

**REPORT FROM THE
BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON
CHARTER SCHOOLS**

**TO THE
NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

January 2008

**REPORT FROM THE
BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON
CHARTER SCHOOLS**

**TO THE
NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

January 2008

Table of Contents

Background

Legislation	1
Board Policies	1
Current Status	2

Blue Ribbon Commission on Charter Schools

Commission Charge	2
Commission Members	2
Work of the Commission	3
Report from Public Impact	3

Findings of the Commission	5
----------------------------------	---

Guiding Principles	6
--------------------------	---

Recommendations	6
-----------------------	---

APPENDIX A: Charter School Statutes	9
---	---

APPENDIX B: State Board of Education Charter School Policies	21
--	----

APPENDIX C: Application and Revocation Statistics	46
---	----

APPENDIX D: Charter Schools by County	48
---	----

APPENDIX E: Charter Schools	50
-----------------------------------	----

APPENDIX F: Selected Characteristics	82
--	----

APPENDIX G: Report from Public Impact	84
---	----

REPORT FROM THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

Background

Legislation

In 1996 the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation to authorize a system of charter schools to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently of existing schools, as a method to accomplish all of the following:

- (1) Improve student learning;
- (2) Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as at risk of academic failure or academically gifted;
- (3) Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- (4) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;
- (5) Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system; and
- (6) Hold the schools established under this Part accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results, and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.

The General Statutes address:

- eligible applicants;
- contents of applications;
- submission of applications for approval;
- final approval of applicants;
- charter school operation;
- general requirements;
- causes for nonrenewal or termination;
- funding;
- review of charter schools;
- public and private assistance to charter schools; and
- criminal history checks.

The General Statutes (§ 115C-238.29B) specify that the State Board of Education shall have the final approval of charter schools and that (§ 115C-238.29D (b)) the Board shall authorize no more than 100 charter schools statewide. A copy of the General Statutes related to charter schools is included in Appendix A.

Board Policies

Following ratification of the legislation, an Office of Charter Schools was established within the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina State Board of Education adopted policies to implement the legislation. Board policies address:

- enrollments in charter schools;
- accountability procedures;

- criminal history checks for individuals handling fiscal matters in charter schools;
- racial and ethnic balance;
- liability insurance for charter schools;
- financial and governance noncompliance;
- the renewal process;
- definition of a charter school;
- assistance and program evaluation of low-performing charter schools; and
- designation as an alternative charter school.

A copy of the State Board of Education policies related to charter schools is included in Appendix B.

Current Status

To date, 370 charter school applications have been received; 136 applications have been approved; 26 charters have been voluntarily relinquished; and 12 charters have been revoked. Appendix C provides this data by year.

Today, North Carolina has 98 charter schools in operation in 48 counties. Appendices D, E, and F provide more detailed information on each charter school, their locations, and selected characteristics.

Blue Ribbon Commission on Charter Schools

Commission Charge

In June, the North Carolina State Board of Education convened a Blue Ribbon Commission on Charter Schools. The charge of the Commission was to:

- (1) Evaluate the current status of charter schools including current and past legislation, and current Board policies that affect charter school functioning;
- (2) Determine where the charter sector needs to improve and develop goals for the future;
- (3) Identify how current legislation can enable achievement of these goals, or if legislation needs to be adjusted to allow the state's charter school program to improve; and
- (4) Assess current Board policies to determine if they need to be adjusted or if new ones are necessary.

Commission Members

Dr. Mike Fedewa, Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Raleigh and former Chair of the Charter Schools Advisory Committee, was named as chair the Commission. Members of the Commission were:

Mr. Acton Archie, Business Analyst, SAS Institute

The Honorable Larry Bell, North Carolina House of Representatives

The Honorable Julia Boseman, North Carolina Senate

Ms. Sandy Carmany, Former Member of the Charter Schools Advisory Committee, and Greensboro City Council Member

Dr. Jesse Dingle, Principal, Lufkin Year-Round Middle School

Ms. Joyce Fitzpatrick, Fitzpatrick Communications

Dr. Tom Humble, Principal, Raleigh Charter High School
Mr. Phillip J. Kirk, Vice President for External Affairs, Catawba College and Former
Chair of the NC State Board of Education
Mr. Akhil Jariwala, Student, Raleigh Charter High School
Mr. Saumil Jariwala, Student, Raleigh Charter High School
The Honorable Marvin Lucas, North Carolina House of Representatives
Mr. Robert Luddy, Chair, Board of Directors, Franklin Academy
Dr. Charles Nolan, Principal, Middle College High School at Durham Technical
Community College
The Honorable Joe Sam Queen, North Carolina Senate
Ms. Tammi Sutton, School Leader, KIPP Gaston College Preparatory
Ms. Kathleen Tanner, Attorney, Tharrington Smith

Ms. Laura Crumpler, Attorney, Office of the Attorney General, Mr. Jack Moyer, Director of the Office of Charter Schools, and Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Senior Policy Analyst, State Board of Education Office served as staff to the Commission.

Work of the Commission

Meeting monthly from June through November, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Charter Schools reviewed the General Statutes and State Board of Education policies related to charter schools and data on the performance of charter schools. The Commission considered input from the NC School Boards Association, the NC League of Charter Schools, and the Wake County Commissioners. The Commission also considered the report on charter schools published by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, Inc. The work of the Commission was facilitated by Bryan Hassel and Dana Brinson, of *Public Impact*, who provided a framework for comprehensively reviewing the current status of charter schools and suggested recommendations for the Commission's consideration.

Report from Public Impact

The report from *Public Impact* identifies five elements of a successful state charter system:

- building a supply of quality applications;
- strong charter authorizing processes;
- effective oversight;
- valuable support from the state and private organizations; and
- renewal and closure.

The report describes each of these elements in detail and offers specific recommendations related to each one. The report also offers recommendations related to the charter school cap.

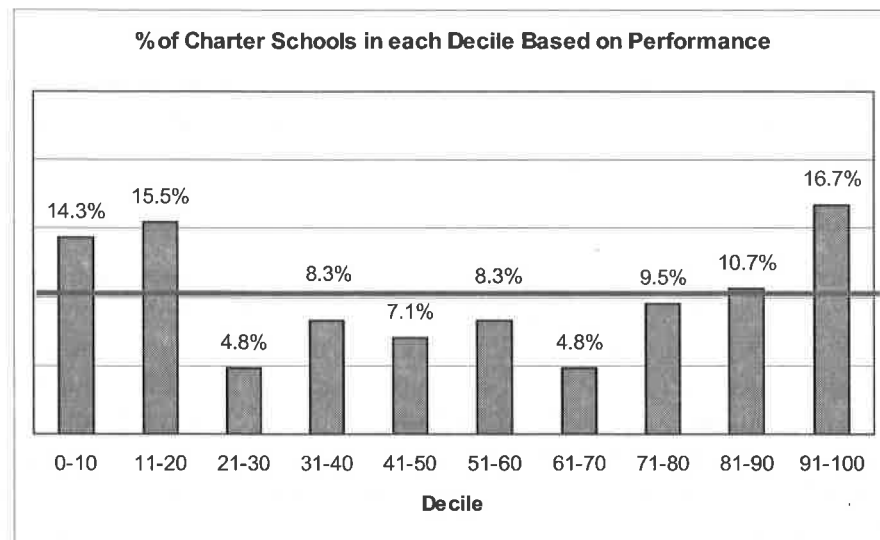
As part of their work, *Public Impact* also assessed the degree to which North Carolina's charter schools have achieved the purposes¹ for which they were authorized. Highlights of their assessment follow. A complete copy of the report is included in Appendix G.

- Charter schools have lived up to the legislative purpose of creating expanded choices for parents and students. In the first month of the 2007-08 school year, 32,398 students

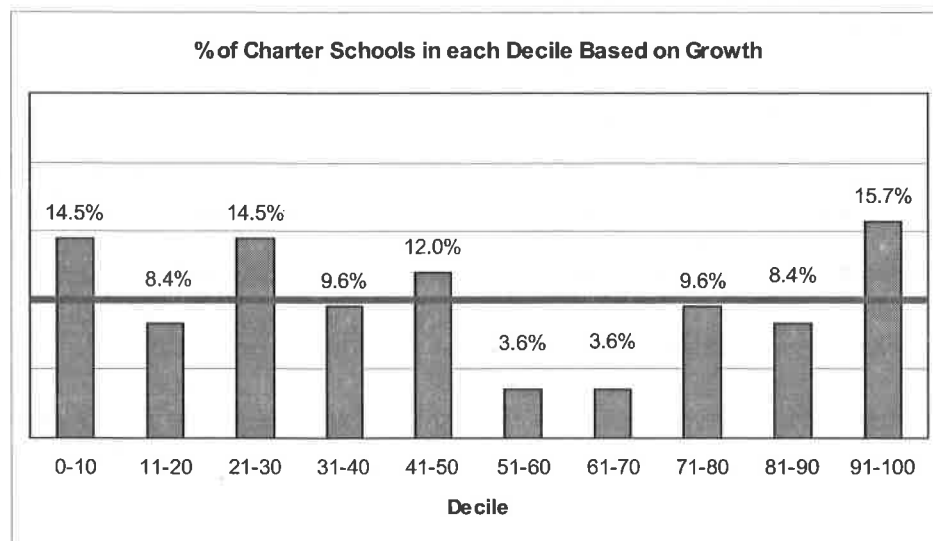
¹ The purposes, as detailed in the General Statutes, are identified in the Background Section of this report.

attended charter schools, approximately 2% of total public school enrollment in North Carolina.

