Charters "Yes!" Vouchers "No!"

by Joe Nathan

Why did our former president and the late progressive U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone support the charter public school approach, while rejecting public funds for private or parochial schools? Why has civil rights legend Rosa Parks been a strong charter supporter? Why has the number of states with some form of charter law grown from one in 1992 to forty-one today, and the number of charter schools from one to more than 3,000? This essay attempts to help answer those questions.

In order to understand the answers, one must understand how charters differ from vouchers. In the anchor essay of this issue of *Educational Horizons*, Charles Glenn lays the foundation for that discussion with his listing of the thirteen key points upon which he and I agree and the key points upon which we do not, which include "publicly funding religious schools, either directly or with vouchers…and allowing schools to set admissions requirements related to their educational mission." Although I have deep respect for the commitment and insights of Dr. Glenn, I consider those two points of disagreement to be of the utmost importance. They share a common denominator—vouchers—so it is in contrasting charters and vouchers that I can best address the topics of distinctive schools and parental choice.

This essay includes two sections. The first offers a brief explanation of the charter idea and shows how it is different from the voucher idea. The second describes some of the experience and research that help define the charter movement, including some that the American Federation of Teachers has attempted to promote in furtherance of its goal of blocking or blunting the movement.

What is the charter idea? How does it differ from the voucher approach?

The charter idea builds on four fundamental American principles:

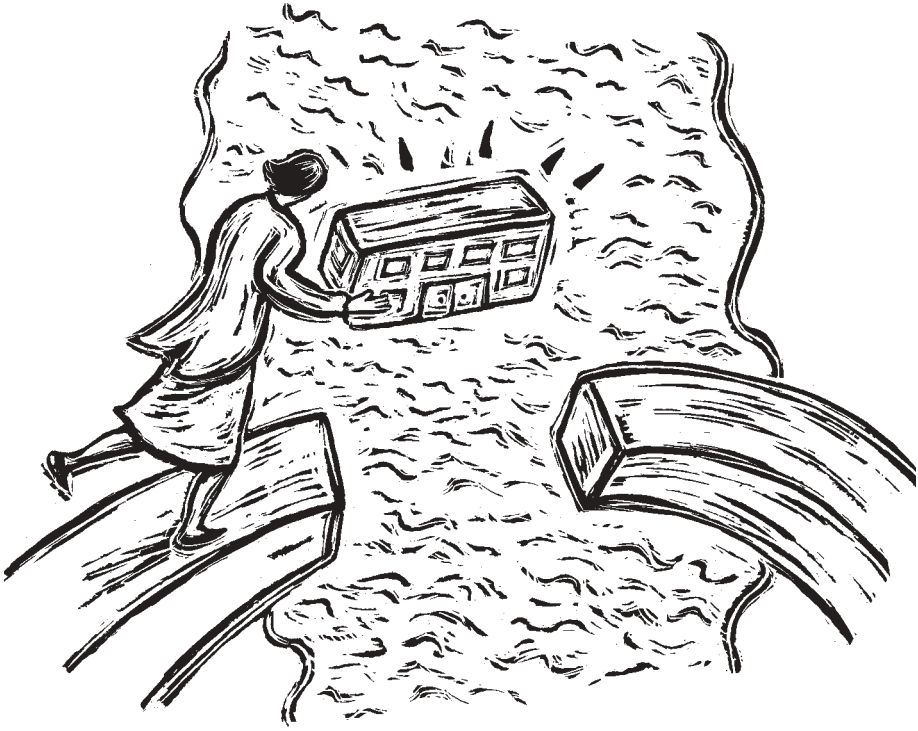
1. People should have an opportunity to carry out their dreams and use their best ideas, including the opportunity to create schools that make sense.
2. This is a country of responsibilities, not just rights. Schools should have responsibilities, including the responsibility to improve student achievement, measured in various ways.
3. We believe in extensive, but not unlimited freedom; for example, the classic limitation on the freedom of speech is that Americans may not yell "Fire!" in a crowded theater. Educational freedom—within limits—is important.
4. We are skeptical of monopoly and support choice. Our system of public education should not be monolithic: it should offer choices to parents and students.

