

# Charter Schools

## Redesigning Public Education

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With the Governor's signature on the Oregon's new charter school bill, Senate Bill 100, the legislature created an opportunity for community groups to develop and operate a charter school. The bill also allows an existing district school to opt out of district control and "go independent." Ted Kolderie points out that with a charter bill, the legislature is sending a message to local school boards and communities that in providing public education, they now have a choice between using the traditional, district administered schools or the independent, accountable, public charter schools. The legislature is also saying to charter starters that it is removing the districts' exclusive control over education services. If a district board will not approve a charter school, the charter starters may go to the state board for approval. This new choice and removal of the district exclusive franchise in delivering public education services creates a new model of public schools and a new working relationship between school boards and independent public charter schools.

Senate Bill 00, the Oregon public charter school bill, defines public charter schools as "an elementary or secondary school offering a comprehensive instructional program operating under a written agreement entered into between a sponsor and an applicant and operating" as described in the bill. The operating provisions the bill describes are: 1) that the

board contracts with a private provider to offer public education services. The board essentially "buys" learning by contracting for specific learning outcomes from a "chartered" provider and in exchange for this contracted accountability, the rules and regulations controlling traditional public schools are waived.

The charter bill states throughout that charter schools are public schools, not private schools. The statute requires that the school meet the fundamental criteria that make a school public - that it be secular in nature, that it be non-discriminatory and open to all, that it be free, and that it have oversight by a publicly elected board.

Nothing requires a public school to be owned by a school district. The means of delivery does not define its public nature. Any school that delivers public education is a public school and the fact that charter schools may be owned by the teachers who operate them does not change the public nature of their educational services they deliver.

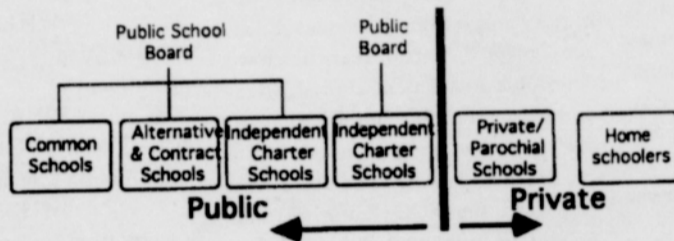
Public charter school have a limited term contract just as with any contractor. Nobody has a right to start a public charter school nor a right to operate indefinitely except as the contract provisions are fulfilled. To remain

accountable to the public purpose and remain under public oversight for compliance to the public purpose, the charter school must remain under the oversight of a public board for a limited term under its charter contract.

Charter schools have a dual accountability. Beside public accountability to an elected board for a secular purpose, the school must also maintain accountability to families by being a school of choice. Neither students nor teachers can be "assigned" to a charter school, and as a result, every charter school must attract and hold its parents. Since its very existence depends on families choosing the school, its reputation and capability to deliver high quality instruction impose a

strict accountability to families on the school. And the school must be non-discriminatory and open to all regardless of the target population it is designed to serve (although if over-enrolled it can limit its enrollment to district students). It cannot pick and choose good students, or good athletes, or rich kids. It must be open to any student in the state who wishes to enroll. If over enrolled, it must select students on the basis of a lottery.

Each year, the charter school must report on its performance to its sponsoring board and the state board. The sponsoring board's agent must visit the school each year to determine compliance. At the end of its charter term, the school must show how it has met its



school be formed as a new non-profit corporation, 2) that it be approved by local school board or by the state board, 3) that the public board approves its operation under a specific written charter with performance standards for learning and the school be approved only for a limited term of up to five years, 4) that the school be a public school non-secular in its programs, be open to all, and have an enrollment of at least 25 students, 5) that the boards enforce the performance standards for learning and the other requirements placed on the school by its charter, and that the charter school be funded by the district on the basis of the number of students it attracts and serves. What the bill describes is a new typed of school which the board no longer owns or oper-



Yankton Elementary School, in St. Helens, Oregon, is a perfect example of how a charter school can truly fulfill it's mission.

### KENNEDY SCHOOL McMenamins EVENTS

**Hudis James Trio**  
Thursday, June 10 at 7pm in the Gymnasium

**John Bunzow and Steve Bradley**  
Thursday, June 17 at 7pm in the Gymnasium

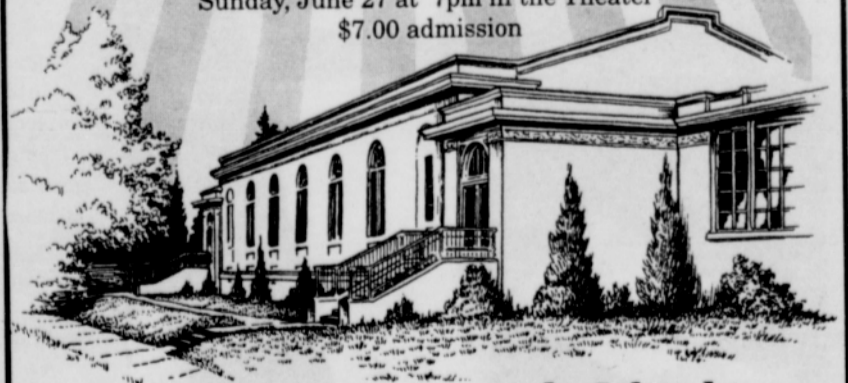
**Good In The Hood**  
Thursday, June 24 in the Gymnasium  
Doors Open at 6:30pm

**Mary Kadderly Jazz Band**  
7:30 to 10pm

**Shoehorn**  
Tap Dancer & Saxophone at 7 to 7:30pm  
**Ms. Petal the Clown**

**Jon Koonce & The Gas Hog Reunion**

Sunday, June 27 at 7pm in the Theater  
\$7.00 admission



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