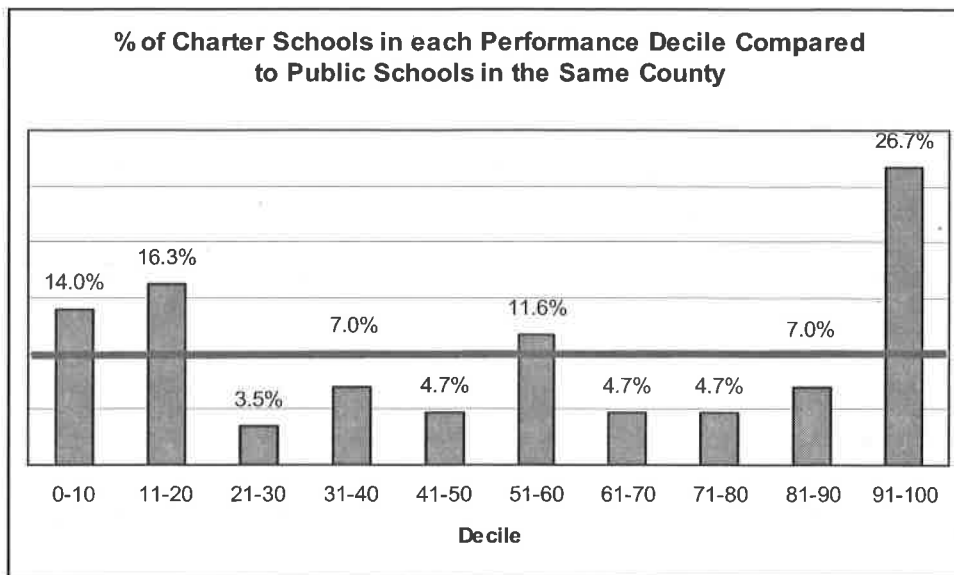
- Charter schools' success in improving student learning has varied widely from school to school.
- Charter schools are over-represented among the best- and worst-performing schools in the state. Over 27% of North Carolina's non-alternative charter schools performed in the top two deciles for public school performance in 2006-2007. At the same time, nearly 30% of North Carolina's non-alternative charter schools performed in the bottom two deciles. Overall, 50% of North Carolina's charter schools scored at or below median performance in 2006-07, and 50% performed above the median.



- Over 15% of charter schools are in the state's top decile for growth. However, 59% of charter schools grew at a rate that was at or below the median of average growth for the state. As with performance, charter schools are over-represented at both the upper and lower ends of the range.



- Comparison of charter schools to other public schools in the same county reveals that nearly 27% of charter schools perform in the top decile of public schools. Roughly 30% of charter schools perform in the bottom two deciles, and about 55% of charter schools perform at or above the mean.



- North Carolina's charter schools provide greater school choice for those students in greatest need of academic support whether because of socioeconomic disadvantage, special education need, or gifted status.
- Several NC charter schools create learning opportunities for academically gifted students by offering a rigorous and college-preparatory academic program for all students.
- The sheer existence of charter schools in North Carolina creates new professional opportunities for teachers.

Findings of the Commission

Based on review of all the information and data available to it, the Commission finds that:

1. To some degree, charter schools have achieved the purposes for which they were authorized. They do provide expanded choices for parents and students; they have created learning opportunities for academically gifted students; they have provided greater choice for those students in greatest need of academic support; and they have created new professional opportunities for teachers.
2. Charter schools' success in improving student performance has varied widely from school to school. While charter schools are "over-represented" in the best performing schools in the state, they are also "over-represented" in the worst performing schools in the state.

3. While the number of applications received has decreased significantly from 50-60 per year in the beginning years of charter schools to only 6 in the most recent year, the quality of the applications has increased significantly and North Carolina is receiving strong applications.
4. The authorizing process used by North Carolina is a strong one, even though it has not ensured that all approved charter schools are successful.
5. The renewal process used by North Carolina is satisfactory.
6. For the most part, the revocation of a charter has been based on financial circumstances. There need to be consequences when a charter school does not produce expected academic performance.
7. To address issues that have been identified, some adjustments of legislation and Board policies are needed.

Guiding Principles

In arriving at its recommendations, the Commission was guided by the following principles:

1. Charter schools are an important component of the North Carolina Public School System.
2. A balanced adjustment in the current cap of 100 is needed. A “smart” cap is needed, with growth based on excellence.
3. A successful system of charter schools depends on a strong pool of applications, strong charter authorizing processes, effective oversight, valuable support from the state and private organizations, and effective and efficient processes for renewal and closure.
4. Charter schools must meet academic expectations. Those that do not meet academic expectations should not be allowed to remain in operation.
5. Children enrolled in charter schools should be funded on an equitable basis with children in the public schools.
6. The State has learned much from ten years of experience with charter schools. The lessons learned must guide future actions.

Recommendations

The Commission has generated 11 recommendations. The recommendations focus on the cap and the following elements of a successful state system of charter schools: building the supply of quality applications; strong charter authorizing processes; effective oversight and closure; valuable support from the state and private organizations; and renewal.

CAPS

1. The State Board of Education should seek legislative authority to increase the charter school cap by 6 schools per year and to exclude from counting toward the cap high performing charter schools and the first charter school in a county that currently does not have one.

BUILDING THE SUPPLY OF QUALITY APPLICATIONS

2. The State Board of Education should not proactively cultivate charter school applications.
3. The League of Charter Schools should be encouraged to help build the supply of quality applications.

STRONG CHARTER AUTHORIZING

4. In authorizing charter schools, the State Board of Education should ensure that:
 - A. Emphasis be focused on the importance of the founding members and board when assessing a charter school application.
 - B. At least one member of the charter application evaluation committee have expertise in academics and curriculum.
 - C. The charter authorizing process continue to be evaluated, and through it, efforts be made to identify the characteristics of charter school boards or academic programs that are predictive of later success of the charter school.

EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT AND CLOSURE

5. The State Board of Education should develop a more diagnostic process of oversight to enable timely response to poor-performing schools (rather than 5-10 years). A school that demonstrates low growth and low performance should be reviewed and the results of the review should determine subsequent state action relative to the school. A charter school that has low growth and low performance should be given one year to demonstrate improvement or be closed. The minimum standard for academic growth should be "a year's growth in a school year" by the end of the second year of enrollment in the school.
6. The State Board of Education should seek legislative change to eliminate the contradiction between the requirement that a charter school's population reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the local district and the requirement for a lottery which cannot specify for a particular racial or ethnic group.
7. The State Board of Education should seek legislative change to allow sibling preferences for students drawn in the lottery.

VALUABLE SUPPORT FROM THE STATE AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

8. The current status of facility funding should remain the same.

9. Lottery proceeds should be distributed to public schools and charter schools on a per child basis.
10. The State Board of Education should encourage philanthropic donors to back nonprofit charter school support organizations.

RENEWAL

11. The State Board of Education should continue to use the current process for the renewal of charters.

The members of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Charter Schools appreciate the opportunity provided by the State Board of Education to make recommendations to strengthen charter schools. Members stand ready to assist the Board in advocating for and implementing the recommendations.

APPENDIX A
Charter School Statutes

Chapter 115C.
Elementary and Secondary Education.
SUBCHAPTER I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 16.
Optional Programs
Part 6A. Charter Schools

§ 115C-238.29A. Purpose.

The purpose of this Part is to authorize a system of charter schools to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently of existing schools, as a method to accomplish all of the following:

- (1) Improve student learning;
- (2) Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as at risk of academic failure or academically gifted;
- (3) Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- (4) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;
- (5) Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system; and
- (6) Hold the schools established under this Part accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results, and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2.)

§ 115C-238.29B. Eligible applicants; contents of applications; submission of applications for approval.

