existed in a different form but converted to charter status).
2. ***Gathering empirical data about the effectiveness of charter schools can be difficult.*** The laws that affect charter schools vary from state to state, and these schools and the legislation that influence them are complex and diverse. For these reasons, it can be very misleading to compare charter schools in one state with those in another. Since accountability is a key reason for charter schools, uneven legislation contributes to the difficulties associated with assessment of charter schools' effectiveness.
3. ***State laws that govern charter schools vary among themselves and have a major impact on the development of charter schools.*** These laws determine who is allowed to sponsor and operate a charter school, the level of funding for charter schools, the percentage of state funds they receive, employee requirements and restrictions, student performance requirements, how many charters per state will be granted and how long they will last (U. S. Department of Education, 1998, p. 4).

The charter schools movement excites many educational stakeholders, but their enthusiasm often is tempered by confusion. While there is considerable information available on charter schools, it is difficult to access information that also is firmly grounded in solid research and experience. Clearly, policymakers and practitioners — as well as other educational stakeholders — need a reliable knowledge base on which to base their efforts related to charter schools.

To contribute to this emerging knowledge base, the Comprehensive Center–Region VI initiated a tightly focused working conference, *Charter Schools: Developing Policy & Practice*, which was held September 24-25, 1998 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This conference was cosponsored by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning

and the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL). It was funded in part by the U. S. Department of Education.

The Comprehensive Center–Region VI commissioned papers from experts in the charter schools movement nationwide, carefully seeking a wide variety of perspectives and experiences. The authors included researchers who have studied charter schools extensively, charter school operators who represented dramatically different approaches to teaching and learning, and advocates/proponents of charter schools. These papers have culminated in a monograph, *Charter Schools: Common Issues, Different Missions*, which has been shaped into a practical, research-based guide for practitioners and policymakers.

This article focuses on selected, key aspects of these papers that have clear implications for both policy and practice. *In particular, we discuss:*

- the potential for enhanced teaching and learning in charter schools,
- management issues that can affect the success and development of charter schools as well as the quality of teaching and learning,
- accountability in charter schools, and
- key considerations for policymakers as they construct and refine charter school legislation in their states.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

When Irene Sumida pushed open the doors to Fenton Avenue Elementary School in Los Angeles on her first day as Director of Instruction, chaos greeted her. Fenton Avenue Elementary, which had a long, negative reputation as an unsafe school with discouragingly low student achievement, seemed an unlikely candidate for schoolwide success. Instead, its staff confronted many out-of-school factors common to inner-city schools — factors frequently cited by educators as causes of school failure.

The majority of Fenton Avenue's students came from households of acute poverty. The neighborhood surrounding the school was riddled with crime. An ever-increasing number of students did not speak English, and staff members were not equipped adequately to deal with their language needs. Although parents and family members may have cared about how well their children performed in school, this was not reflected in parental participation in parent-teacher conferences. And although most staff members were well intentioned, they were ground down by many of the daily obstacles they faced (Sumida, 1998).

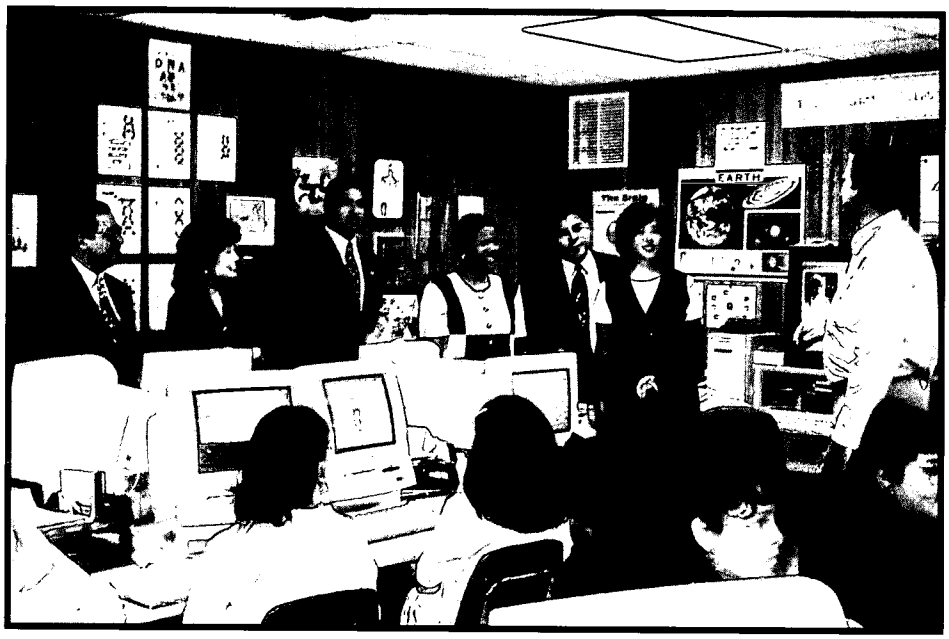
Today, Sumida continues as Director of Instruction at Fenton Avenue, but the school now has charter status. Achievement has improved. Teachers have assumed active roles as school leaders, participating in school governing councils with other educational stakeholders. Many faculty departed, finding their educational beliefs and philosophies incompatible with the new emphasis on the quality of instruction for all students. Crime — once dramatic, as when three siblings rode their bikes to school together and emerged to find all three bikes stolen — has subsided. What happened?

INFLUENCING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

To Sumida and many of her colleagues in charter schools nationwide, this schoolwide improvement can be found in the relative freedom charter schools enjoy — relieved of the bureaucratic burden that encumbers other public schools. This freedom, while variable from state to state, allows charter schools to steer their own course and establish their own educational visions. And this freedom can be heady indeed to educational entrepreneurs who are eager to educate in ways not easily permitted by bureaucratic educational structures (Manno, 1998).

In the case of Fenton Avenue Charter School, **charter school status allowed staff to decide on and enact the following changes** which ultimately improved the quality of teaching and learning for all students:

- ***The school's instructional program became the primary focus*** as the charter petition was written.
- ***The school's governance plan included all educational stakeholders***, with all staff participating on school councils of their choice.
- ***The quality of governance was assured*** through the presence of an overarching governance body which closely monitors the actions and performance of school governing councils (the Council of Councils). The Council of Councils ensures a balance of new and inexperienced teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, year-round staff, and new or experienced council members.
- ***The school day was extended*** to include enrichment activities, small group tutorial opportunities, and a quiet study hall with teacher supervision.
- ***Class size was reduced*** to 25 students in all grades from a previous count of 33 students per class.
- ***A premium was placed on professional development***, ensuring that teachers remain connected to innovations in education beyond the walls of the charter school. This link to high-quality, in-depth professional development wards off the possibility that ideas and instruction could become insular.
- ***A strong focus was placed on equity and on improving relationships among the African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian communities***. Nurturing these relationships among Fenton Avenue's primary student/family population paid off in terms of heightened parent/family involvement in their children's schooling as well as more positive relationships among racial and ethnic groups.



- ***A strong bilingual education program continued to be a priority at Fenton Avenue Elementary School for its Limited English Proficient (LEP) student population***, despite the passage of California Proposition 227. In addition, parents are able to attend ESL classes during the evening, taught by a member of Fenton Avenue's faculty.
- ***Weekly parenting classes in the school's Family Center*** are tailored to the needs of the parents and families that comprise the Fenton Avenue community.
- ***Parents' vocational and social needs are addressed through an active, ongoing program of counseling*** that encompasses everything from vocational preparation, the acquisition of English language skills, to coping with divorce and grief (Sumida, 1998).

DIFFERENT MISSIONS, COMMON ISSUES

Across the country, another charter school has a totally different concept of what it means to engage students and teachers in the learning process. At ıcis W. Parker School in Devon, Massachusetts, faculty go through an exhaustive, painstaking process as they plan curriculum for the year ahead. Central to this process is faculty's view of themselves as ongoing learners (Nehring, 1998).