What is the charter idea? As adopted in 1991 by the Minnesota legislature, the charter idea has the following key features:

- The state will give more than one publicly accountable organization the power to authorize or sponsor new kinds of public schools. That could include the State Board of Education, local school boards, cities, universities, foundations, major non-profit organizations, etc.
- Those sponsors will develop a "charter" or contract with a group of people who want to create a new kind of public school, or want to convert an existing public school to something new.
- The contract will specify improvements in student achievement that the school will have to produce in order to have its contract renewed.
- The school will be public. It will be nonsectarian. It will not charge tuition. It will not have admissions tests of any kind. It will follow health and safety regulations.
- Existing public schools may convert to charter status. That should happen if a majority of the teachers in the school vote to convert.
- The state will offer an up-front waiver of rules about curriculum, management, and teaching. The state may specify student outcomes, but determining how the school operates should be up to the people who establish and operate it. The charter school concept trades bureaucracy for accountability, regulation for results.
- The charter school will be a school of choice. Faculty, students, and families actively choose it. No one is assigned to be there.
- The school will become a discrete entity: The law may let the founders choose any organization available under general state law or may specify an organization, such as non-profit. As a legal entity,

the school will have its board. There is real site management. Teachers, if employees, have full rights to organize and bargain collectively; however, their bargaining unit is separate from any district bargaining unit.

- The full per-pupil allocation will move with the student. That amount should be roughly the average state allocation per pupil or the average in the district from which the student comes. If the state provides extra funds for students from low-income families or with disabilities, those funds also should follow the students.
- Participating teachers should be protected and given new opportunities. To teach in charter schools, teachers may take leaves from public school systems, and while on leave will retain their seniority. They may continue to participate in the local or state retirement programs. New teachers may join state retirement programs. They may choose to be employees, or to organize a professional group under which they collectively own and operate the school.



How does the charter idea differ from the voucher approach? The key differences are two: First, with the charter idea schools must be nonsectarian, whereas with the voucher approach schools may be faith-based. Second, with the charter idea schools may not use admissions tests, whereas with the voucher approach schools may use admissions tests that do not violate antidiscrimination laws.

Let's talk about those issues, one by one.

Faith-based Schools: Within the last year, courts in Florida and Colorado have ruled that their state constitutions prohibit funding religious schools at the K–12 level. While the "separation of church and state" argument can be argued in several ways at the federal level, states appear to be deciding that public funds should not go to religious K–12 schools. That makes great sense to me.

In this issue's anchor essay, Charles Glenn wrote that he and I both would "bar from participation schools which teach hatred or disrespect for any racial, religious, ethnic, or sexual group." True, but just try enforcing that. Faith-based schools are established to, among other things, promote a religion. One of the ways they do that is to show how their religion, whether it is Lutheran, Jewish, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, or whatever, is superior to any and all others. Elsewhere in this issue, Steven Vryhof writes eloquently on the other side of the debate, but as I see it, while a school might also try to teach tolerance, the bottom line for most religious schools is the promotion of one religion over all others.

America already is an enormously diverse country and is becoming moreso all the time. By and large we have avoided the centuries-long religious battles that we see in places like Ireland, the Middle East, and the Balkans. No one knows for certain how much religious schools have contributed to those conflicts, but materials from religious schools in those areas have been examined, and some are quite inflammatory.

Dr. Glenn has been, for decades, a passionate, articulate spokesperson and activist for educational equity. His characterization of the two of us as "allies" in that cause is accurate, so this statement clearly is not intended in any way to diminish respect for him or Steven Vryhof. However, it does not appear to me that they have given sufficient weight to the risk that schools might promote further religious divisions in this country.

Admissions tests: Glenn would allow for admissions tests except when they are used to exclude someone of a particular race or religion.

A major federal study found that thousands of magnet public schools use admissions tests, including the majority of magnet schools at the secondary level (Steel and Levine 1994). However, that has resulted in huge frustration in many communities. In fact, one of the nation's first voucher laws was sponsored by a Wisconsin African-American Democrat,

Representative Polly Williams, who was frustrated with the fact that her relatives could not get into a magnet school in her Milwaukee neighborhood. Magnet schools have created a two-tier system in many communities, with the magnets able to screen out all but those they want. So low-achieving, troubled, or angry, alienated students have been screened out.