- (a) Any person, group of persons, or nonprofit corporation seeking to establish a charter school may apply to establish a charter school. If the applicant seeks to convert a public school to a charter school, the application shall include a statement signed by a majority of the teachers and instructional support personnel currently employed at the school indicating that they favor the conversion and evidence that a significant number of parents of children enrolled in the school favor conversion.
- (b) The application shall contain at least the following information:
 - (1) A description of a program that implements one or more of the purposes in G.S. 115C-238.29A.
 - (2) A description of student achievement goals for the school's educational program and the method of demonstrating that students have attained the skills and knowledge specified for those student achievement goals.
 - (3) The governance structure of the school including the names of the proposed initial members of the board of directors of the nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation and the process to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement.
 - (3a) The local school administrative unit in which the school will be located.
 - (4) Admission policies and procedures.
 - (5) A proposed budget for the school and evidence that the financial plan for the school is economically sound.
 - (6) Requirements and procedures for program and financial audits.
 - (7) A description of how the school will comply with G.S. 115C-238.29F.
 - (8) Types and amounts of insurance coverage, including bonding insurance for the principal officers of the school, to be obtained by the charter school.
 - (9) The term of the charter.
 - (10) The qualifications required for individuals employed by the school.
 - (11) The procedures by which students can be excluded from the charter school and returned to a public school. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, any local board may refuse to admit any student who is suspended or expelled from a charter school due to actions that would lead to

suspension or expulsion from a public school under G.S. 115C-391 until the period of suspension or expulsion has expired.

- (12) The number of students to be served, which number shall be at least 65, and the minimum number of teachers to be employed at the school, which number shall be at least three. However, the charter school may serve fewer than 65 students or employ fewer than three teachers if the application contains a compelling reason, such as the school would serve a geographically remote and small student population.
 - (13) Information regarding the facilities to be used by the school and the manner in which administrative services of the school are to be provided.
 - (14) Repealed by Session Laws 1997-430, s. 1.
- (c) An applicant shall submit the application to a chartering entity for preliminary approval. A chartering entity may be:
- (1) The local board of education of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school will be located;
 - (2) The board of trustees of a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina, so long as the constituent institution is involved in the planning, operation, or evaluation of the charter school; or
 - (3) The State Board of Education.

Regardless of which chartering entity receives the application for preliminary approval, the State Board of Education shall have final approval of the charter school.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection, if the State Board of Education finds that an applicant (i) submitted an application to a local board of education and received final approval from the State Board of Education, but (ii) is unable to find a suitable location within that local school administrative unit to operate, the State Board of Education may authorize the charter school to operate within an adjacent local school administrative unit for one year only. The charter school cannot operate for more than one year unless it reapplies, in accordance with subdivision (1), (2), or (3) of this subsection, and receives final approval from the State Board of Education.

(d) Unless an applicant submits its application under subsection (c) of this section to the local board of education of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school will be located, the applicant shall submit a copy of its application to that local board within seven days of its submission under subsection (c) of this section. The local board may offer any information or comment concerning the application it considers appropriate to the chartering entity. The local board shall deliver this information to the chartering entity no later than January 1 of the next calendar year. The applicant shall not be required to obtain or deliver this information to the chartering entity on behalf of the local board. The State Board shall consider any information or comment it receives from a local board and shall consider the impact on the local school administrative unit's ability to provide a sound basic education to its students when determining whether to grant preliminary and final approval of the charter school. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2; 1997-430, s. 1.)

§ 115C-238.29C. Preliminary approval of applications for charter schools.

- (a) The chartering entity that receives a request for preliminary approval of a charter school shall act on each request received prior to November 1 of a calendar year by February 1 of the next calendar year.
- (b) The chartering entity shall give preliminary approval to the application if the chartering entity determines that (i) information contained in the application meets the requirements set out in this Part or adopted by the State Board of Education, (ii) the applicant has the ability to operate the school and would be likely to operate the school in an educationally and economically sound manner, and (iii) granting the application would improve student learning and would achieve one of the other purposes set out in G.S. 115C-238.29A. In reviewing applications for the establishment of charter schools within a local school administrative unit, the chartering entity is encouraged to give preference to applications that demonstrate the capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences to students identified by the applicants as at

risk of academic failure. If the chartering entity approves more than one application for charter schools located in a local school administrative unit, the chartering entity may state its order of preference among the applications that it approves.

(c) If a chartering entity other than the State Board disapproves an application, the applicant may appeal to the State Board of Education prior to February 15. The State Board shall consider the appeal at the same time it is considering final approval in accordance with G.S. 115C-238.29D. The State Board shall give preliminary approval of the application if it finds that the chartering entity acted in an arbitrary or capricious manner in disapproving the application, failed to consider appropriately the application, or failed to act within the time set out in G.S. 115C-238.29C.

If the chartering entity, the State Board of Education, or both, disapprove an application, the applicant may modify the application and reapply subject to the application deadline contained in subsection (a) of this section. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2.)

§ 115C-238.29D. Final approval of applications for charter schools.

(a) The State Board shall grant final approval of an application if it finds that the application meets the requirements set out in this Part or adopted by the State Board of Education and that granting the application would achieve one or more of the purposes set out in G.S. 115C-238.29A. The State Board shall act by March 15 of a calendar year on all applications and appeals it receives prior to February 15 of that calendar year.

(b) The State Board shall authorize no more than five charter schools per year in one local school administrative unit. The State Board shall authorize no more than 100 charter schools statewide. If more than five charter schools in one local school administrative unit or more than 100 schools statewide meet the standards for final approval, the State Board shall give priority to applications that are most likely to further State education policies and to strengthen the educational program offered in the local school administrative units in which they are located.

(c) The State Board of Education may authorize a school before the applicant has secured its space, equipment, facilities, and personnel if the applicant indicates the authority is necessary for it to raise working capital. The State Board shall not allocate any funds to the school until the school has obtained space.

(d) The State Board of Education may grant the initial charter for a period not to exceed 10 years and may renew the charter upon the request of the chartering entity for subsequent periods not to exceed 10 years each. The State Board of Education shall review the operations of each charter school at least once every five years to ensure that the school is meeting the expected academic, financial, and governance standards.

A material revision of the provisions of a charter application shall be made only upon the approval of the State Board of Education.

It shall not be considered a material revision of a charter application and shall not require the prior approval of the State Board for a charter school to increase its enrollment during the charter school's second year of operation and annually thereafter (i) by up to ten percent (10%) of the school's previous year's enrollment or (ii) in accordance with planned growth as authorized in the charter. Other enrollment growth shall be considered a material revision of the charter application, and the State Board may approve such additional enrollment growth of greater than ten percent (10%) only if the State Board finds that:

- (1) The actual enrollment of the charter school is within ten percent (10%) of its maximum authorized enrollment;
- (2) The charter school has commitments for ninety percent (90%) of the requested maximum growth;
- (3) The board of education of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school is located has had an opportunity to be heard by the State Board of Education on any adverse impact the proposed growth would have on the unit's ability to provide a sound basic education to its students;
- (4) The charter school is not currently identified as low-performing;
- (5) The charter school meets generally accepted standards of fiscal management; and
- (6) It is otherwise appropriate to approve the enrollment growth. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2; 1997-430, s. 3; 2000-67, s. 8.23; 2001-424, s. 28.26; 2003-354, s. 2; 2004-203, s. 45(a).)

§ 115C-238.29E. Charter school operation.

(a) A charter school that is approved by the State shall be a public school within the local school administrative unit in which it is located. It shall be accountable to the local board of education if it applied for and received preliminary approval from that local board for purposes of ensuring compliance with applicable laws and the provisions of its charter. All other charter schools shall be accountable to the State Board for ensuring compliance with applicable laws and the provisions of their charters, except that any of these charter schools may agree to be accountable to the local board of the school administrative unit in which the charter school is located rather than to the State Board.

(b) A charter school shall be operated by a private nonprofit corporation that shall have received federal tax-exempt status no later than 24 months following final approval of the application.

(c) A charter school shall operate under the written charter signed by the entity to which it is accountable under subsection (a) of this section and the applicant. A charter school is not required to enter into any other contract. The charter shall incorporate the information provided in the application, as modified during the charter approval process, and any terms and conditions imposed on the charter school by the State Board of Education. No other terms may be imposed on the charter school as a condition for receipt of local funds.

(d) The board of directors of the charter school shall decide matters related to the operation of the school, including budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures.

(e) A charter school's specific location shall not be prescribed or limited by a local board or other authority except a zoning authority. The school may lease space from a local board of education or as is otherwise lawful in the local school administrative unit in which the charter school is located. If a charter school leases space from a sectarian organization, the charter school classes and students shall be physically separated from any parochial students, and there shall be no religious artifacts, symbols, iconography, or materials on display in the charter school's entrance, classrooms, or hallways. Furthermore, if a charter school leases space from a sectarian organization, the charter school shall not use the name of that organization in the name of the charter school.

At the request of the charter school, the local board of education of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school will be located shall lease any available building or land to the charter school unless the board demonstrates that the lease is not economically or practically feasible or that the local board does not have adequate classroom space to meet its enrollment needs. Notwithstanding any other law, a local board of education may provide a school facility to a charter school free of charge; however, the charter school is responsible for the maintenance of and insurance for the school facility.