Rather than seeing themselves as authorities whose duty it is to impart a codified body of knowledge to students, faculty have a much more humble view; they see themselves as more experienced learners than their students but deeply invested in the learning process — an investment they model for their students. They willingly put in four weeks of unpaid time in the summer to begin their own contemplation and questioning of the content that will be the focus of the academic year ahead.

There are no grades for student work at Parker. Although most Parker students enroll in selective colleges or universities — which means they must score well on standardized tests such as the SAT — other measures of student learning are valued. Elaborate student portfolios and exhibitions are the markers of student progress. Students are not automatically passed from one grade to the next; rather, they must master the content and thinking emphasized at their respective grade levels prior to advancement.

Parker divides itself into two broad disciplines: Arts and Humanities juxtaposed with Math, Science, and Technology (Nehring, 1998). A strong emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary work. Teacher teams discuss, argue, and contend with knotty questions related to curriculum not only during their planning time during the summer, but throughout the academic year.

Key characteristics of Parker that are facilitated by its charter school status include:

- ***The work year for teachers includes four weeks during the summer that are unpaid***; this is stipulated at the time faculty are hired.
- ***The curriculum is intellectually rigorous***, much like a high-quality graduate school seminar that challenges faculty as well as students.
- ***Teacher work on curriculum is collaborative and interdisciplinary***, rather than fragmented, isolated, and piecemeal.
- ***Classes are small in size and focus on in-depth understanding of complex material*** rather than broad coverage of many superficial concepts (Nehring, 1998).

As these two examples illustrate, teaching and learning in charter schools can encompass different missions and reflect both the values and needs of local school staff, parents, students, and other educational stakeholders. In fact, charter school advocates point to this mirroring of stakeholders' values — along with the freedom to enact those values — as one of the most compelling arguments for these public schools of choice.

But charter school operators must grapple with the practical in ways they may not anticipate. They need considerable management savvy to enact their educational visions and ensure that they are appropriate for their students and the families they serve. If they are not pre-

pared to deal with a host of new demands, a myriad of management issues could sink their schools.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

While the early success from Fenton Avenue and Francis W. Parker is encouraging — as are similar accounts from other charter schools — charter school operators readily admit that even seemingly mundane management issues can swamp the most carefully conceived visions of teaching and learning. As Picus (1998) points out, too frequently charter school applicants receive word that their applications for charter status have been approved and then are expected to have their schools up and running within a matter of weeks — with a brand-new staff, innovative educational mission, and strong measures for accountability in place.

Fiscal matters, once the domain of central office personnel, suddenly fall to charter school operators who may have limited financial experience and expertise. As a result, they may construct a budget inadequate for the school's needs. Because of the lack of start-up time, they may secure monies that are insufficient to hire experienced, certified staff. And because they lack training in fundraising, they may lack the confidence necessary to secure additional funds necessary to allow the school to function smoothly (Gruber, 1998).

Manno and his colleagues on the Hudson Institute Charter Schools Study argued that charter schools should be seen as small businesses — but they usually are managed by staff whose expertise lies outside the business of running a school (Vanourek, Manno, Finn, and Bierlein, 1997). If states require charter schools to open their doors too quickly (immediately after granting the charter), even the most brilliantly crafted educational vision can bog down with problems that can range from transporting the school's students to acquiring funds to buy adequate instructional materials. Professional development, in particular, can be jettisoned as charter school operators look at their dwindling resources and try to economize — yet ongoing professional development is critical to the success of charter schools so that staff can continue to develop and refine their skills so that the school's educational mission can be realized.

Policymakers need to be attentive to the fiscal problems with which charter schools must contend and to how restrictive financial policies can be detrimental to the development of charter schools (Manno, 1998, p.12). In particular, **Manno points to the following common problems:**

- a lack of start-up funds,
- reduced operating funds if the full complement of federal, state, or local monies cannot be secured,
- uneven cash flow, and
- school finance formulas that do not consider the unusual situation of charter schools (p. 12).

Picus (1998) emphasizes that charter schools bear a tremendous burden due to their precarious financing. Whether the school is a new, start-up school or a conversion school (a school that previously existed within a public school district as a noncharter school) influences the degree of control that the sponsoring agency maintains over the charter school's financial decisions.

If a charter school is dependent upon a local school district as its chartering agency, it needs approval for its expenditures in advance, and it must follow that agency's expenditure requirements (Picus, 1998). This arrangement offers some, but not enough, freedom from bureaucratic restrictions central to the entire argument for charter schools in the first place.

If, however, a charter school is fiscally independent of the chartering agency, it still must maintain a balanced budget and keep its expenditures legal — but now, without any help from the chartering agency. On the other hand, it is freed from seeking approval for expenditures.

Where does school finance policy enter this picture? Timing is critical. If funding comes from the state or the district in which the charter school is housed, funds often do not arrive in time for the school to meet its payroll or to purchase necessary materials (Picus, 1998, p. 8).

Budgets are helpful documents for policymakers and charter school operators, Picus emphasizes, because they should give both groups of educational stakeholders a clear image of what the school needs in order to enact its mission. Standards for fiscal reserves established by state policymakers also are key in guiding charter school operators toward accurate estimates of the monies needed to keep charter schools open and thriving.

Just as charter schools must grapple with the practical issues that suffuse all teaching and learning, they also must come to terms with the spotlight that has been placed on them that demands improved accountability for student performance. In fact, accountability for charter schools will become increasingly prominent as charter schools proliferate.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

Advocates of charter schools argue that these public schools of choice are held to tighter and higher standards than other noncharter public schools. This is one way, they believe, that charter schools can influence and improve noncharter public schools. They reason that if student achievement in noncharter public schools falters or is unsatisfactory, these other schools are able to continue to operate with a "business as usual" attitude (Manno, 1998).

But charter schools must show heightened student achievement or face the revocation of their charters after a

In fact, charter school advocates point to this mirroring of stakeholders' values — along with the freedom to enact those values — as one of the most compelling arguments for these public schools of choice.

certain period of time (typically, three to five years). This demand for results provokes best practices and it provides an incentive for school staff to focus on outcomes. But how should student achievement be measured in charter schools? Is it fair to compare charter schools to noncharter public schools — given their much briefer existence?

As Nathan and Cheung (1998) point out, charter schools must be responsive to the same accountability measures used by noncharter public schools, such as the standardized tests that are used within a state. As public schools, it is unreasonable to expect charter schools not to adhere to the same measures as noncharter public schools. However, Nathan and Cheung also note that charter schools are more active than noncharter public schools in employing other, nonstandardized measures to assess student achievement, such as portfolio assessments.

Although issues related to accountability and assessment of student achievement are complex, **Nathan and Cheung recommend some guiding principles for both the sponsor and the charter school:**

- The accountability plan should be jointly developed and monitored (by both sponsor and charter school).
- The charter school's mission and curriculum should be tied to state standards.
- The standard for improved student achievement should be clearly stated by the charter school and considered carefully by the sponsor.
- The charter school's goals should be explicit in the charter proposal; these goals should be tied to assessment.
- The sponsoring agency and prospective charter school should agree on the tools that will be used to measure student progress prior to granting the charter.
- Baseline data should be gathered with the help of the sponsoring agency.
- Charter schools should understand and be prepared to comply with state charter laws that govern accountability.
- Charter school operators should review and know about the various measures that are used in the state as well as non-standardized measures that could complement their assessment of student progress.
- Charter school operators should prepare a clear annual report that is available to the sponsoring agency and to a variety of educational stakeholders including parents, news media, students, community groups, and legislators. This annual report should be available in abbreviated form as appropriate (Nathan and Cheung, 1998, pp. 19-21).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

As charter schools continue to increase in number, policymakers need to develop legislation that allows the freedom so appealing to these schools of choice and their advocates. This freedom needs to take into account whether there will be caps on the number of charter schools allowable in a state and whether the sponsoring agency will allow enough latitude to the charter school so that it truly can operate independently.