One of the reasons the charter movement was started was that its founders were deeply disturbed by the injustice of allowing some schools receiving public funds to screen students while insisting that other schools take all comers. Our center is working closely with high schools in a metropolitan area where there is a handful of elite "public" high schools that use admissions testing. That results in the elite schools having less than 5 percent students with disabilities and the neighborhood schools having more than 30 percent students with disabilities. The use of admissions tests is deeply unfair.

Why does the charter idea merit support?

Success stories: One reason the charter idea merits support is that the movement has helped generate ideas and approaches that clearly help students who traditionally have not done well in public education. Individual success stories abound, for example:

- Lawrence Hernandez, a young man from Pueblo, Colorado, was the first in his family to attend college. Hernandez taught at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, then he decided to return to his hometown to found Cesar Chavez Academy. The school mixes intensive instruction in the arts with a deep belief that students from low-income, limited-English-speaking families can do as well as students from middle-class communities where English is the first language and therefore is spoken at home. The Cesar Chavez Academy currently is rated among Colorado's top-achieving schools, and Hernandez is now working to start a high school (*Pueblo Chieftain* 2003).
- Codman Academy, an inner-city high school using many progressive education ideas, was featured in a recent *New York Times* article because its inner-city students are doing as well as most suburban students on the state's standardized tests (Rimer 2003).
- The Academy for the Pacific Rim, working with secondary students in urban Boston, has consistently been one of the city's top-ranked public schools among those that do not use admissions tests. The school starts each day with a "pep rally" for academics and gives some students a "gambatte" award recognizing academic persistence. ("Gambatte" is a Japanese term that translates roughly as "persist, keep going.") The school also mixes high expectations

with active learning; for example, students attend a model Constitutional Convention in which they play the parts of people who attended the original convention (Nathan and Febey 2001).

- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation gave Minnesota New Country School about $7 million to replicate itself, based on the success of this rural charter. MNCS developed the idea of teacher-owned schools run as cooperatives. That is a new option in the profession, giving educators the chance to act more like some doctors and attorneys who select their office administrators and run institutions as they think appropriate. MNCS also operates a secondary school that uses a project-based learning approach in which few classes are offered. Instead, its 120 grade 7–12 students work with their families and an adviser to develop an individual plan that helps them meet their own needs and interests, and that also satisfies performance-based graduation requirements. Students are expected to make public presentations three times a year. There are no bells and virtually no classes, and students may move freely around the school, operating much like adults. Students work on projects for a time and then, on their own schedule, get up and go to the restroom or spend a few minutes as they wish, then return to work (Dirkswager 2002).
- Charter schools using the KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) approach developed by three young teachers have consistently out-performed other public schools serving similar low-income students. The founder of the Gap clothing store chain has given the KIPP founders $25 million to help create similar programs around the country (Wingert and Kantrowitz 2003).

A growing body of research: Another reason that the charter idea deserves support is that in addition to the individual success stories, scholarly research is demonstrating that in certain circumstances charter schools as a group perform better than traditional schools; for example:

- A report released in January 2004 by California's non-partisan Legislative Analyst's Office praised that state's charter movement and urged that it be expanded. Among the conclusions were that "charter schools are a viable reform strategy, expanding families' choices, encouraging parental involvement, increasing teacher satisfaction, enhancing principals' control over school-site decision-making, and broadening the curriculum without sacrificing time spent on core subjects." The report recommended, among other things, eliminating the state's cap on charter schools, consolidating fourteen categorical programs into block grants to make it easier

for charter schools to apply for those funds, and allowing multiple authorizers of charter schools (Legislative Analyst's Office 2004).

- A study of charter schools serving a general education population (as opposed to charters established to serve students with whom traditional schools have failed) found that "charter schools serving the general student population outperformed nearby regular public schools on math tests by 0.08 standard deviations, equivalent to a benefit of 3 percentile points for a student starting at the 50th percentile, and outperformed regular public schools on reading tests by 0.04 standard deviations, or about two points for a student starting at the 50th percentile" (Greene et al. 2003).
- A study of California charter schools that converted from district to charter status finds "many conversion charters are producing average test scores with populations of children historically associated with low test scores" (Loveless 2003, 33).
- A Center for School Change study of charters in Minneapolis found that over a one-year period a higher percentage of students at six of the nine charters sponsored by the district made a year's worth of progress in reading, math, or both than the district average; over the previous two years, students at five of the seven district-sponsored charter schools had made more progress than the district average. That, despite the fact that Minneapolis charters enroll a higher percentage of students who do not speak English at home, a higher percentage of students of color (minorities), and a higher percentage of students from low-income families (Brandt 2003).
- A Wisconsin study found that fourth-graders in charter schools "are significantly less likely to perform at minimal or basic levels of achievement than their traditional counterparts (i.e., the charter school students performed higher). We found similar results, though not as strong, for 8th graders. . . . Charter schools may not be for all students—that is why they are a choice—but they serve some extremely well." That report is especially noteworthy because it was written by Professor John Witte, who had published earlier, critical questions about the impact of vouchers in Milwaukee (Witte 2004).

