



Charter Schools: A Reform Option for Struggling Districts

**Briefing to the
Virginia State Board of Education
Committee on Lowest-Performing School Systems**

James Monroe Building, Richmond

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National Overview

- **40 states and the District of Columbia have charter school legislation.**
- **There are approximately 3,000 charter schools open around the United States today serving over 750,000 students – and nearly two-thirds of these schools have waiting lists.**
- **Charter schools are serving a higher percentage of students receiving free- or reduced-price lunch, African-Americans and Hispanics.**

National Overview (2)

- **Most important reasons for founding a charter school: realize an alternative vision for schooling (58 percent), serve a special population (23 percent) gain autonomy (9 percent).**

Source: U.S. Department of Education

Most Comprehensive Study to Date shows Charters Boost Student Achievement

- **Harvard University researchers conclude charter school students are more likely to be proficient in reading (5.2%) and math (3.2%) compared with nearest neighborhood public school.**

**Source: Caroline Hoxby
Harvard Program on Education Policy, 2004**

Federal Public Charter School Funding

	Law Created	Number of Schools	2002	2003	2004
Virginia	1998	8	\$400K	0	0
Nevada	1997	14	\$2.5M	\$2.5M	\$2.5M
Utah	1998	20	\$2.2M	\$3.3M	\$2.8M
Oregon	1999	42	\$5M	\$6M	\$5M
Maryland	2003		0	0	\$3.8M

No Child Left Behind and the Charter School Model

- **Accountability for Results**
- **Flexibility and Local Control**
- **Expanded Parental Options**
- **Doing What Works**

Charter Schools in Virginia Today

- **In 2003-2004 seven charter schools statewide served 745 students in grades 3-12 (mostly older grades).**
- **All are designed to increase educational opportunities for at-risk or educationally disadvantaged students.**
- **In 2003, no new VA charters were approved. Four were rejected.**
- **Two charters closed in 2004-2005 (Greene County and Gloucester County) for lack of funds.**

Virginia Charter School Law Basics (1)

- **Any person, group or organization, including any institution of higher education, may submit an application to form a charter school.**
- **Local school boards have final authority over charter school approval and governance.**
- **School boards must review and act on charter applications. Reasons for denial must be reported to the state Board of Education.**

Virginia Charter School Law Basics (2)

- **The mission statement and educational objectives of the charter school must be consistent with the principles of Virginia's Standards of Quality.**
- **Application may be submitted to state Board of Education Review Committee for comment.**

Minnesota – Nation's First Charter School State (1991)

- **105 charter schools enroll 18,000 students. Another 33 charters to open in September, 2005.**
- **Proportion of low-income students in chartered schools is twice that in district schools statewide and 10 percent higher than the proportion in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The proportion of color is triple the state average.**
- **Failing chartered schools do close: 19 have closed to date, for financial or academic failure or for violation of law.**

Source: Ted Kolderie, Education/Evolving

Oregon – Making Progress

- **48 charters have opened since 1999. Six have closed.**
- **Local School Boards have right of first refusal for charters. Two schools rejected by local school boards have been sponsored by the state board.**
- **Of 6 charters that closed, 4 closed by local school boards because of financial instability and failing to meet academic terms of charter. Two closed because of too few students.**

Recommended Websites for Additional Information

- **Virginia Charter School Resource Center,**
www.viriniacharterschools.org
- **U.S. Department of Education,**
www.uscharterschools.org
- **National Charter School Clearinghouse,**
www.ncsc.info
- **Education/Evolving,**
www.educationevolving.org
- **Center for Education Reform,**
www.edreform.com

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