Legislators need to make accountability especially critical. Charter schools should not be exempt from measures of student progress to which other public schools are held. However, since charter schools can be closed if they do not show heightened student achievement, legislators need to consider a range of measures of student progress as well as student performance on standardized measures. In particular, legislators need to ask: Do charter school students meet state-established standards (if such standards exist)?

The integrity of the charter school's mission and educational vision also needs to be emphasized in the laws that govern charter schools. As sponsoring agencies consider a charter school proposal, their criteria should be clear. Does the prospective charter school have a sound mission and educational vision? What is the rationale for the educational vision? What makes the charter school distinctive? Are there solid student recruitment plans in place? What provisions exist for hiring and recruiting qualified staff? How will the charter school, if a conversion school, deal with recalcitrant staff who are not "on board" with the school's educational vision?

Finally, legislators need to consider how sponsoring agencies in their states can help or confound charter schools as they struggle with management issues — with little start-up time. Do state laws provide for adequate help to charter schools — or, is there a "sink or swim" mentality? At their best, state laws can guide sponsoring agencies so that charter schools will begin operation with adequate funds, with the full complement of monies available to them, and with assistance in hiring and recruiting the most qualified staff.

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[about the author]

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DR. WAYNE SANSTEAD: WHY WE DON'T HAVE CHARTER SCHOOLS IN NORTH DAKOTA

[eva m. kubinski]

NORTH DAKOTA IS A STATE IN A SPECIAL POSITION. WHILE ITS STUDENTS DO WELL WHEN COMPARED WITH OTHER STATES ON MEASURES OF ACHIEVEMENT (NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, 1998), NORTH DAKOTA IS FACING DECLINING ENROLLMENT AND HAS A TAX BASE THAT RELIES ON AN AGRICULTURE-BASED ECONOMY THAT HAS NOT DONE WELL THIS YEAR. RANGING FROM A HIGH OF APPROXIMATELY 170,000 STUDENTS IN 1968 TO THE CURRENT LEVEL OF 112,000 STUDENTS, STATE ENROLLMENT IS EXPECTED TO DROP YET ANOTHER 10 PERCENT IN THE NEXT DECADE (EDUCATION WEEK, 1999, NOVEMBER 3). ACCORDING TO THE 1999 NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION BIENNIAL REPORT, IN 1961 THERE WERE ONE THOUSAND SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN NORTH DAKOTA. CURRENTLY THERE ARE ONLY 229. THIS SAME REPORT STATES THAT FEW DISTRICTS IN THE STATE HAVE STABLE OR INCREASING ENROLLMENTS, WITH RURAL SCHOOLS SEEING THE GREATEST DECLINE. ADDITIONALLY, THE SCHOOLS IN THE STATE WITH SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS, PRIMARILY LOCATED IN RURAL COMMUNITIES, CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE TO RAISE THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND GRADUATION RATES OF ALL THEIR STUDENTS.

Dr. Wayne Sanstead has served North Dakota for more than thirty years, including terms as State Representative, State Senator, Lieutenant Governor, and, currently, as the most senior Chief State School Officer in the United States. Part of his charge as the State School Superintendent is to promote the continuation of educational excellence in North Dakota schools. Dr. Sanstead has previously expressed his concerns about the viability and potential success of charter schools in North Dakota. This interview probes his view of charter schools in the context of North Dakota's educational system.

Q ***Dr. Sanstead, initially you had expressed a hesitancy about having charter schools in North Dakota. What is the basis of your concerns?***

A ***One of my major concerns about charter schools is what I see as a potential lack of oversight when they are implemented outside of the public education system.*** That lack of oversight can lead to excesses that harm the education system as a whole. Without accountability and some sort of overview, charter schools can pull needed resources from public schools, harming their ability to adequately serve their remaining students.

For example, a colleague in Arizona recently sent me a news article about a school district in his state that spent huge amounts of money on the transportation

of students to attend a charter school. The transportation costs per student were significantly higher than the cost of transporting those same students to their neighborhood schools. The number quoted in the article was that charter school transportation in Arizona cost upwards of $30 million — an expense that the article calculated could have been used to build six new schools (Mesa Tribune, 1999, December 28). This story is an example of how the system can be taken advantage of — to the detriment of other students.

I also have strong concerns about accountability. I think that competition has a healthy influence on education. This was one of the original reasons for the start of the charter school movement. A well designed and implemented charter school allows the featuring and supporting of student strengths and talents. But in many states, we are not really seeing any true competition or utilization of this opportunity to capitalize on the chance to do something special. Instead, charter schools are being protected, but not in a way akin to private enterprise. While private enterprise is supposed to be self-regulating, charters are not always doing so. Charter schools have also been able to use public tax collars unlike private businesses. I am concerned that we are starting to see charter schools that have taken advantage of the regulatory flexibility without providing improved education.

Honestly, I have no problem with good, well-planned charter schools that are under the umbrella and control of public schools and are accountable to an elected school board. These charters can give students special opportunities and experiences, be it in arts, in technology, with a special instructional focus, or to meet a group of students' special needs.

Q ***What are some barriers to having charter schools in North Dakota?***

A ***There are several distinct barriers to having charter schools in our state. Transportation costs and a declining enrollment in our primarily rural school districts are among the most significant. A lack of legislation allowing for charter schools is another barrier.***

Transportation costs increase as travel distance increases. Many of the rural school districts already bus their students long distances so they can attend their home school. Any rural charter school would have to have significant transportation costs if they were to attract enough students to be viable.

Declining enrollment is a factor that cannot be ignored. In North Dakota, half of the public school districts have fewer than 200 students. Twenty districts have fewer than two dozen students. These small student numbers in most of the state would make it almost impossible for a charter school and a public school to exist within a given community unless the charter school was located in the same community, or if there were an exceptional level of financial support for transportation.

As a result of poor economic times in this state, due to a recent downturn in agriculture, we can ill afford to have more schools competing for ever scarcer dollars.

Additionally, if an already low-population district's student numbers were reduced as a result of students' being pulled out, the result could be the need to close down the public school. Many districts are having a hard time keeping their doors open with their current enrollment. The last thing they need to be doing is putting their time and effort into fighting off a charter school. As a result of poor economic times in this state, due to a recent downturn in agriculture, we can ill afford to have more schools competing for ever scarcer dollars.

Q ***Even with your concerns, you eventually tried to enact legislation that would allow school districts to set up charter-like schools. Why the change of heart?***

A ***We sponsored SB 2175 which was a comprehensive waiver proposal.*** It was a proposed expansion of an existing waiver that allows for greater flexibility, with new accountability pieces in the application process. It came out of our school improvement process with the intent of supporting innovative education projects in a public school setting. The proposal included a required commitment by participating districts to achieve improved student achievement levels.

The intent of proposing this legislation was somewhat of a defensive move to forestall other versions that could be more detrimental to public education in North Dakota. We also wanted to make sure high accountability and a commitment to work toward achieving to challenging standards would be required. Additionally, if it had passed, North Dakota would have been eligible to apply for and receive federal charter school funds to fund start-up planning at the district level. However, SB 2175 failed.

I believe that part of what happened is that there is a view among the public that what is needed is to strengthen leadership and organization of existing public schools before we think about adding more to the system. We were on the right track with the innovative education projects sites legislation. I am especially pleased at this effort that aimed at both freeing public schools from restrictive requirements *and* rewarding them for being accountable.

Q ***What would your ideal charter school look like?***

A ***I would like to see charter schools that promote the development of special expertise and talents, with highly com-***

petent, well prepared, and knowledgeable educators. Any such school staff would have to make a commitment that they and their students would aspire to the top echelon of academic performance and achievement. I would also like to see a charter school that meets the needs of both the students and the community — without taking away from the other schools — a school that would not just cater to an elite group and ideal, but one that would spread learning opportunities as widely as possible.