What about a report from the American Federation of Teachers analyzing federal data, which received extensive coverage in August 2004 (Nelson et al. 2004)?

Let's be clear: the AFT is far from a neutral group. The AFT and its state affiliates have battled the charter idea for years, strongly opposing the creation of laws allowing new schools that would not be controlled by unions and school boards. In 1993, AFT President Albert Shanker

wrote that "vouchers, charters, and for-profit management schemes are all quick fixes that won't fix anything" (Shanker 1993). (Ironically, in the same column Shanker praised President Bill Clinton's initiatives in education, despite the fact that Clinton was a strong supporter of the charter movement.)

The National Assessment of Educational Progress Web site cited by the AFT represented less than 1 percent of all charter school students in the United States. The National Assessment did not, as other studies cited earlier in this essay have done, examine what *progress* students in charters have made relative to students in district schools.

After examining the AFT report and other reports on charter schools, newspapers around the United States concluded that the charter movement remained, as the liberal-leaning (Minneapolis) *Star Tribune* wrote, "[a]n option [the] U.S. still needs" (*Star Tribune* 2004).

- The *Wisconsin State Journal* in Madison wrote, "Educators and policymakers should embrace the spread of charter schools, which improve prospects for students who are low achievers in traditional classrooms" (*Wisconsin State Journal* 2004).
- A *Denver Post* editorial concluded, "Charters aren't a silver bullet, but they can offer an alternative that suits some students" (*Denver Post* 2004).
- And the St. Paul, Minnesota *Pioneer Press* wrote, "Charter schools provide [a] needed choice. . . . Many charter schools perform well academically." The editors urged that communities should be "replicating their success while eliminating schools that fail to deliver academic progress over time . . ." (*St. Paul Pioneer Press* 2004).

As the *Wisconsin State Journal* editorial pointed out,

> This analysis by the American Federation of Teachers is just another salvo in a campaign against innovation by defenders of the status quo. The study explores the wrong question and ignores some basic facts about the makeup of charter schools. The real question is: "Do charter schools improve student achievement?

Stimulating broader system improvement. A third reason the charter idea is worth supporting is that in some places it has helped stimulate broader improvement. Research by Eric Rofes found that in states with strong laws that provided for multiple sponsorship the existence of a charter public school sector encouraged improvement in existing schools: "District personnel on at least five occasions in that study

acknowledged, sometimes begrudgingly (sic), that charters had served to jump-start their efforts at reforms. While they initially opposed charters and the chartering had been accomplished outside their authority, they felt that district schools ultimately had benefited from the dynamics introduced by the charter school." Rofes noted, "States which had policies that provided for the chartering of new schools only through the local district showed significantly less evidence of reform efforts from the development of charter schools than did states which allowed for multiple sponsors" (Rofes, n.d., 19).

A few anecdotes help illustrate how competition can, in some circumstances, help stimulate improvement. About a year ago, a front-page article in Minnesota's largest daily paper noted that one district was modifying an existing elementary school to include studies of the Hmong culture. "School officials acknowledge that they are trying to keep Hmong parents from fleeing to nearby Hope Academy Charter School, a Hmong-centered program" (Walsh 2003). Urban Coalition President Lee Pao Xiong is quoted as saying, "In the back of their mind, the school district knows they're losing students to charter schools. This is a way for them to keep those children."

Another example comes from Dr. Kent Matheson, the former Washington State superintendent of the year and president of the Washington State Superintendent's Association. In 1998, I was invited to debate Dr. Matheson in front of several hundred Idaho public school administrators. Matheson stunned the audience by noting that originally he had opposed the charter idea when he moved to Flagstaff, Arizona, to serve as superintendent. He said he initially regarded charters as "cutworms that would hurt the whole field of education," but had changed his mind. As he put it, "When planting a field, if you see cutworms, you use pesticide; that's what I wanted to do: stop the charter movement. But gradually I became a convert to the charter idea. Our state's charter law was a very strong motivating force making us want to compete" (Matheson 1998).