(f) Except as provided in this Part and pursuant to the provisions of its charter, a charter school is exempt from statutes and rules applicable to a local board of education or local school administrative unit. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2; 1997-430, s. 4.)

§ 115C-238.29F. General requirements.

(a) Health and Safety Standards. – A charter school shall meet the same health and safety requirements required of a local school administrative unit. The Department of Public Instruction shall ensure that charter schools provide parents and guardians with information about meningococcal meningitis and influenza and their vaccines at the beginning of every school year. This information shall include the causes, symptoms, and how meningococcal meningitis and influenza are spread and the places where parents and guardians may obtain additional information and vaccinations for their children.

(b) School Nonsectarian. – A charter school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations and shall not charge tuition or fees. A charter school shall not be affiliated with a nonpublic sectarian school or a religious institution.

(c) Civil Liability and Insurance. –

- (1) The board of directors of a charter school may sue and be sued. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to establish reasonable amounts and types of liability insurance that the board of directors shall be required by the charter to obtain. The board of directors shall obtain at least the amount of and types of insurance required by these rules to be included in the charter. Any sovereign immunity of the charter school, of the organization that operates the charter

school, or its members, officers, or directors, or of the employees of the charter school or the organization that operates the charter school, is provided to the extent of indemnification by insurance.

- (2) No civil liability shall attach to any chartering entity, to the State Board of Education, or to any of their members or employees, individually or collectively, for any acts or omissions of the charter school.

(d) Instructional Program. –

- (1) The school shall provide instruction each year for at least 180 days.
- (2) The school shall design its programs to at least meet the student performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education and the student performance standards contained in the charter.
- (3) A charter school shall conduct the student assessments required for charter schools by the State Board of Education.
- (4) The school shall comply with policies adopted by the State Board of Education for charter schools relating to the education of children with disabilities.
- (5) The school is subject to and shall comply with Article 27 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, except that a charter school may also exclude a student from the charter school and return that student to another school in the local school administrative unit in accordance with the terms of its charter.

(e) Employees. –

- (1) An employee of a charter school is not an employee of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school is located. The charter school's board of directors shall employ and contract with necessary teachers to perform the particular service for which they are employed in the school; at least seventy-five percent (75%) of these teachers in grades kindergarten through five, at least fifty percent (50%) of these teachers in grades six through eight, and at least fifty percent (50%) of these teachers in grades nine through 12 shall hold teacher certificates. All teachers in grades six through 12 who are teaching in the core subject areas of mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts shall be college graduates.

The board also may employ necessary employees who are not required to hold teacher certificates to perform duties other than teaching and may contract for other services. The board may discharge teachers and noncertificated employees.

- (2) No local board of education shall require any employee of the local school administrative unit to be employed in a charter school.
- (3) If a teacher employed by a local school administrative unit makes a written request for a leave of absence to teach at a charter school, the local school administrative unit shall grant the leave for one year. For the initial year of a charter school's operation, the local school administrative unit may require that the request for a leave of absence be made up to 45 days before the teacher would otherwise have to report for duty. After the initial year of a charter school's operation, the local school administrative unit may require that the request for a leave of absence be made up to 90 days before the teacher would otherwise have to report for duty. A local board of education is not required to grant a request for a leave of absence or a request to extend or renew a leave of absence for a teacher who previously has received a leave of absence from that school board under this subdivision. A teacher who has career status under G.S. 115C-325 prior to receiving a leave of absence to teach at a charter school may return to a public school in the local school administrative unit with career status at the end of the leave of absence or upon the end of employment at the charter school if an appropriate position is available. If an appropriate position is unavailable, the teacher's name shall be placed on a list of available teachers and that teacher shall have priority on all positions for which that teacher is qualified in accordance with G.S. 115C-325(e)(2).
- (4) The employees of the charter school shall be deemed employees of the local school administrative unit for purposes of providing certain State-funded employee benefits, including membership in the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System and the Teachers' and

State Employees' Comprehensive Major Medical Plan. The State Board of Education provides funds to charter schools, approves the original members of the boards of directors of the charter schools, has the authority to grant, supervise, and revoke charters, and demands full accountability from charter schools for school finances and student performance. Accordingly, it is the determination of the General Assembly that charter schools are public schools and that the employees of charter schools are public school employees. Employees of a charter school whose board of directors elects to become a participating employer under G.S. 135-5.3 are "teachers" for the purpose of membership in the North Carolina Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System. In no event shall anything contained in this Part require the North Carolina Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System to accept employees of a private employer as members or participants of the System.

(f) Accountability. –

- (1) The school is subject to the financial audits, the audit procedures, and the audit requirements adopted by the State Board of Education for charter schools. These audit requirements may include the requirements of the School Budget and Fiscal Control Act.
- (2) The school shall comply with the reporting requirements established by the State Board of Education in the Uniform Education Reporting System.
- (3) The school shall report at least annually to the chartering entity and the State Board of Education the information required by the chartering entity or the State Board.

(g) Admission Requirements. –

- (1) Any child who is qualified under the laws of this State for admission to a public school is qualified for admission to a charter school.
- (2) No local board of education shall require any student enrolled in the local school administrative unit to attend a charter school.
- (3) Admission to a charter school shall not be determined according to the school attendance area in which a student resides, except that any local school administrative unit in which a public school converts to a charter school shall give admission preference to students who reside within the former attendance area of that school.
- (4) Admission to a charter school shall not be determined according to the local school administrative unit in which a student resides.
- (5) A charter school shall not discriminate against any student on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability. Except as otherwise provided by law or the mission of the school as set out in the charter, the school shall not limit admission to students on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion, or ancestry. The charter school may give enrollment priority to siblings of currently enrolled students who were admitted to the charter school in a previous year and to children of the school's principal, teachers, and teacher assistants. In addition, and only for its first year of operation, the charter school may give enrollment priority to children of the initial members of the charter school's board of directors, so long as (i) these children are limited to no more than ten percent (10%) of the school's total enrollment or to 20 students, whichever is less, and (ii) the charter school is not a former public or private school. Within one year after the charter school begins operation, the population of the school shall reasonably reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the general population residing within the local school administrative unit in which the school is located or the racial and ethnic composition of the special population that the school seeks to serve residing within the local school administrative unit in which the school is located. The school shall be subject to any court-ordered desegregation plan in effect for the local school administrative unit.
- (6) During each period of enrollment, the charter school shall enroll an eligible student who submits a timely application, unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building. In this case, students shall be accepted by lot. Once enrolled, students are not required to reapply in subsequent enrollment periods.

- (7) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, a charter school may refuse admission to any student who has been expelled or suspended from a public school under G.S. 115C-391 until the period of suspension or expulsion has expired.
- (h) Transportation. – The charter school may provide transportation for students enrolled at the school. The charter school shall develop a transportation plan so that transportation is not a barrier to any student who resides in the local school administrative unit in which the school is located. The charter school is not required to provide transportation to any student who lives within one and one-half miles of the school. At the request of the charter school and if the local board of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school is located operates a school bus system, then that local board may contract with the charter school to provide transportation in accordance with the charter school's transportation plan to students who reside in the local school administrative unit and who reside at least one and one-half miles of the charter school. A local board may charge the charter school a reasonable charge that is sufficient to cover the cost of providing this transportation. Furthermore, a local board may refuse to provide transportation under this subsection if it demonstrates there is no available space on buses it intends to operate during the term of the contract or it would not be practically feasible to provide this transportation.
- (i) Assets. – Upon dissolution of the charter school or upon the nonrenewal of the charter, all net assets of the charter school purchased with public funds shall be deemed the property of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school is located.
- (j) **(See Editor's Note)** Driving Eligibility Certificates. – In accordance with rules adopted by the State Board of Education, the designee of the school's board of directors shall do all of the following:
- (1) Sign driving eligibility certificates that meet the conditions established in G.S. 20-11.
 - (2) Obtain the necessary written, irrevocable consent from parents, guardians, or emancipated juveniles, as appropriate, in order to disclose information to the Division of Motor Vehicles.
 - (3) Notify the Division of Motor Vehicles when a student who holds a driving eligibility certificate no longer meets its conditions.
- (k) The Display of the United States and North Carolina Flags and the Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. – A charter school shall (i) display the United States and North Carolina flags in each classroom when available, (ii) require the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance on a daily basis, and (iii) provide age-appropriate instruction on the meaning and historical origins of the flag and the Pledge of Allegiance. A charter school shall not compel any person to stand, salute the flag, or recite the Pledge of Allegiance. If flags are donated or are otherwise available, flags shall be displayed in each classroom. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2; 1997-430, s. 5; 1997-443, s. 8.19; 1997-456, s. 55.4; 1998-212, s. 9.14A(a); 1999-243, s. 8; 2001-462, s. 1; 2004-118, s. 3; 2004-203, s. 45(b); 2006-69, s. 3(e); 2006-137, s. 2.)