I believe that when charter schools are intended to increase the availability of consumer choice within the public education system, they can, and do, serve a worthy purpose. In a sum, I support alternative type schools that are accountable to their public school district boards and whose objective is to provide for increased individual student opportunity and achievement.

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CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS: MOTIVATORS OR BARRIERS

[audrey cotherman]

NO TWO STATES' LAWS GOVERNING CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE THE SAME. THEY APPEAR TO BE CUSTOMIZED COMBINATIONS OF POLITICAL REALITIES AND EDUCATION IDEALS. BECAUSE THESE VARIED LAWS REFLECT THE ATTITUDES AND NEEDS OF THE SPECIFIC POPULATION A CHARTER SCHOOL WILL SERVE AND THE FISCAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE STATE, SOME LAWS LIMIT THE NUMBER OF CHARTER SCHOOLS THAT WILL BE APPROVED, HOW INDEPENDENT THEY WILL BE, AND HOW LONG THEY WILL BE ALLOWED TO OPERATE. ON ONE HAND, THE LAW MAY GIVE THE CHARTER SCHOOL TOTAL FREEDOM FROM STATE REGULATIONS BUT PROVIDE NO START-UP FUNDS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE LAW MAY PROVIDE START-UP FUNDS BUT CONSTRAIN FREEDOM IN STAFFING BY REQUIRING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND STATE CERTIFICATION OF ALL TEACHERS.

Charter schools are intended to offer high-standards alternative schools within a district and to enable parents, teachers, and administrators to design a different school, a school free to adopt new ways that lead to high student achievement. Thus, ideally, the laws should create schools that have the freedom to organize governance, management, curriculum, and instruction in creative ways and that have control over adequate finances. Legislation in some states does little more than permit charter schools (such as in Alabama or Wyoming), while in others it provides support and encouragement (such as in Wisconsin and Minnesota).

By 1998, thirty-three states and the District of Columbia had passed charter school laws. These were included in a report of the U. S. Department of Education entitled A *Comparison of Charter School Legislation* (U. S. Department of Education, 1998). Here we will focus on issues arising in only three areas contained in that report: (1) charter school development and legal status, (2) fiscal concerns, including capital funding, and (3) teaching staff and management issues, asking how laws motivate and support or erect barriers to establishing and supporting successful charter schools.

MOTIVATORS

In their study of the impact of charter schools, **Nathan and Cheung (1998) spell out the elements they think should be included in the law.** Some states appear to motivate the creation and success of charter schools by including some combinations of these elements in state law.

- ***More than one organization should be authorized to start and operate a charter school.*** Only three states do not stipulate in the law who can initiate a charter school application. All others specify that more than one of the following is authorized to start a charter school: public school districts, education service providers, local schools, universities, colleges, individuals, nonprofit groups, teach-

ers, public service organizations, or any person, group or organization.

- ***Charter schools should be public schools.*** All laws either state or imply that charter schools must function as public schools. Illinois is the only state that specifically prohibits charters to home schools.
- ***Charter schools should be schools of choice.*** All state laws specify attendance by choice, or they do not address the issue at all.
- ***Charter schools should be accountable for student achievement.*** All laws stipulate that charter schools function by virtue of performance-based contracts that hold them accountable for student achievement. If there are state standards of achievement, students must progress toward meeting these standards. Usually, the instruments to be used to measure school achievement are not mentioned in the law.
- ***In return for this accountability, the state should grant up-front waivers of virtually all rules and regulations governing public schools.*** Although waivers from regulations are frequently mentioned in the law, rules concerning student achievement — and many rules governing personnel and fiscal matters — are not waived and cannot be waived. Often the regulations are generally agreed upon and specify what rules can be waived, but these sections of the laws are not as strong as sections on performance accountability.
- ***Charter schools should be discrete entities with their own governing boards.*** The laws are often ambiguous about the amount of independence a charter school is granted and about its relationship to the local school board. The granting agency may withdraw a school's charter for failing to fulfill its contract. The charter school board, therefore, may not be totally independent — even though they may have authority in setting the mission of the school, hiring, budgeting, and accounting for both student achievement and expenditure of funds. Charter schools are, nevertheless, usually discrete entities with some kind of governing structure separate from their granting agent.

Nathan and Cheung (1998) include two other critical elements that should be included in state law: Teachers should have job protection and be given new appointments upon termination of the charter school, and charter schools should have control over adequate resources to start-up and to implement their mission. Laws in these areas tend not to be motivators of charter schools; they will be addressed in the following sections.

BARRIERS

Laws may be intended to allow, provide for, and support the innovations and operations of charter schools. In reality, however, those same laws may erect barriers that constrain charter schools as they try to establish themselves and operate in creative ways that will serve their particular population and enhance student achievement. Areas that are particularly troublesome (which we will address here) are: defining the legal status of the charter school, funding, facilities, governance, and staffing.

Legal Status

Although laws are somewhat ambiguous on this issue, it appears that in ten states charter schools organized by a district are considered part of that local school district. In four states charter schools are considered independent public schools, and in 14 states they are organized as nonprofit entities. Wisconsin law seems to provide the most options. There, a charter school may be under the authority of the local school board; the local board may contract with an outside entity to govern and operate the school; or schools not sponsored by a local board may become independent entities — as they are in Milwaukee, for example. Michigan is unique in that charter schools are corporate entities subject to leadership and general supervision of the state board. It is not clear in the law whether charter schools can sue and be sued, nor what liability the granting agencies bear.

Funding

One of the most often cited barriers to charter school success is inadequate funding. Nathan and Cheung (1998) mention this. Picus (1998) identifies lack of start-up funds, lack of operating funds, and two other funding-related problems — inadequate facilities and problems in hiring and managing staff — as serious barriers to creating successful charter schools.

Only nine states authorize either specific dollar amounts or grants and loans to cover charter school start-up costs. Perhaps the most generous is Minnesota law which provides funding for two years of up to $50,000 per school or $500 per pupil for new charter schools. A new charter school in Arizona may, upon application, receive up to $100,000 from a $1 million grant fund. Georgia provides $5,000 in state grants to assist with the charter school planning process, and California has a revolving loan fund. Seventeen states deny start-up funds, and another eight do not address the issue.

Why are start-up funds needed? Even if a charter school is to have full per-pupil state funding and categorical funding for special students, these monies may not be received at the beginning of the school's life. Moreover, successful charter schools often begin with heavy professional staff development programs. This cannot be done effectively without adequate funds. *If* allowed under the law, even seemingly inexpensive ways to provide this — such as changing the number of teaching days, extending the school year, or using noncertified personnel to teach while others are preparing for new ways to facilitate student learning — are not without a price tag (Picus, 1998). Ongoing financial needs — such as rent, equipment, supplies, building maintenance, and costs of innovative programming and instruction — may also require start-up funds to launch the charter school.

Once a charter school is established, operating funds become a crucial issue. Per-pupil funding, for example, is not fully addressed in state laws. Two states, Kansas and Nevada, do not specify whether the general funding will be comparable to other schools. Several states, including California, negotiate funding with the local school board. In Colorado and four other states, the law specifies that a stated percentage (or percentage range) of the per-pupil allocation be provided to charter schools. There is evidence that, in many cases, even when the allocation is comparable to the district per-pupil allocation, overhead costs (rent, equipment, bookkeeping, for example) may be taken out before the funds are transferred to the charter school. Furthermore, state per-pupil allocations do not adequately cover personnel salary and benefits, maintenance, insurance, recruitment, books, other educational materials, professional development, and development of curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

In addition to this, services ordinarily provided by the district office with specialized staff may not be provided for a charter school, or they are provided for a fee. Functions such as bookkeeping, purchasing, and maintenance may become the added responsibility of a staff that has had much more experience in designing curriculum than taking care of boilers or ledgers.