Matheson listed several reforms that were motivated, in part, by competition from local charter schools. One in particular stands out: he described a former state teacher of the year in his district who had been proposing a high school in cooperation with a local museum that would require all students to make presentations judged by local community and business people before graduating. The district principals resisted those ideas and he did not overrule them. When the charter law passed, that outstanding teacher made one last attempt to convince the district that her ideas made sense. When she was again rejected, she set up the proposed program as a charter school. After that, Matheson noted, when he and his high school principals went to local meetings, business and

community leaders began to ask why the district was not requiring presentations from its own students. After some discussion, the high schools implemented the same practices.

Another example of response to competition comes from Boston. There, in the early 1990s, the local teachers union proposed creation of new small-school options within the district that would have been similar to those that have been created as part of the New Visions program in New York City. However, the local school board (called the School Committee) rejected that idea. Then the Massachusetts legislature passed a charter law allowing educators and community groups to apply directly to the state for permission to create charter schools. Eighteen of the first sixty-four charter proposals came from Boston. Faced with the potential loss of thousands of students, some of the district's most innovative teachers, and millions of dollars, the School Committee reversed itself and created the Boston Pilot School program. (See Nathan 1999 for more details.) [*For additional insight into the Boston Pilot School program, see also Deborah Meier's essay in* **educational HORIZONS** *82:4—Editor.*]

The growth of the charter idea

The charter idea has found support across the political spectrum. In a nationally televised campaign debate in 1992, both the Democratic candidate Bill Clinton and incumbent Republican President George H. W. Bush endorsed the idea. Liberal Democrat U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone praised the charter idea in a speech to a joint session of the Minnesota legislature, calling charter schools "that marvelous Minnesota innovation which is spreading throughout the country" (Wellstone 1997).

In 1992, only one state (Minnesota) had a charter law and only one charter school was operating. As of fall 2004, forty-one states have some form of charter law and approximately 3,000 charter schools are operating, serving between 600,000 and 700,000 students (Center for Education Reform 2004).

Will the charter movement by itself solve all of American education's problems? To this writer's knowledge after reviewing hundreds of documents on that subject, no one has suggested that the charter movement will be a panacea. The examples cited above suggest that the charter idea and individual charter schools sometimes helped stimulate improvements in traditional schools, but have the charter movement and individual charter schools produced dramatic improvements in every public school in America? Of course not. As Ted Kolderie notes:

> The prevailing notion is that existing schools will be transformed, like caterpillars into butterflies, as people who mean well and get resources try hard and act decisively after experts

> train them in how to "do better." The suggestion implicit in chartering is that the schools we want will be developed faster by creating them new. Neither theory need work perfectly: evaluation should simply compare the two; tell us whether chartering does some things that cannot be done as well in "regular" schools, or does them more quickly. (Kolderie 2003)

Wise states will use both strategies: trying to help improve existing schools and giving people opportunities to create new schools. And part of the opening of new schools and the improving of existing ones should be learning from success.

Almost twenty years ago, *New York Times* education editor Fred Hechinger wrote:

> Unfortunately, educators often pay no attention to success stories in newspapers or on television unless they are about their own schools. And when they do pay attention, they often complain that the reporter has been hoodwinked by a teacher or a principal seeking publicity. Or they cite particular circumstances that make it impossible for them to do the same thing. So successful experiments and outstanding performance are often left in isolation. . . . To those who lean on the established way of doing things, the successful rebel is not a model but a threat. For those who want to find them, there are plenty of models of excellence. . . . Since American schools, in contrast to those of other countries, are not reformed by national edicts, emulation of these models is the only hope for education reform. It remains a dim hope as long as many educators, deliberately or not, fail to visit those islands of excellence and try to learn from them. Since the Deborah Meiers cannot be cloned, they might at least be studied. (Hechinger 1987)

Initially critics (such as the Minnesota Education Association) feared that charter schools would become "elite academies" (Furrer 1991). In fact, Minnesota's charter schools serve a higher percentage of students representing low-income, minority, and limited-English-speaking groups, and a higher percentage of students with disabilities. U.S. Department of Education figures show that nationally, charter schools enroll a higher percentage of minorities and a higher percentage of low-income students than do district schools.