§ 115C-238.29G. Causes for nonrenewal or termination; disputes.

- (a) The State Board of Education, or a chartering entity subject to the approval of the State Board of Education, may terminate or not renew a charter upon any of the following grounds:
- (1) Failure to meet the requirements for student performance contained in the charter;
 - (2) Failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
 - (3) Violations of law;
 - (4) Material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter;
 - (5) Two-thirds of the faculty and instructional support personnel at the school request that the charter be terminated or not renewed; or
 - (6) Other good cause identified.
- (b) The State Board of Education shall develop and implement a process to address contractual and other grievances between a charter school and its chartering entity or the local board of education during the time of its charter.
- (c) The State Board and the charter school are encouraged to make a good-faith attempt to resolve the differences that may arise between them. They may agree to jointly select a mediator. The mediator shall act as a neutral facilitator of disclosures of factual information, statements of positions and contentions, and efforts to negotiate an agreement settling the differences. The mediator shall, at the request of either

the State Board or a charter school, commence a mediation immediately or within a reasonable period of time. The mediation shall be held in accordance with rules and standards of conduct adopted under Chapter 7A of the General Statutes governing mediated settlement conferences but modified as appropriate and suitable to the resolution of the particular issues in disagreement.

Notwithstanding Article 33C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, the mediation proceedings shall be conducted in private. Evidence of statements made and conduct occurring in a mediation are not subject to discovery and are inadmissible in any court action. However, no evidence otherwise discoverable is inadmissible merely because it is presented or discussed in a mediation. The mediator shall not be compelled to testify or produce evidence concerning statements made and conduct occurring in a mediation in any civil proceeding for any purpose, except disciplinary hearings before the State Bar or any agency established to enforce standards of conduct for mediators. The mediator may determine that an impasse exists and discontinue the mediation at any time. The mediator shall not make any recommendations or public statement of findings or conclusions. The State Board and the charter school shall share equally the mediator's compensation and expenses. The mediator's compensation shall be determined according to rules adopted under Chapter 7A of the General Statutes. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2; 1997-430, s. 6.)

§ 115C-238.29H. State and local funds for a charter school.

(a) The State Board of Education shall allocate to each charter school:

- (1) An amount equal to the average per pupil allocation for average daily membership from the local school administrative unit allotments in which the charter school is located for each child attending the charter school except for the allocation for children with disabilities and for the allocation for children with limited English proficiency;
- (2) An additional amount for each child attending the charter school who is a child with disabilities; and
- (3) An additional amount for children with limited English proficiency attending the charter school, based on a formula adopted by the State Board.

In accordance with G.S. 115C-238.29D(d), the State Board shall allow for annual adjustments to the amount allocated to a charter school based on its enrollment growth in school years subsequent to the initial year of operation.

In the event a child with disabilities leaves the charter school and enrolls in a public school during the first 60 school days in the school year, the charter school shall return a pro rata amount of funds allocated for that child to the State Board, and the State Board shall reallocate those funds to the local school administrative unit in which the public school is located. In the event a child with disabilities enrolls in a charter school during the first 60 school days in the school year, the State Board shall allocate to the charter school the pro rata amount of additional funds for children with disabilities.

(a1) Funds allocated by the State Board of Education may be used to enter into operational and financing leases for real property or mobile classroom units for use as school facilities for charter schools and may be used for payments on loans made to charter schools for facilities or equipment. However, State funds shall not be used to obtain any other interest in real property or mobile classroom units. No indebtedness of any kind incurred or created by the charter school shall constitute an indebtedness of the State or its political subdivisions, and no indebtedness of the charter school shall involve or be secured by the faith, credit, or taxing power of the State or its political subdivisions. Every contract or lease into which a charter school enters shall include the previous sentence. The school also may own land and buildings it obtains through non-State sources.

(b) If a student attends a charter school, the local school administrative unit in which the child resides shall transfer to the charter school an amount equal to the per pupil local current expense appropriation to the local school administrative unit for the fiscal year. The amount transferred under this subsection that consists of revenue derived from supplemental taxes shall be transferred only to a charter school located in the tax district for which these taxes are levied and in which the student resides. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2; 1997-430, s. 7; 1998-212, s. 9.20(f); 2003-423, s. 3.1; 2006-69, s. 3(f).)

§ 115C-238.29I. Notice of the charter school process; review of charter schools; Charter School Advisory Committee.

(a) The State Board of Education shall distribute information announcing the availability of the charter school process described in this Part to each local school administrative unit and public postsecondary educational institution and, through press releases, to each major newspaper in the State.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 1997-18, s. 15(i).

(c) The State Board of Education shall review and evaluate the educational effectiveness of the charter school approach authorized under this Part and the effect of charter schools on the public schools in the local school administrative unit in which the charter schools are located. The Board shall report no later than January 1, 2002, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee with recommendations to modify, expand, or terminate that approach. The Board shall base its recommendations predominantly on the following information:

- (1) The current and projected impact of charter schools on the delivery of services by the public schools.
- (2) Student academic progress in the charter schools as measured, where available, against the academic year immediately preceding the first academic year of the charter schools' operation.
- (3) Best practices resulting from charter school operations.
- (4) Other information the State Board considers appropriate.

(d) The State Board of Education may establish a Charter School Advisory Committee to assist with the implementation of this Part. The Charter School Advisory Committee may (i) provide technical assistance to chartering entities or to potential applicants, (ii) review applications for preliminary approval, (iii) make recommendations as to whether the State Board should approve applications for charter schools, (iv) make recommendations as to whether the State Board should terminate or not renew a charter, (v) make recommendations concerning grievances between a charter school and its chartering entity, the State Board, or a local board, (vi) assist with the review under subsection (c) of this section, and (vii) provide any other assistance as may be required by the State Board.

(e) Notwithstanding the dates set forth in this Part, the State Board of Education may establish an alternative time line for the submission of applications, preliminary approvals, criminal record checks, appeals, and final approvals so long as the Board grants final approval by March 15 of each calendar year. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2; 1997-18, s. 15(i); 1997-430, ss. 8, 9; 1999-27, s. 1.)

§ 115C-238.29J. Public and private assistance to charter schools.

(a) Local boards of education are authorized and encouraged to provide administrative and evaluative support to charter schools located within their local school administrative units.

(b) Private persons and organizations are encouraged to provide funding and other assistance to the establishment or operation of charter schools.

(c) The State Board of Education shall direct the Department of Public Instruction to provide guidance and technical assistance, upon request, to applicants and potential applicants for charters.

(d) The State Board of Education shall direct the Department of Public Instruction to notify the Department of Revenue when the State Board of Education terminates, fails to renew, or grants a charter for a charter school. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2; 1997-430, s. 10; 2000-72, s. 3.)

§ 115C-238.29K. Criminal history checks.

(a) As used in this section:

- (1) "Criminal history" means a county, state, or federal criminal history of conviction of a crime, whether a misdemeanor or a felony, that indicates an individual (i) poses a threat to the physical safety of students or personnel, or (ii) has demonstrated that he or she does not have the integrity or honesty to fulfill his or her duties as school personnel. These crimes include the following North Carolina crimes contained in any of the following Articles of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes: Article 5A, Endangering Executive and Legislative Officers; Article 6, Homicide; Article 7A, Rape and Kindred Offenses; Article 8, Assaults; Article 10, Kidnapping and Abduction; Article 13, Malicious Injury or Damage by Use of Explosive or Incendiary Device or Material; Article 14, Burglary and Other Housebreakings; Article 15,

Arson and Other Burnings; Article 16, Larceny; Article 17, Robbery; Article 18, Embezzlement; Article 19, False Pretense and Cheats; Article 19A, Obtaining Property or Services by False or Fraudulent Use of Credit Device or Other Means; Article 20, Frauds; Article 21, Forgery; Article 26, Offenses Against Public Morality and Decency; Article 26A, Adult Establishments; Article 27, Prostitution; Article 28, Perjury; Article 29, Bribery; Article 31, Misconduct in Public Office; Article 35, Offenses Against the Public Peace; Article 36A, Riots and Civil Disorders; Article 39, Protection of Minors; and Article 60, Computer-Related Crime. These crimes also include possession or sale of drugs in violation of the North Carolina Controlled Substances Act, Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes, and alcohol-related offenses such as sale to underage persons in violation of G.S. 18B-302 or driving while impaired in violation of G.S. 20-138.1 through G.S. 20-138.5. In addition to the North Carolina crimes listed in this subdivision, such crimes also include similar crimes under federal law or under the laws of other states.

(2) "School personnel" means any:

- a. Member of the board of directors of a charter school,
- b. Employee of a charter school, or
- c. Independent contractor or employee of an independent contractor of a charter school if the independent contractor carries out duties customarily performed by school personnel, whether paid with federal, State, local, or other funds, who has significant access to students or who has responsibility for the fiscal management of a charter school.