Facilities

In many states, charter school law stipulates whether, and from whom, the schools are allowed to lease, rent, or purchase facilities, but the laws do not state how this is to be accomplished. In one state, New Jersey, a charter school is prohibited from purchasing facilities, yet the law stipulates that it must locate in a suitable (safe) building.

Picus (1998) and others point out that accountability for student achievement assumes that building space, good teaching, operating and start up funds are all available. For example, facilities have a significant impact on the technology available for students, and many educators believe that the use of technology is vital to equalizing students' opportunities and enhancing high performance. Paradoxically, laws may require but, in fact, not allow charter schools to have and maintain adequate facilities.

Functions such as bookkeeping, purchasing, and maintenance may become the added responsibility of a staff that has had much more experience in designing curriculum than taking care of boilers or ledgers.

Governance

None of the state laws suggest or direct the governance structure of a charter school. In most cases, it seems that the schools themselves design the governance structure based on the characteristics of effective models. Laws do, however, mention teachers and parents as representatives to be involved in the school's governance. Alaska specifies that there must be an academic policy committee comprising parents, teachers, and school employees. Connecticut lists teachers, administrators and parents among those who must be involved in school governance. Only Delaware prohibits a specific group — members of the district school board — from serving on the charter school board. Only in South Carolina does the law state that there will be an annual election, and at least one teacher, along with parents and employees, must be on the governing body.

In practice, charter schools include those who have a stake in the formation

and success of the schools. Parents, teachers, sometimes community members, administrators, and even students may serve on the governing boards, but in only seven states is the exact composition of the governing body spelled out in the law.

Staffing

More than two-thirds of the state laws demand the same credentials of charter school teachers as of teachers in other public schools. The laws of Georgia, Texas, and the District of Columbia do not discuss credentials, but all three require that teacher credentials be addressed in school charters. In two states, Massachusetts and Arizona, the charter school board decides what credentials they will require, and in Illinois other requirements are permitted.

Those who are qualified to teach in higher education may teach in charter schools sponsored by a university or college. Wisconsin has a special charter school teacher license that is more flexible in its requirements than regular public school certification. Several states put into law that the state's credential requirement can be waived if the waiver is asked for in the school charter. Some states specify the percentage of the staff who must be credentialed, and some require more faculty to be certified in conversion charter schools than in new charter schools.

In about two-thirds of the states, the law permits collective bargaining, but, in many cases, the bargaining unit must be separate from the district or state bargaining unit. Nine states prohibit collective bargaining. In California, charter schools are exempt from all state laws pertaining to schools, including collective bargaining. State laws address job protection in sections on certification, collective bargaining, leaves of absence, and participation in public employee pension plans. These sections of charter school law, however, are weak.

Though accountability for student achievement is part of every state law, there is no mention of curriculum, programs, instruction, or how schools are to effect results.

Since teaching is the key to whether children learn (thus, is linked to accountability for student achievement), one could argue that laws that require teacher certification and collective bargaining could be a barrier to the ability of charter schools to be successful and accomplish their mission. These two concerns have an impact upon the school's flexibility in hiring and, certainly, are integrally related to funding issues.

AMBIGUITIES

Charter school laws do not mandate collaboration but do mention various people who may be involved. Successful charter schools and movements such as Comprehensive School Improvement and Effective Schools all cite collaboration with parents, community organizations, and higher education and cooperation among teachers, parents, principals and boards as necessary to success. Charter schools, themselves, appear to incorporate this collaboration and cooperation as part of the freedom exchanged for accountability.

Though accountability for student achievement is part of every state law, there is no mention of curriculum, programs, instruction, or how schools are to effect results. This is part of the freedom they are given. Several states, however, have state-adopted achievement standards and assessments. This may mean that certain curriculum content, instructional techniques, and assessment instruments are a given and that the charter school must incorporate traditional means of accountability.

In terms of facilities, though charter school laws may permit leasing or purchasing of buildings, they do not address bonding or sources of funding. By this omission, most of the laws imply that all charter schools are conversion schools and are part of the district, not new schools independent from the district.

These are only a few areas of ambiguity in the laws that are, most likely, addressed through guidelines, rules, or consensus at the district or school level. Another vague area is the legal status of charter schools as independent and liable entities.

CONCLUSIONS

There is some evidence that states will continue to legislate for and support charter schools. Minnesota passed the first charter school law in 1991. The 1998 U. S. Department of Education study, on which this article is based, included 33 states and the District of Columbia. Since then, three more states (Oklahoma, Oregon, and New York) and Puerto Rico have passed charter school legislation.

The Center for Education Reform evaluated these laws. Strong laws are defined to be those that foster the development of numerous independent charter schools, and weak ones are those that provide few incentives for charter school development. According to the Center for Education Reform (2000, January) rankings, 23 states have medium to strong laws, and 12 have weak laws.

It is clear that simply passing charter school legislation does not guarantee that the number of schools will grow or that they will be effective. Arizona has the most charter schools (348), followed by California (234) and Texas. Some states with more recently passed laws, however, do not seem to be developing charter schools very rapidly. Although Arkansas, New Hampshire and Wyoming passed laws in 1995 and Virginia in 1998, there are no charter schools for the school year

1999-2000 in those states. Mississippi, Hawaii, Rhode Island, New Mexico, and Nevada all have fewer than five charter schools. Of these states, only New Hampshire has a medium to strong law (U. S. Department of Education, 1998).

Picus (1998) claims there are several questions that need to be asked to determine the health of charter schools: Has the number of charters increased in the state? Where? Why? What kinds of waivers have been requested? How high are the standards? How are results measured? Are students performing better? Perhaps the most important question to ask is this: Is there any indication that charter schools are becoming models for other public schools?

Most charter schools have from three to five years to demonstrate they are accomplishing their mission and improving student achievement. Anecdotal evidence suggests that charter schools are successful, but research evidence is still being collected.

Some laws seem to motivate charter school development and success. All charter school laws hold the schools accountable for improving student achievement, but they may choose how to accomplish this. Conspicuously absent from the laws are stipulations concerning curriculum and instruction. This flexibility charter schools have to define their mission and to select programs, curriculum, instructional methods, and governance structures has added to their chances for success.

Some laws seem to erect barriers to the establishment and success of charter schools. All of these are related, in some way, to funding. In general, state laws do not provide start-up funds, or full funding for operations. None provide facilities funding. Some laws, meant to provide latitude in staffing, also inhibit staff selection by simultaneously imposing certification and credentialing demands. These laws also constrain staff management by failing to provide adequate funding for things such as salaries and rewards. A superceding requirement for collective bargaining also hampers creative hiring and staffing efforts.

If charter schools are to carry out their mission, implement innovative curriculum and instruction, and improve student achievement, teachers must have time and money for collaboration, continued learning, and professional development...Neither time nor money is available for these critical pieces of charter school success.

Lack of funding is related to the lack of professional development for both academic and management staff, another obstacle to be overcome — perhaps the most insurmountable of all. If charter schools are to carry out their mission, implement innovative curriculum and instruction, and improve student achievement, teachers *must* have time and money for collaboration, continued learning, and professional development. Charters schools are free to organize their calendar in creative ways or to reallocate money for this — but only within the confines of an often already inadequate budget. Neither time nor money is available for these critical pieces of charter school success. It is interesting to note that this issue extends to public schools in general. Jennings (1998) reports that education spends only about 1% (or less) of its budget for continued learning and staff development.

Finally, state laws are not reliable predictors of charter school success. This is partly because of other factors such as state regulations. Interpretation of the law, and accepted practice may come into play. Still, those states that do not eliminate barriers — especially lack of funding and lack of real freedom to hire, train, and manage staff — are less likely to see the expansion of charter schools or to establish schools that are successful and become models for the reform of other public schools.