These data are drawn from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center on Education Statistics figures in the School and Staffing Survey, 1999–2000. They are for charter public schools open as of the 1998–1999 school year and still operating in the 1999–2000 school year. (Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.)

Race/Ethnicity of Students	Elementary		Secondary	
	Traditional public	Charter public	Traditional public	Charter public
White	61.4	44.7	66.6	48.9
Black	18.1	31.0	15.0	21.8
Hispanic	15.7	19.5	13.3	22.7
Asian/Pac Islander	3.6	3.3	3.9	3.1
American Indian	1.2	1.5	1.2	3.5

Percent of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	Elementary		Secondary	
	Traditional public	Charter public	Traditional public	Charter public
Less than 15	21.1	3.9	31.3	29.8
15–29	18.6	11.0	20.0	9.8
30–49	21.8	16.6	20.3	16.8
50–74	19.9	14.1	14.7	19.9
75–100	18.7	27.4	13.7	23.7

Combining the two highest categories (50–74 and 75–100) we find that at the elementary level there is a slightly higher percentage of charters serving predominantly low-income students and at the secondary level, a significantly higher percentage (43.6 percent compared to 28.4 percent). Those figures show charters serving a significantly higher percentage of low-income students and young people representing communities of color; however, it is vital to recognize that charters vary widely. A Rand Corporation researcher made this point, as part of his review of California charter schools:

> Charter schools differ markedly from each other and consequently there is no single charter-school effect on student achievement. From campus to campus, charter schools are so diverse it is impossible to paint a single picture of them. To precisely evaluate performance, you really need to consider the type of charter school and the characteristics of the specific charter. (Zimmer and Gill 2003)

A teacher/researcher made a similar point, writing in *The Nation*:

> It would probably be a mistake at any point to try to draw broad performance conclusions about "the charter movement." By design, that "movement" is a collection of unique schools ranging from international baccalaureate academies to intensive last resorts for juvenile lawbreakers; taking their average temperature probably won't be very enlightening. (Schorr 2000)

The importance of accountability

Accountability is at the heart of the charter idea because charter schools differ in more than just focus and philosophy: they also differ in effectiveness. Putting it simply, some charter schools are more effective than others.

President Bill Clinton discussed the issue of accountability in a Minnesota speech given at the nation's first charter school:

> One problem we have had is that not every state has had the right kind of accountability for the charter schools. Some states have laws that are so loose that no matter whether the charter schools are doing their jobs or not, they just get to stay open, and they become like another bureaucracy. Unfortunately, I think even worse, some states have laws that are so restrictive it's almost impossible to open a charter school in the first place. Minnesota's law is right. You basically have struck the right balance. You have encouraged the growth of charter schools, but you do hold charter schools responsible for results. That's what every state in the country [needs] to do. (Clinton 2000)

The unfortunate fact is that some people will abuse opportunities. That seems to be true for a small percentage of people in every profession, from teacher union presidents (such as the ones who were indicted in Miami-Dade and Washington, D.C.) to superintendents, principals, and directors of charter schools. So although the vast majority of people in each job seem to follow the rules, some people do not, or aren't sure of the rules they should be following. That makes monitoring necessary.

One of the challenges states face in developing the charter idea and offering relief from many (though not all) rules and regulations is how to balance flexibility, opportunity, and regulation. Wise states will periodically look at what problems are developing in the charter process on both sides. What rules and regulations frustrate educators, and should be reexamined? And what mistakes are some schools making that might be prevented if there were a better combination of training, monitoring, and regulation?

And charter schools must be ultimately accountable. As the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* encouraged, rather than merely chartering schools willy-nilly, communities should be replicating schools that *do* improve student achievement, and closing schools that, after several years, fail to achieve the level of performance achieved by traditional schools. With strong monitoring and accountability in place, a state encourages the development of effective charter schools and makes possible the continuous culling and improvement of the genre.