(b) The State Board of Education shall adopt a policy on whether and under what circumstances school personnel shall be required to be checked for a criminal history. The policy shall not require school personnel to be checked for a criminal history check before preliminary approval is granted under G.S. 115C-238.29B. The Board shall apply its policy uniformly in requiring school personnel to be checked for a criminal history. The Board may grant conditional approval of an application while the Board is checking a person's criminal history and making a decision based on the results of the check.

The State Board shall not require members of boards of directors of charter schools or employees of charter schools to pay for the criminal history check authorized under this section.

(c) The Board of Education shall require the person to be checked by the Department of Justice to (i) be fingerprinted and to provide any additional information required by the Department of Justice to a person designated by the State Board, or to the local sheriff or the municipal police, whichever is more convenient for the person, and (ii) sign a form consenting to the check of the criminal record and to the use of fingerprints and other identifying information required by the repositories. The State Board shall consider refusal to consent when deciding whether to grant final approval of an application under G.S. 115C-238.29D and when making an employment recommendation. The fingerprints of the individual shall be forwarded to the State Bureau of Investigation for a search of the State criminal history record file, and the State Bureau of Investigation shall forward a set of fingerprints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a national criminal history record check. The Department of Justice shall provide to the State Board of Education the criminal history from the State and National Repositories of Criminal Histories of any school personnel for which the Board requires a criminal history check.

The State Board shall not require members of boards of directors of charter schools or employees of charter schools to pay for the fingerprints authorized under this section.

(d) The State Board shall review the criminal history it receives on an individual. The State Board shall determine whether the results of the review indicate that the individual (i) poses a threat to the physical safety of students or personnel, or (ii) has demonstrated that he or she does not have the integrity or honesty to fulfill his or her duties as school personnel and shall use the information when deciding whether to grant final approval of an application for a charter school under G.S. 115C-238.29D and for making an employment recommendation to the board of directors of a charter school. The State Board shall make written findings with regard to how it used the information when deciding whether to grant final approval under G.S. 115C-238.29D and when making an employment recommendation.

(e) The State Board shall notify in writing the board of directors of the charter school of the determination by the State Board as to whether the school personnel is qualified to operate or be employed by a charter school based on the school personnel's criminal history. At the same time, the State Board shall provide to

the charter school's board of directors the written findings the Board makes in subsection (d) of this section and its employment recommendation. If the State Board recommends dismissal or nonemployment of any person, the board of directors of the charter school shall dismiss or refuse to employ that person. In accordance with the law regulating the dissemination of the contents of the criminal history file furnished by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the State Board shall not release nor disclose any portion of the school personnel's criminal history to the charter school's board of directors or employees. The State Board also shall notify the school personnel of the procedure for completing or challenging the accuracy of the criminal history and the personnel's right to contest the State Board's determination in court.

(f) All the information received by the State Board of Education or the charter school in accordance with subsection (e) of this section through the checking of the criminal history is privileged information and is not a public record but is for the exclusive use of the State Board of Education or the board of directors of the charter school. The State Board of Education or the board of directors of the charter school may destroy the information after it is used for the purposes authorized by this section after one calendar year.

(g) There shall be no liability for negligence on the part of the State Board of Education or the board of directors of the charter school, or their employees, arising from any act taken or omission by any of them in carrying out the provisions of this section. The immunity established by this subsection shall not extend to gross negligence, wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing that would otherwise be actionable. The immunity established by this subsection shall be deemed to have been waived to the extent of indemnification by insurance, indemnification under Articles 31A and 31B of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, and to the extent sovereign immunity is waived under the Tort Claims Act, as set forth in Article 31 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. (1997-430, s. 2.)

APPENDIX B

State Board of Education Charter School Policies

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual**

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-000

Policy Title: Policy regarding enrollments in charter schools

Current Policy Date: 04/03/1997

Other Historical Information:

Statutory Reference:

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

A request by a charter school to increase enrollment above 10% of the enrollment specified in the application shall be brought to the State Board of Education for action. Any request to increase enrollment 10% or less may be handled by DPI staff without the necessity of Board action.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-001

Policy Title: Policy outlining the accountability procedures for charter schools

Current Policy Date: 07/10/1997

Other Historical Information:

Statutory Reference:

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

Each year all eligible students must take required state tests.

In the **first year** of operation there are two options for accountability:

- **Option 1** applies to schools where less than 75 percent of students have end-of-grade/end-of-course (EOG/EOC) test scores from the previous year. Results of student performance from these schools will be reported.
- **Option 2** applies to schools where 75 percent or more of the students have EOG/EOC test scores from the previous year. These schools will follow the ABCs Accountability Model for rewards that is used in the North Carolina public schools. If, however, the school is designated as low performing (as determined by the ABCs Accountability Model) the State Board of Education may revoke the charter.

In the **second year and subsequent years** of operation, all schools will follow the ABCs Accountability Model for rewards that is used in the North Carolina public schools. If, however, the school is designated as low performing (as determined by the ABCs Accountability Model) the State Board of Education may revoke the charter.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Policy Manual

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-002

Policy Title: Policy regarding criminal history checks for individuals handling fiscal matters in charter schools

Current Policy Date: 12/04/1997

Other Historical Information:

Statutory Reference:

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

The State Board of Education will conduct criminal history checks as authorized by statute of charter school personnel responsible for the fiscal affairs of the school. In addition, the State Board may conduct criminal history checks of any charter school personnel or directors when the State Board deems it necessary to protect the financial integrity of the school or when necessary to protect the health and safety of students or employees.

The State Board may consider the refusal of an individual to submit to a finger print check in determining whether:

1. To grant final approval of the Charter application;
2. To recommend to the charter school that the individual be denied employment; and/or;
3. To revoke the Charter of the charter school.

The costs for conducting criminal history checks shall be borne by the charter school.

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual**

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-003

Policy Title: Policy on charter schools racial and ethnic balance

Current Policy Date: 07/09/1998

Other Historical Information:

Statutory Reference:

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

Racial and Ethnic Balance in Charter Schools

All charter schools shall have open admission procedures and policies. Charter schools shall provide racial/ethnic balance in their student enrollments.

A charter school must have a student population that reflects the racial/ethnic composition of the school system in which it is located. The school must have percentages that fall within the range exhibited by the regular, non-magnet, non-special schools in the district. For charter schools that have a mission that targets a specific population, the range must reflect the percentage of the targeted population in the district.

If a school is outside the acceptable range, the Charter School Advisory Committee shall investigate the variance in order to determine whether or not the charter school made a good faith effort for diversity during enrollment. When such determination is made, the Committee shall recommend to the State Board of Education a course of action as appropriate.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-004

Policy Title: 16 NCAC 6G.0501 Policy regarding liability insurance for charter schools

Current Policy Date: 01/07/2005

Other Historical Information: Previous board dates: 11/06/1997, 09/12/2002

Statutory Reference:

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category: 16 NCAC 6G .0501

16 NCAC 6G .0501 Liability Insurance

- (a) Each charter school shall obtain and maintain liability insurance and fidelity bonding of the types and amounts specified in the charter agreement.
- (b) The provisions of this Rule shall not preclude any charter school from obtaining liability insurance coverage in addition to or in excess of the requirements of this Rule.

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual**

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-005

Policy Title: 16 NCAC 6G.0502 Policy regarding the Charter Schools Advisory Committee

Current Policy Date: 06/30/2005

Other Historical Information: Previous board dates: 01/14/1998, 05/06/1999, 07/01/1999, 11/05/1998, 10/04/2001, 06/06/2002

Statutory Reference: GS 115C-238.29G(b)

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category: 16 NCAC 6G.0502

.0502 CHARTER SCHOOLS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Charter School Advisory Committee referred to in G.S. 115C-238.29I(d) should include representative(s) in the following categories:

- (1) charter schools officials;
- (2) public school employees;
- (3) business and community leaders;
- (4) local boards of education;
- (5) the North Carolina Parents and Teachers Association; and
- (6) county commissioners.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115C-238.29G(b);
Eff. August 1, 2000;
Amended Eff. April 1, 2003.

Selection Procedure:

1. The committee shall consist of fifteen members appointed by the State Board of Education (SBE).
2. Annually the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall recommend and the SBE will appoint a chair for the committee. The Chair will serve to the end of the term for which he or she is appointed or until replaced by the SBE.
3. Each member shall be appointed to serve a three year term beginning January 1st of the year appointed and ending December 31st of the third year of service. Members who have served one three year term are eligible for reappointment to one additional consecutive term. If a member is appointed to fulfill a vacancy, he or she may complete the term of the member he or she is replacing and is thereafter eligible for reappointment to two full consecutive terms.