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SHAPING POSITIVE CULTURES IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

[kent d. peterson]

SCHOOL CULTURE COMPRISES THE UNDERLYING SET OF NORMS AND VALUES, RITUALS AND TRADITIONS, CEREMONIES AND STORIES THAT HAVE BEEN BUILT UP OVER TIME AS PEOPLE WORK AND LEARN TOGETHER (DEAL & PETERSON, 1994; SCHEIN, 1985). THIS STRONG WEB OF SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS AND BELIEFS SHAPE HOW PEOPLE THINK, FEEL, AND ACT. A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE FUNCTIONS TO (1) SHARPEN THE FOCUS OF STAFF AND STUDENTS, (2) BUILD COMMITMENT AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY, (3) FOSTER MOTIVATION TO ACHIEVE VALUED ENDS, AND (4) ENCOURAGE PRODUCTIVITY AND LEARNING.

One of the most important and powerful elements of an effective and successful school is its positive culture. In a school with a well defined and shared focus on student learning, staff and students are more likely to work toward the specific goals and mission of the school. When students, teachers, and parents — the key stakeholders in the school's success — have a strong sense of community and commitment to the school, they are more likely to work collectively toward the mission of the school. In a strong and positive school culture, motivation is more potent and energized. Teachers and students in such schools have an intrinsic desire to work hard, put forth effort, and persevere. Finally, in a positive school culture, students and staff learn and grow together; they become part of a vigorous learning community. (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Peterson, 1999)

This article is adapted from Deal, T. E. & Peterson, K. D. (1999). *Shaping school culture: The school leader's role.* San Francisco: CA. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

To build a strong and positive school culture, leaders must attend to numerous critical issues. They must:

- ***Develop a focused vision and mission.*** They must decide *collaboratively* what they want to achieve, what standards they wish to promote and what goals for student achievement they will have.
- ***Identify core norms, values, and beliefs*** that will undergird the school. This includes identifying norms of behavior and decision making, establishing values concerning education and its purposes, and setting forth belief statements that can be guideposts for the school.
- ***Generate new rituals, traditions, and ceremonies*** that will bring the community together, transmit the culture, and commemorate important events and transitions. Ceremonies at the beginning and end of the year are key to forging community bonds. It is important to have award and recognition events to honor people who are making a difference.
- ***Foster norms of behavior that are unique to the school***, norms that forge strong positive interpersonal relationships. Be clear about how teachers, students, and parents are to be treated. Specify what mix of respect, caring, concern, and support will be a trademark of the school.
- ***Attend to the symbols, artifacts, history, and logos*** of the school. These outward manifestations of the school's culture and vision are key to communicating what the school stands for. Keeping early artifacts of a new charter school can make a difference in the future.
- ***Celebrate early successes***, both large and small. Without the visible celebration of efforts and achievements, motivation can be lost.

Schools with strong positive cultures have a communal sense of what is important, act in caring and concerned ways toward each other, and promote a collective commitment to helping students learn (Peterson & Deal, 1998, September).

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CULTURE IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

Policymakers have instituted charter schools to be free from the bureaucratic binds of state rules. Each school is free to develop a unique mission — one designed to serve their specific population of students and parents — and to establish norms and values compatible with its mission. It is free to generate rituals, traditions, and ceremonies that move students, staff, and parents toward realizing the school's mission. In sum, a charter school is free to articulate its mission and to develop a strong positive school culture to support that mission. This is, of course, easier for a charter school that is new than for one formed from an established school with a long-standing culture that may be negative or in direct opposition to the newly formulated mission (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Charter schools have a unique opportunity to develop a strong positive school culture. Vision and mission are based on the charter of the school and [illegible] fine the focus of the school. All [illegible] king toward the same ends. It is extremely important for school leaders, staff, and students to help shape and maintain a positive culture that reinforces the vision and mission of the school. Being free from most or all state rules, charter schools are free to organize governance and instruction in innovative ways that foster living their vision and moving toward their specific goals and mission. In spite of the special circumstances and opportunity a charter school has, it is never simple to build a strong supportive culture, even in a new school. They must still attend to all of the issues indicated above.

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FEATURES OF A STRONG POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

- *Staff has a shared sense of purpose and pour their hearts into teaching.*
- *Staff and administrators share norms of collegiality, improvement, and hard work.*
- *Rituals and traditions celebrate student accomplishment, teacher originality, and parental commitment.*
- *A shared mission for the school bonds everyone to core goals.*
- *Success, joy, and humor fill the corridors.*
- *Parents, staff, and administrators possess a shared sense of community.*

(Deal & Peterson, 1999)

Professional Development and the Seven Cs of Successful Schools

[stephen kailin]

THE COMPREHENSIVE CENTER–REGION VI PROVIDES ON-SITE TEACHER TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOLS ENROLLING LARGE NUMBERS OF MIGRANT, BILINGUAL, OR AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS. AS I HAVE WORKED IN AND OBSERVED THESE SCHOOLS, SEVEN COMMON QUALITIES SEEM TO CHARACTERIZE SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS (KAILIN, 1999, NOVEMBER). THIS ARTICLE DEFINES THOSE QUALITIES AND PROVIDES AN EXAMPLE OF EACH.

CENTRAL ACADEMY IS A CHARTER SCHOOL IN ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN WHICH SERVES A PRIMARILY ARABIC POPULATION. MR. LUAY SHALABI, ITS DYNAMIC AND HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL, TOOK OVER LEADERSHIP IN CENTRAL'S SECOND YEAR OF OPERATION. ONE OF SHALABI'S PRIMARY GOALS IS TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS TO, ULTIMATELY, IMPROVE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S LARGE BILINGUAL STUDENT BODY. THIS PROGRAM IS BASED ON THE *SEVEN CS OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS*.

THE SEVEN Cs OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS	CENTRAL ACADEMY: AN EXAMPLE
Cohesive A cohesive school ***has a well-integrated curriculum that provides a common focus*** for all students. The professionals work well together and are aware of each other's strengths. They are knowledgeable about teaching practice and curriculum at all grade levels, and they accept change as a positive organizational concept.	Professional development at Central Academy is a team effort. All staff members participate on several committees. Time is set aside for committees to share their thoughts, decisions, and the products of their labor in ways that benefit the entire school. In order to develop consistency in teachers' instructional approaches, all staff members receive training in content area strategies for second language learners and in the use of rubrics to teach the writing process. This provides a common language to be used by both staff and students.
Collaborative In a collaborative school ***students, staff members, parents, and community members are part of the effort to build a culture of collaboration.*** All of these participants accept the notion that they can learn from each other and that individuals must be open to changing their own practice for the benefit of the entire school.	As a charter school, Central Academy has been a collaborative effort from the beginning, and Mr. Shalabi has established a variety of committees which guide the school's improvement efforts. Parents are partners in the educational enterprise at Central. Staff members understand this, and improvement of student achievement is seen as a cooperative effort. Students are released a half day early every Friday, and teachers devote this time to collaboration and in-service training. This has enhanced professional development efforts at Central and shows, symbolically, that the parent community understands that this investment of teacher time is valuable to their children. To promote cohesion among staff, team-building, and consensus-building, a portion of the Friday in-service time — now an integral part of Central's collaborative effort — is devoted to social activities such as cooperative lunches and birthday celebrations.