The charter idea is an idea whose time has come

Many years ago, Victor Hugo wrote that "Stronger than all the armies of the world is an idea whose time has come" (Hugo 649). The rapid growth of charter schools throughout the nation shows how much momentum has developed behind the charter idea. Despite intense, ongoing opposition from powerful groups, the number of schools and the number of students participating in the charter movement continue to grow. Though some critics and opponents downplay or deny the contributions of individual schools and those of the charter movement on the whole, more and more families are saying, "We want this!"

References

Abdullah, Halimah, "Rights Hero Seeks to Open School in Detroit," *The New York Times*, June 30, 1997.

Brandt, Steve, "New Test Data Analysis Favors Charter Schools," *Star Tribune*, December 22, 2003.

Center for Education Reform, *National Charter School Directory*, Eighth Edition, 2004, Washington, D.C.: author.

Clinton, William Jefferson, remarks by the President to the St. Paul Community, May 4, 2000 (available at <www.centerforschoolchange.org>).

Denver Post, "The Reality of Charter Schools," August 24, 2004.

Dirkswager, Edward J., editor, *Teachers as Owners*, 2002, Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press.

Furrer, Cheryl, *Why MEA Opposes Chartered Schools*, duplicated material accompanying letter addressed to State Senator Ember Reichgott, April 11, 1991.

Greene, Jay, Forster, Greg, and Winters, Marcus A., 2003, *Apples to Apples: An Evaluation of Charter Schools Serving General Populations*, New York City: Manhattan Institute.

Hechinger, Fred, "The Short Life of the Success Story," *The New York Times*, July 7, 1987, p. 16.

Hugo, Victor, *Histoirie d'un Crime*, Conclusion.

Kolderie, Ted, "Chartering: How Are We to Evaluate It?" *Education Week*, October 8, 2003.

Legislative Analyst's Office, *Assessing California's Charter Schools*, Sacramento 2004.

Loveless, Tom, *How Well Are American Students Learning?* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, October 2003.

Matheson, Ken D., speech at the Idaho School Administrators Conference, February 2, 1998 (summary available from Center for School Change).
Nathan, Joe, *Charter Schools: Creating Hope and Opportunity in American Education*, San Francisco, Jossey Bass, 1999.
Nathan, Joe, and Febey, Karen, *Smaller, Safer, Saner Successful Schools*, 2001, Washington, D.C., National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.
Nelson, F. Howard, Rosenberg, Bella, and Van Meter, Nancy, *Charter School Achievement on the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress*, Washington, D.C., American Federation of Teachers, August 2004.

Pueblo Chieftain, "An Attractive Alternative," December 29, 2003.
Rimer, Sara, "A Small-Scale Attack on Urban Despair," *The New York Times*, December 17, 2003.
Rofes, Eric, n.d., *How Are School Districts Responding to Charter Laws and Charter Schools*? Berkeley: Graduate School of Education Policy Analysis for California Education.
St. Paul Pioneer Press, "Charter Schools Provide Needed Choice," August 19, 2004, p. 14A.
Schorr, Jonathan, "Giving Charter Schools a Chance," *The Nation*, June 5, 2000, pp. 19–22.
Shanker, Albert, "Goals, Not Gimmicks" (paid advertisement), *The New York Times*, November 7, 1993.
Star Tribune (Minneapolis), "Charter Schools," August 21, 2004.
Steel, L., and Levine, R., *Educational Innovation in Multiracial Contexts: The Growth of Magnet Schools in American Education*, prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, contract #LC 90043001 (Palo Alto, California, American Institutes for Research, 1994).
Walsh, James, "Phalen Lake Plans Pioneering Move," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), p. 1A, 6A, January 20, 2003.
Wellstone, Paul, "Putting Our Children First: Closing the Gap by Forging a New Partnership," remarks by the Honorable Paul Wellstone delivered at the Minnesota State Legislature, Monday, February 17, 1997.
Wingert, Pat, and Kantrowitz, Barbara, "At the Top of the Class," *Newsweek*, March 24, 2003.
Wisconsin State Journal, "One Style Doesn't Fit All Students," Madison, Wisconsin, August 19, 2004.
Witte, John F., *Wisconsin Charter Schools Study*, Madison: LaFollette School of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin, 2004.
Zimmer, Ron, and Gill, Brian, *Charter School Operations and Performance: Evidence from California*, 2003, Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation.

Joe Nathan is director of the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. He was one of the founders of the charter movement in Minnesota, which is widely recognized as not only one of the first charter movements in the nation, but also one of the most successful.