

E D U C A T I O N

Starting A Charter School

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Anyone can operate a charter school but the school must be formed as a new non-profit organization except for alternative schools already providing contracted services to districts. District schools are not legal entities, only districts are. If teachers wanted to convert their district school to independent charter status, they would have to form a non-profit organization with its own governing board that would then be able to enter into a legally binding charter contract with the school board and manage the financial affairs of the school. A private school that provides alternative education under a contract to a district can use its existing organization but if a private school wants to be chartered to become a public school, it must disband and reform as a new non-profit charter school organization. This requirement prevents a private school from creating an exclusive school for its own kids because if the school is over enrolled when it restarts, it will have to admit students on the basis of a lottery.

Charter starters must seek the approval of the locally elected school board in order to operate a charter school and receive district funding. The idea is that boards will want to charter a school rather than lose the charter school to the state. The local board has three months to hold a public hearing and act on the charter proposal. In making its decision, a board must look at the capability of the charter starters to provide a comprehensive instructional program including students who are low achieving, how complete the charter application is, whether there will be a "directly identifiable, significant and adverse impact on the quality of the public education of students residing in the district," the arrangements for special education, and the arrangements for students and teachers if a public school is converting to charter status school. The local board often will have political pressure to refuse charter applicants but the charter bill helps boards resist pressure to turn down charter applicants by allowing charter starters to go to the state board if the local board refuses. The state can suggest modifications, refuse the charter appeal, or charter the school itself. The board that approves the charter becomes the charter sponsor and assumes responsibility for oversight of the charter contract.

The charter starters develop a charter proposal answering a number of questions about the operation and standards for the school. The charter starters must describe who is applying the philosophy and mission of the school,

School Uniform Bill Passes The Legislature

The House voted 31 to 27 to pass a bill encouraging the use of school uniforms. The bill's sponsor, Senator John Lim, R-Gresham, believes that the use of school uniforms will help combat violence, improve academic performance, and increase self-esteem.

"Gang related clothing fosters violence, creates an atmosphere of fear, and distracts from classroom instruction" stated Senator Lim. "With school uniforms, there will be no trench coat mafias" and parents and schools will have another tool to free up teachers for what they do best, teaching."

Senator Lim stated that he does not believe school uniforms are a "cure all" for school violence. However, he brought forward the proposed legislation, Senate Bill 751, with the hope that it would assure parents and schools of their right to set a school uniform policy as well as encouraging the implementation of those policies in individual schools and school districts.

The proposal, Senate Bill 751, encourages schools and school districts to implement school uniform policies as long as reasonable notice is given to parents. There is also an "opt out" clause which allows children to be exempt from the school uniform policy if their parents submit a written request.

Senate Bill 751 passed the Senate on May 11 by a vote of 21 to 8. The Senate will now consider changes made by the House before it moves to the Governor's desk.

its curriculum, the expected results and verified methods of measuring the growth of knowledge in the students, the governance structure, the projected enrollment and grades to be served, the target population of students, any distinctive learning or teaching techniques to be used, the admission policies and student application procedures, additional rules and laws the school will accept, the budget and financial plan along with evidence of financial ability, the standards for student behavior and discipline, the school day and year, the staff qualifications, the date of operations, special education and discipline, the school day and year, the staff qualifications, the date of operations, special education and related services, community groups involved, the charter term, performance bonding and insurance, placement of teachers and student if the school closes, fiscal audit procedures, and employee relations.

These written answers form the basis for the charter contract that legally binds the school to compliance and performance standards. No performance, no charter. But in return for the accountability contract, the bill allows most education regulations and statutes to be removed. The charter school must still comply with certain statutes and rules governing the state CIM and CAM standards, state testing, health and safety, non-discrimination and prohibition of religion, open meetings, federal laws, and others.

The charter bill makes important changes in the way public education is delivered. In the charter relationship, the charter bill changes the school boards role from that of being the owner/operator of schools to that of broker/oversight agency for learning. Boards no longer need to micromanage schools since site management of school takes over control of money, budgets, personnel, operations, development, program adoption, everything. Accountability changes from regulations and control over the processes of school operation to contractual accountability for results and outcomes. Accountability now carries a consequence for failure to perform. With the establishment of real accountability, deregulation and removal of bureaucratic control follow. The handcuffs can and must come off. And instead of funding districts, funding is finally "attached" to students and follows them to the school that serves them. Funding is naturally reallocated on the need—how many students a school serves.

Teachers become professionals whose teaching capability and pro-

fessional reputation are vital to the success of the school. Suddenly, change-oriented teachers have a real opportunity to bring in innovative programs. District processes and governance committees cannot block change. And teachers no longer have to be unionized employees but can own and operate their own learning

First Youth\$ave Graduation

On June 10th, ten young men and women celebrated their nine-month goal of saving money to reach their own dreams. The youths are participants in Youth\$ave, a matched-savings program of REACH Community Development. Their success was celebrated in a ceremony at the Federal Courthouse with U.S. District Court Judge Ancer Haggerty presiding.

Reach began the program last fall with the goal of helping youth learn money management skills while assisting them to raise funds for activities they could otherwise not afford. With cutbacks in school funding for academic, athletic, artistic and musical programs, many of these younger residents find they cannot participate in activities due to lack of funds. Youth\$ave provides an opportunity to change that. Youth\$ave gives kids ages 10-18 living in REACH-owned affordable housing a chance to participate in athletic, artistic or educational activities.

Participants in the program attended money management classes, performed community service work, and opened savings accounts to help achieve their goals. Each student's savings account was matched by REACH through a grant from the Enterprise Foundation. Washington Mutual Bank generously allowed participants to save their money free of charge, and provided assistance with money management classes.

Some of the tangible benefits of the Youth\$ave Program for the 10 successful participants include new instruments, athletic lessons and a new computer. REACH Community Development, Inc. is a private nonprofit corporation that develops and manages affordable housing in southeast Portland. The Enterprise Foundation is a national foundation providing funding and technical assistance to organizations working to improve our inner-city neighborhoods.

program but along with this opportunity comes the need to market and sell their program to families. Public charter schools have a powerful incentive to find the best teachers possible to carry out their unique pro-

gram. Parents have the power of being consumers who control funding by their choices. They find charter school eager to serve them, and they can even become involved in the non-profit board of the school or

cause review for non-compliance with the charter in difficult cases.

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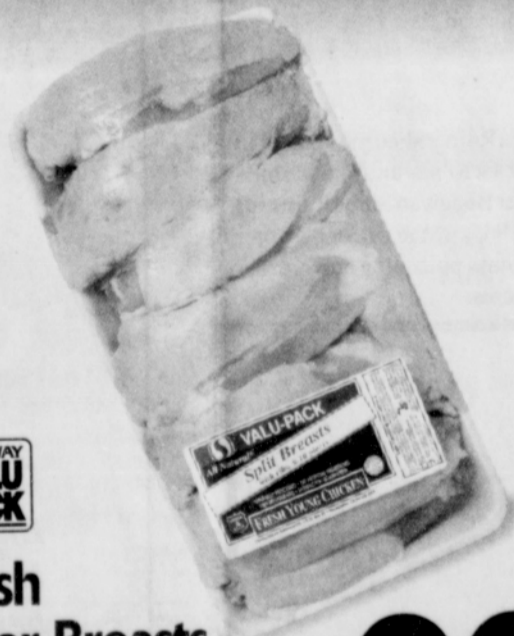
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