Internal Operating Procedures:

1. At the request of the SBE, the Committee will advise the SBE on policies, procedures, and concerns that relate to the operation of charter schools in this State.
2. The charter schools advisory committee shall also sit either as a whole or in panels designated by its chair to hear grievances between or among charter schools, chartering entities, and local boards of education. Either the charter school, its chartering entity, or the local board of education of the county in which the charter school is located may file a grievance with the charter schools advisory committee. The grievance shall state the basis of the grievance and what steps the parties have taken to resolve the grievance. The Committee or a panel of the Committee shall consider the grievance, provide a hearing for the parties to the grievance, and decide the final resolution of the grievance, subject to an appeal to the SBE.
3. Whenever the SBE votes to initiate revocation of a charter as provided in the charter agreement, the charter school may request an appeal of that recommendation by sending written notice to the SBE within 10 days after receipt of the notice of intent to revoke. The chair of the SBE will then designate a review committee from the membership of the SBE. The review committee will receive evidence, may conduct a hearing, and shall present its findings to the full SBE for action.

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual**

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-006

Policy Title: Policy for charter schools on financial and governance noncompliance

Current Policy Date: 04/06/2000

Other Historical Information:

Statutory Reference:

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE NONCOMPLIANCE POLICY FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

The following policy represents the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's internal operating procedures and does not preclude the Deputy Superintendent of NC DPI, the Chief Financial Officer of NC DPI, after consultation with the Charter School Advisory Committee, from making any recommendations to the State Board of Education with regards to a Charter School, if so warranted, regardless of the charter schools financial and governance noncompliance status.

I. IMPACT OF FINANCIAL NONCOMPLIANCE

There are three (3) stages of financial noncompliance under which a charter school may be placed: Cautionary, Probationary, and Disciplinary. A charter school may be placed in each stage of noncompliance based on any one of the following financial warning conditions:

- A. If the charter school fails to report required, Uniform Education Reporting System (UERS), data within 30 days of the required or agreed-upon reporting date or does not submit accurate data due to incorrectly utilizing UERS approved materials or software within the next reporting cycle;
- B. If the charter school fails to respond to a specific financial, personnel, or student information request for information/data;
- C. If the charter school shows signs of financial insolvency or weakness as determined by independent auditors, by the Deputy Superintendent, or the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of NC DPI;
- D. If the Office of State Treasurer receives a "non sufficient funds (NSF)" notification during the course of cash certification processing;

E. If the charter school receives a material audit finding in their annual independent audit which indicates a violation of State law or State Board of Education Policy, a violation of any of the conditions or procedures set forth in their Charter, a failure to meet generally accepted accounting practices and principles, including sound fiscal management in accordance with section 115C-238.29G of the General Statutes and remains unresolved as determined by the Deputy Superintendent or CFO of NC DPI; and/or

F. If the charter school's staff fails to attend required financial training.

NOTE: For warning conditions A) through D), funds may be frozen (i.e. the school's access to the cash management system is revoked) until the exception is corrected, or as determined by the CFO of NC DPI. Any combination of the above violations which accumulate three (3) or more warnings may immediately move the charter school to Financial Disciplinary Status without the benefit of being first held in either the Cautionary or Probationary status. Should a charter school have repeated violations of the same or similar non-compliance condition, the charter school may be moved to Financial Disciplinary Status.

This policy does not preclude the Deputy Superintendent of NC DPI, the CFO of NC DPI, or the Charter School Advisory Committee from making any recommendations to the State Board of Education with regards to a charter school if so warranted, regardless of the charter schools financial noncompliance status.

G. The stages of financial noncompliance are as follows:

Level 1: Financial Cautionary Status

Upon receiving a Financial Warning for any of the above conditions, the charter school will be placed on Financial Cautionary Status. The school remains in cautionary status for 60 calendar days, from the date of notification, and during that time must correct the exception(s) that caused the financial warning(s). When the 60 calendar days have ended and the exception(s) is corrected, the financial warning(s) will be removed and the school will be removed from cautionary status.

Level 2: Financial Probationary Status

The school will be placed in Financial Probationary Status, if the school fails to correct the exception(s) during the 60-calendar day cautionary period. The school remains in probationary status for 60 calendar days, from the date of notification, and during that time must correct the exceptions that caused all of the financial warnings. When the 60 calendar days have ended and all of the exceptions have been corrected, the financial warnings will be removed and the school will be removed from probationary status. While in probationary status, state funds for the school may be allotted on a monthly basis, at the discretion of the Deputy Superintendent or CFO of NC DPI, until the exceptions that caused all of the financial warnings are corrected.

Level 3: Financial Disciplinary Status

The school will be placed in Financial Disciplinary Status, if the school fails to correct all of the exceptions during the 60-calendar day probationary period. When in Disciplinary Status, the school is expected to immediately address all of the exceptions that caused the financial warnings within ten (10) business days from the date of notification. State funds for the school may be allotted on a monthly basis until the exceptions that caused all of the financial warnings are corrected. Also, any combination of the above violations which accumulate three (3) or more warnings may immediately move the charter school to Financial Disciplinary Status without the benefit of being first held in either the Cautionary or Probationary status. Also, should a charter school have repeat violations of the same or similar non-compliance condition, the charter school may be moved to Financial Disciplinary Status without the benefit of completing either the Cautionary or Probationary status periods.

If exceptions are not resolved in the required 10 business days, they will be referred to the Charter School Advisory Committee for appropriate inquiry and action as determined by the Deputy Superintendent or CFO of NC DPI.

Referral to the Charter School Advisory Committee (CSAC)

The charter school will be notified when information will be presented to the Charter School Advisory Committee related to its noncompliance with financial and/or student reporting requirements. The Charter School Advisory Committee may recommend to the State Board of Education any corrective action required by the charter school or that the charter school's Charter be revoked pursuant to Paragraph X of the Charter Agreement.

This policy does not preclude the Deputy Superintendent of NC DPI, the CFO of NC DPI, or the Charter School Advisory Committee from making any recommendations to the State Board of Education with regards to a charter school if so warranted, regardless of the charter schools financial noncompliance status.

II. IMPACT OF GOVERNANCE NONCOMPLIANCE

There are three (3) stages of Governance Noncompliance: Governance Caution Status, Governance Probationary Status, and Governance Disciplinary Status. A charter school may earn placement within a status based on any one of the following governance warning conditions:

- A. Failure to have a functioning board in place, including failure to conduct regular meetings of the board and failure to adopt policies regarding the operation of the charter school. Such policies would include a minimum of Personnel, Disciplinary, and Parental Grievance policies.
- B. Inability to show progress towards the educational and organizational goals described in the charter school application.
- C. Failure to maintain student enrollment. (i.e., Required minimum of 65 students, or as otherwise stated in the charter application or approved waiver to operate under the minimum of 65 students.)

- D. Bylaws violations including, but not limited to, following the Open Meetings Law, maintaining Public Records, implementing a Conflict of Interest Policy, adhering to basic rules of Parliamentary Procedure.
- E. Charter Agreement violations including, but not limited to, following State/Federal Regulations, ensuring Health & Safety Standards, making adequate ABCs progress, meeting Testing and Reporting requirements.
- F. Substantiated complaints indicating that the Board is not acting as a representative of the school community to ensure that the needs of all students, parents, and teachers will be addressed.

NOTE: This policy does not preclude the Deputy Superintendent of NC DPI, the CFO of NC DPI, or the Charter School Advisory Committee from making any recommendations to the State Board of Education with regards to a charter school if so warranted, regardless of the charter schools governance noncompliance status.

The stages of noncompliance are as follows:

Level 1: Governance Cautionary Status: Upon receiving a Governance Warning for any of the above conditions, the charter school will be placed on Governance Caution Status. The school remains in cautionary status for 60 calendar days and during that time must correct the exception that caused the warning. When the 60 calendar days have ended and the exception is corrected, the governance warning will be removed and the school will be removed from cautionary status. Failure to correct the exception during the 60 calendar day cautionary period constitutes a second warning and the school will be placed on Governance Probationary Status.

Level 2: Governance Probationary Status: The school remains on Governance Probationary Status for 60 calendar days and during that time must correct the exceptions that caused all of the governance warnings. When the 60 calendar days have ended and the exception is corrected, the governance warning will be removed and the school will be removed from probationary status. Failure to correct the exception during the 60 calendar day probationary period constitutes a third warning and the school will be placed on Governance Noncompliance Status.

Level 3: Governance Noncompliance Status: The school remains on Governance Noncompliance Status for 10 calendar days. When in Noncompliance Status, the school is expected to immediately address all of the exceptions that caused the governance warnings. State funds for the school will be allotted on a monthly basis until the exceptions that caused all of the governance warnings are corrected. A School placed in Governance Noncompliance Status may be referred to the Charter School Advisory Committee for appropriate inquiry and action as determined by the Chief Financial Officer of NC DPI. The Charter School Board Chair and School Operations Manager will be notified that information will be presented to the Charter School Advisory Committee related to its noncompliance with governance requirements.