THE SEVEN Cs OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS		CENTRAL ACADEMY: AN EXAMPLE
Comprehensive	A comprehensive school ***educates the whole child***. Teachers are advocates for student achievement rather than subject matter specialists. There is a sense of "we" in the school, and the curriculum is designed around student needs and interests. Teachers take school-wide responsibilities, and, rather than taking ownership of just their own classrooms, view all students in the school as their students.	Central Academy has adopted William Glasser's *Quality Schools* model (Glasser, 1992) to enhance the comprehensive nature of the school. This has provided a cohesive and child-centered focus for all staff development. Discussions at staff meetings frequently revolve around how to make the school more student-centered or how to adjust the program to better meet students' needs. Professional development, rather than focusing on a particular curriculum, has featured child-centered teaching techniques such as cooperative learning and multiage grouping.
Continuous	A continuous school ***has curricula and instructional practices that are not only developmentally appropriate but build from one grade to the next***. There is a common instructional language throughout the school. Expectations for behavior and achievement are clear and are consistently applied. Teachers are aware of standards and benchmarks, not only for their own grade, but for grades both below and above.	Central Academy has implemented multiage teams across the school. This was begun at the preschool/kindergarten level and is progressing up the grades. The goal is to have multiage teams through grade eight. These teams have greatly enhanced the continuous nature of the curriculum at Central. Part of the Friday in-service time is frequently taken up with dialog — both within and across these teams — about instruction. Such dialog promotes the use of common language and instructional practices. Multiage teams actually build collaboration, cohesion, and the comprehensive nature of the school.
Committed	A committed school ***has stakeholders who are all committed to the success of students and of the school as a whole***. Everyone who is involved with the school works together for its success. Staff, students, and community members are aware of the school's mission, and they support it. A culture of success pervades the organization, and reform efforts are due, in large part, to broad-based support.	Due to the efforts of Mr. Shalabi and to the nature of a charter school, there is a high level of commitment between the staff and parents at Central Academy. Charter schools have a distinct advantage in developing commitment, because parents choose the school for their children. In general, parents at Central hold common, or similar, cultural values which are also shared by many staff members. This forms a strong bond which is often not present in other public schools. There is a concerted effort at Central to serve the bilingual student population by providing Arabic classes for all students. Professional development initiatives at Central reinforce the strong commitment already present. The Comprehensive Center–Region VI has provided training in the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994) giving teachers techniques especially suited to teaching bilingual students.
Cognitive	A cognitive school ***spends more instructional time on cognitive work than on discipline and administrative tasks***. Professional development centers on achievement issues and on instructional practices that enhance student achievement. There is a concerted effort to organize the school schedule to provide as much uninterrupted instructional time as possible. School administrators facilitate, whenever possible, team planning and instructional dialog among all staff members.	The majority of the Friday afternoon in-service time (discussed above) focuses on teaching techniques that lead to improved student achievement. Topics have included the following: developing integrated thematic units, Cooperative Learning strategies (Kagan, 1994) and other direct instruction reading strategies as well as ways to assist bilingual students in the content areas. Central's training to improve student achievement is enhanced by the comprehensive nature of its staff development program which concentrates on student-centered strategies rather than focusing on subject matter. Since all teachers receive this training, it becomes both cohesive and continuous. All students experience similar instructional practices and use a common academic language. Furthermore, exposure runs across grade levels.

THE SEVEN Cs OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

ALL WITHIN A CULTURE THAT IS *Contemplative*

The culture of a contemplative school ***fosters and supports self-reflection and change of practice based on critical reflection.*** All stakeholders view change as positive and inevitable. If — based on what is best for the students they serve — their school and their own practice are not changing, they are moving backward. Staff members willingly devote time to staff development that actually brings about change in instructional and/or school practice. Contemplative schools celebrate their culture of success.

CENTRAL ACADEMY: AN EXAMPLE

Mr. Shalabi is known as Central Academy's "lead contemplator." He is a leader who holds strongly and firmly to practices that he believes are best for children — even if these practices are not especially convenient for staff or parents. Mr. Shalabi is the first to be self-reflective and open to constructive criticism. He is also the first to support positive change at Central. Mr. Shalabi will not long tolerate those who refuse to examine their own practices and work toward positive change.

Central Academy's strong mission statement, which all stakeholders in the school community support, enhances the contemplative nature of the school. This strong widely supported mission statement anchors and guides the changes that can, and should, occur in the school. Central is working toward validating their mission statement and making it part of a broader document that will truly guide all changes that occur at the school.

As the result of a strong professional development program — lead by Principal Shalabi, endorsed by parents, and actively engaged in by staff members — Central Academy is a charter school on the rise. It has challenges to face, but, because it has paid attention to the Seven Cs of Successful Schools, it is well positioned for continued improvement in student achievement. It is an excellent example of a charter school working at fulfilling its educational mission.

CENTRAL ACADEMY MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Central Academy shall be to provide an education of the whole child by integrating the different aspects of children's learning and lives to make them fuller and more meaningful.

The Academy shall offer an integrated theme and project-based curriculum which draw on experiences at home, in the community, and which encourages parents and other community members to participate in the school and share their expertise.

The Academy shall supplement a carefully planned Michigan core curriculum with a special component of international cultures, including study of language, culture and history.

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[about the author]

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[continued from page 1]

a means toward that end.

Charter schools have various instructional missions. While charter schools espousing basic-skills educational philosophies tend to get the lion's share of media attention, one can also find charter schools based on Dewey's ideas or on some other progressive educational philosophies. Indeed, a most illuminating incident occurred at a conference sponsored by the Comprehensive Center–Region VI when the representative of a school committed to basic-skills instruction showed ongoing interest in performance-based assessments used by another school that followed the Coalition of Essential Schools philosophy. At this same conference, a secondary school committed to innovative instruction for inner city students featured in its teaching of calculus (a very traditional course) as a vehicle for enhancing students' later-life opportunities.

At this conference, listening to representatives from charter schools with a wide range of missions, I realized that they have more in common — including a concern for high-quality instruction — than they have differences which get so much media attention. For example, charter schools provide an important relief valve for ongoing pressure on public schools to adopt one or another instructional approach. In addition, people who found and staff charter schools and the parents who send their children to those schools share at least a nominal commitment to a specific educational philosophy, a commitment that has placed them at odds with their local public schools.

What is more, charter schools have traded the support provided by an elaborate infrastructure for the relative autonomy and accountability that are part and parcel of their charters. Charter school personnel share the common pressures of recruiting well-prepared staff and interested students, managing a budget, and attending to the myriad administrative details of running a school. Finally, across the political and instructional spectra, charter school personnel reported being misunderstood by colleagues and parents in the public school system.

While not ignoring the differences among charter schools and the politically controversial winds that swirl around their creation, educators should realize that charter schools are, potentially, places for the development and testing of educational innovations. Charter schools face common problems that need to be solved or managed if they are to fulfill that potential. As the papers (written by our conference participants) summarized in this newsletter show, pioneer charter schools have taken some important steps in this direction. Hopefully, others will learn from their examples, avoid their mistakes, and build on their successful experiences.

The mission of the Comprehensive Center is to provide research-based technical assistance to schools that enroll large numbers of students who are eligible for services funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): Title I Migrant Education, Title VII Bilingual Education, and Title IX American Indian Education. Through this newsletter, we hope to raise awareness about issues involving charter schools' design and implementation. People who are involved in efforts focused on the education of ESEA-eligible students may avail themselves of our services.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Sherian Foster's contributions in editing this issue of the CC–VI newsletter and to the UW–Madison School of Education's Instructional Media Development Center, directed by Lisa Livingston, in its graphic design and layout.

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WEB RESOURCES ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

[mary chaffee]

IN DISCUSSING CHARTER SCHOOLS, KEY RESOURCES FOUND ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB HAVE BEEN LISTED UNDER THREE SECTIONS: LINKS TO THE TWO CHARTER SCHOOLS FEATURED IN THE LEAD ARTICLE, KEY CHARTER SCHOOL WEB RESOURCES WHICH PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION FROM A NATION WIDE PERSPECTIVE, AND CC-VI REGION-SPECIFIC CHARTER SCHOOL WEB RESOURCES. SINCE IOWA, NORTH DAKOTA AND SOUTH DAKOTA DO NOT YET HAVE CHARTER SCHOOLS, REGION-SPECIFIC WEB SITES WILL POINT ONLY TO WEB SITES FOUND IN MICHIGAN, MINNESOTA AND WISCONSIN. BECAUSE THERE IS SO MUCH MATERIAL AVAILABLE, CONSIDER THESE KEY RESOURCES TO BE A STEPPING STONE TO THE PARTICULAR AREA OF CHARTER SCHOOLS WHICH IS OF SPECIFIC INTEREST TO YOU, AS A READER. ADDITIONALLY, WE INVITE YOU TO VISIT THE CC-VI WEB RESOURCE LIBRARY FOR A MORE EXTENSIVE LISTING OF WEB CONNECTIONS TO RESOURCES ON CHARTER SCHOOLS.

SCHOOLS FEATURED IN THE LEAD ARTICLE

FENTON AVENUE CHARTER SCHOOL

[Found on the California Network of Educational Charters (CANEC.) web site.]

http://www.canec.org/schools/2_30c.htm

On the California Network of Educational Charters (CANEC) web site, you can find a copy of the Fenton Avenue Charter School's Charter Document. The Fenton Avenue Charter School is located in the northeast San Fernando Valley in the city of Lake View Terrace.

FRANCIS W. PARKER CHARTER SCHOOL

[Found on the Massachusetts Department of Education web site.]

http://www.doe.mass.edu/cs.www/cs.parker.html

A detailed profile of the Francis W. Parker Charter school, located in Fort Devens, Massachusetts, is found on the Massachusetts Department of Education web site in its Massachusetts Charter school Initiative section.

[about the author]

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KEY CHARTER SCHOOL WEB RESOURCES

CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM

http://www.edreform.com

The Center for Education Reform (CER) is a nonprofit national advocacy group working to improve the nation's schools. The CER web site provides an enormous amount of information on charter schools which is updated frequently. From the home page, scroll down to the index provided to the CER Web site and click on "Charter Schools." "Charter Schools" opens with a section entitled "About Charter Schools." In sections which follow, links are provided to publications on charter schools in such areas as progress reports, legislation, books and guides, and news and analysis as well an invitation to participate in CER's interactive Education Forum.

CHARTER SCHOOL RESEARCH PROJECT

http://csr.syr.edu/

The Charter School Research Project is a one of the best resources on the World Wide Web for research pertaining to charter schools. It offers an enormous selection of research materials to choose from. The site is user friendly and easy to navigate. Its guiding principle is interactivity. In addition to the research area, there is a discussion area where you may join and participate in various on-line forums.

EDUCATION WEEK

http://www.edweek.org/

The Education Week web site is an excellent web resource for many topics in education including charter schools. From the home page click on the "In Context" button. Then, click on the "Issues" button. Finally, click on the "Charter Schools" button. This section provides easy access to Education Week articles on charter schools (see "From the Archives") as well as publications found on the World Wide Web and links to other related organizations with web sites addressing the issue of charter schools.

HOW CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE DIFFERENT: LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM A NATIONAL STUDY

by Bruno V. Manno, Chester E. Finn, Jr., Louann A. Bierlein, and Gregg Vanourek, March 1998

[Found on Hudson Institute's Educational Excellence Network.]

http://edexcellence.net/library/kappan.htm

In this article, the authors provide background information on the Charter Schools in Action project which was a two-year study, a project of the Hudson Institute's Educational Excellence Network, supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The article takes a close look at the innovative ways in which some actual charter schools organize and support themselves, and presents five lessons that charter schools offer American education. The entire article is available on-line and can be downloaded.

A NATIONAL STUDY OF CHARTER SCHOOLS - JULY 1998

[Found on the U. S. Department of Education web site.]

http://ed.gov/pubs/charter98/appendixb.htm

The U. S. Department of Education's web site makes available on-line an enormous number of articles, national studies, and papers within its Publications and Products section. Make your way to this section and then select and / or search various data banks with your topic of interest. There is a lot available on charter schools including the National Study of Charter Schools - July 1998.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

[Found on the National Conference of State Legislatures web site.]

http://www.ncsl.org/

The National Conference of State Legislatures web site provides a wealth of information on charter schools from a legislative point of view. Although not yet updated with a 1999 legislative summary, the 1998 summary is excellent.

CHARTER SCHOOLS: CHALLENGING TRADITIONS AND CHANGING ATTITUDES

Issue Brief - September 1, 1998

[From the National Governors' Association (NGA) web site.]

http://www.nga.org/Pubs/IssueBriefs/1998/

Quoting from the summary provided for this NGA issue brief (September 1, 1998) on charter schools: "...[it] reviews the origins of the charter school movement, explains why proponents believe charter schools improve public education, explores major issues in charter school operation and describes key elements of charter school statutes. Charter school initiatives in Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, and North Carolina provide useful insights to states that are considering charter school legislation."

CHARTER SCHOOLS THE NORTHWEST EXPERIENCE

[Found on the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) web site.]

http://www.nwrel.org/charter/

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's current projects on charter schools include the development of charter school leadership training, collection and dissemination of charter school training materials, and state and school level evaluation services.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

[Found on Pathways, NCREL web site.]

http://www.ncrel.org/http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/pathwayg.htm

There is a wealth of information to be found on NCREL's Pathway to School Improvement web site regarding charter schools. From the home page select "Topics" from the side menu bar. Then, click on "Charter Schools." A page of "Contents" appears which covers links to: What's New, Issues, Publications and Articles, Internet Resources, Policy Briefs and Publications, an Online Discussion Group and information on NCREL states which include Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

US CHARTER SCHOOLS

http://www.uscharterschools.org/

The US Charter Schools web site is, without question, one of the best resources on the World Wide Web regarding charter schools. Funded by the US Department of Education, the site is well laid out and easy to navigate. It provides well written, in-depth comprehensive information on Charter schools nationwide.

CC–VI REGION SPECIFIC WEB RESOURCES

MICHIGAN

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ACADEMIES (MAPSA) "FOR OUR CHILDREN"

http://www.charterschools.org/core.htm/

The MAPSA web site has useful information on charter schools specific to the state of Michigan.

MINNESOTA

CHARTER FRIENDS NATIONAL NETWORK

http://www.charterfriends.org/

The Charter Friends National Network was established in January of 1997 as a project of the Center for Policy Studies in cooperation with Hamline University in St. Paul, MN. The web site is user friendly and has a lot of useful information. From the home page you can click to the following sections: Directory of State Contacts, Charter Friends Toolkit, Friends Network Publications, Major Charter Friends Initiatives, Writings on Education Policy, Charter Events Calendar, Friends Network Feedback, and Links to Other On-Line Resources.

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF CHARTER SCHOOLS (MACS)

http://www.mncharterschools.org/

The MACS web site provides information on charter schools specific to Minnesota. Some of the information found on the site includes school profiles, information regarding legislation, a calendar, and resources.

MINNESOTA'S CHARTER SCHOOLS

http://www.cfl.state.mn.us/charter/

This delightful site is a Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning supported site. It is nicely laid out and contains comprehensive information on charter schools within the state of Minnesota. See their links to other Minnesota web resource sites.

WISCONSIN

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dlsis/edop/charter.html

On the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction web site, information on charter schools can be found as a program under the section entitled "Education Options." The Charter School page offers an overview of charter schools in Wisconsin as well as a contact person.

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COMPREHENSIVE CENTER–REGION VI

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THE COMPREHENSIVE CENTER–REGION VI FIELD SITES

THE MISSION OF THE CENTERS, UNDER THE IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOL ACT (IASA), IS TO EMPOWER SCHOOL PERSONNEL TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR ALL CHILDREN. THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE COMPREHENSIVE CENTERS IS DRIVEN BY THE NEEDS OF THE STATES AND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND BY THE NEEDS OF THE CHILDREN THEY SERVE. THE COMPREHENSIVE CENTER–REGION VI SERVES IOWA, MICHIGAN, MINNESOTA, NORTH DAKOTA, SOUTH DAKOTA, AND WISCONSIN.

[Subcontract/Field Sites]

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