Referral to the Charter School Advisory Committee. The Charter School Advisory Committee may "(iv) make recommendations as to whether the State Board should terminate or not renew a Charter, (v) make recommendations concerning grievances between a charter school and its chartering entity, the State Board, or a local board." After hearing the facts, the Committee may recommend corrective action required by the charter school or that the charter

school's Charter be revoked pursuant to Paragraph X of the Charter Agreement. The charter school may appeal a decision to terminate a Charter. Paragraph X of the Charter Agreement (Termination of Charter) outlines the procedures for appeal.

This policy does not preclude the Chief Financial Officer of NC DPI or the Charter School Advisory Committee from making any recommendations to the State Board of Education with regards to a charter school if so warranted, regardless of the charter school's governance compliance status.

III. IMPACT OF REVOCATION

Recommendation for Revocation

Should a public charter school be recommended to the State Board of Education (SBE) for revocation, by either the Charter School Advisory Committee (CSAC) or the Deputy Superintendent of North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI), the following policy, in addition to the provisions for revocation already contained in the Charter Agreement, shall be followed:

1. Upon the recommendation of revocation, the charter school's access to State and Federal funding via the NC DPI Cash Management System will be frozen. However, the charter school may request State and Federal funds via telephone or written request through the NC DPI's School Business division under normal cash management timelines. NC DPI may, as determined by the Deputy Superintendent or CFO of NC DPI, require adequate documentation to support any requested funds during the review and appeal time period.
2. The allotment for State funds for the school may be adjusted and allotted on a monthly basis, at the discretion of the Deputy Superintendent or CFO of NC DPI, from the point of recommendation through the review and appeal period. The allotment would be based on 1st month ADM figures received via the Student Information Management System (SIMS). Ten percent (10%) of the remaining funds available from the adjusted allotment will be held in reserve, pending the results of any review or appeal process.

Revocation

Should the State Board of Education (SBE) vote to revoke a public charter school's Charter the policies outlined in the Charter Agreement, in conjunction with the steps outlined below, will be followed:

1. The charter school's financial activity with regards to State, Federal and Local District Funding must be discontinued upon the effective date of revocation, or "closing period"*, as approved by Deputy Superintendent or CFO of NC DPI. The charter school must transmit final financial information at that time.
2. *The "closing period" is the length of time given the school to successfully close their business with regards to State, Federal and Local District funding, which should be the end of the month that the revocation becomes effective.*

The charter schools access to State and Federal funding via the NC DPI Cash Management System will be discontinued.

The allotments for State and Federal funds for the school will be adjusted and a final allotment adjustment will be made based on 1st month ADM figures received via the Student Information Management System (SIMS) through the last day of the month that the revocation becomes effective. Ten percent (10%) of the remaining funds available from the adjusted allotment will be held in reserve, pending the results of any review or appeal process, should the school's Charter be revoked by the SBE these funds will be held in reserve, pending the results of the "closing audit"**.

*** The "closing audit" to be conducted will be designed by NC DPIs Office of Financial and Business Services in conjunction with the Local Government Commission to ensure that the audit is in compliance with all required policies and legislation and to ensure a smooth close-out process. The "closing audit" will serve as the annual fiscal year ending audit for the charter school.*

3. After the final allotment adjustment, the charter school may request, in writing, any remaining State and Federal funds through the NC DPIs School Business Division. The request must include adequate documentation to support any requested funds during the closing period. Should the final allotment adjustment indicate that the charter school has overdrawn any State or Federal funds a refund may be due to NC DPI. NC DPI will verify the potential refund amount upon the receipt of the final closing audit and the charter school will be notified, in writing, of any refunds due to NC DPI and given 20 business days to issue the refund.
4. The charter school must transmit final financial information through the last day of the month that the revocation becomes effective.
5. NC DPI will designate and pay a CPA firm to do a "closing audit"* of the charter school. The school will be notified when this audit shall occur. Each officer, employee, and agent of the charter school having custody of public money or responsibility for keeping records of public financial or fiscal affairs shall produce all books and records requested by the auditor and shall divulge such information to fiscal affairs as the auditor may request.
6. All net assets as of the effective date of revocation, purchased with public funds, shall be deemed the property of the appropriate local education agency. A listing of all assets should be provided to the auditor conducting the closing audit.
7. The auditor in conjunction with NC DPI will ensure that the SIMS software has been removed from the schools computers to ensure the integrity of the school's student data and transcripts.
8. If, upon review by NC DPI, the results of the final closing audit disclose any misuse of funds, violations of state law or SBE policy, or any other indiscretion deemed material, the SBE and/or NC DPI will take the necessary action as indicated per each finding. This would include, but is not exclusive to requiring refunds of state or federal funds.

9. The charter school and the SBE will be notified, in writing, when the NC DPI has determined that the school has been effectively closed.

Note: The "closing period" is the length of time given the school to successfully close their business with regards to State, Federal and Local District funding, which should be the end of the month that the revocation becomes effective. The "closing audit" to be conducted will be designed by NC DPIs Office of Financial and Business Services in conjunction with the Local Government Commission to ensure that the audit is in compliance with all required policies and legislation and to ensure a smooth close-out process.

Appeal

Should a public charter school desire, they may choose to exercise their right to appeal as outlined in the Charter Agreement.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-007

Policy Title: Policy regarding charter schools renewal process

Current Policy Date: 10/05/2006

Other Historical Information: Previous board dates: 06/01/2000, 09/13/2001, 12/04/2003

Statutory Reference: GS 115C-238.29G

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

General Information

It is stated in G.S. 115C-238.29D that the original charter with the NC State Board of Education may be granted for up to ten years. It is also stated that the charter may be extended or renewed for up to ten years. Therefore, a process for the exercising the renewal option is needed. The North Carolina Charter Schools Renewal Report (NCCSRR) is intended to be such as document.

The North Carolina Charter Schools Renewal Report (RR)

The NC Charter Schools Renewal Report (NCCSRR) is intended to permit the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) the time to review the information needed to evaluate the progress of the submitting charter school. The renewal process should also be one that will guide charter schools through a self-assessment that becomes an update to the original application and a “roadmap” to future improvement. Furthermore, as a public document, the NCCSRR shall be made available to federal, state, and local educators, policy makers, parents, and the community. It should be constructed with this in mind.

Process for Renewal

A completed charter schools renewal report will consist of at least two sections.

Section 1: THE CHARTER SCHOOLS SELF-STUDY (completed by the school). This section contains questions related to the viability of the charter school’s academic program, governance structure, and business operations. It will be suggested that this portion be undertaken by a team of people having the ability to look objectively at the entire school and identify ways to further strengthen and align the existing program to its mission and the desires of the community that it serves.

- **THE RENEWAL SELF-STUDY PROCESS**

Each charter school seeking renewal *shall* complete the Renewal Self-study first. Summaries should be written in a concise manner and free of jargon. Charter schools' administrators will be encouraged to seek outside assistance.

The self-study *shall* contain the following in this order:

1. **COVER PAGE.** Each report will begin with a one-page fact sheet that contains the name and contact information for the school, the name of the principal including phone/fax /E-mail, contact information for the board chairperson, and the date of submission of the report.
2. **LETTER OF INTENT.** Following the cover page is a formal letter signed by the Board Chairperson stating the Board's intent to seek renewal.
3. **TABLE OF CONTENTS.** All pages of the NCCSRR will be numbered consecutively. The Table of Contents will allow easy access to the various sections. No font smaller than 12 point should be used and all reports should be typed or computer prepared (the report may be downloaded in word format from the DPI website).
4. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.** An executive summary of the self-study is next. This begins with the school's mission statement and consists of no more than two typed pages.
5. **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION.** The body of the self-study contains various evidence of the success of the students and the progress towards the charter school's goals as outlined in the charter application.

- **Section 2: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION REPORT** (submitted by offices of DPI). This section will consist of responses from the Office of Charter Schools, Financial Services, Accountability, Exceptional Children, and any other office or service of the Department that may have information pertinent to the evaluation of the school. All reports from DPI will be submitted to the Office of Charter Schools. The Office of Charter Schools will forward all reports to the Charter Schools Advisory Committee for review.

- **NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHARTER SCHOOLS RENEWAL**

The NC Department of Public Instruction, coordinating its efforts through the Office of Charter Schools, will be asked to assist the Charter Schools Advisory Committee in its effort to collect information relative to the renewal of the charter. The following chart is an overview of possible sources of documentation and resources for this information. This is, in no way, an exhaustive list and is not meant to, in any way, limit the resources employed by the schools seeking renewal, the Charter Schools Advisory Committee, or the State Board of Education as they

prepare for the future of charter schools. Any or all of these offices may be asked to submit written or oral reports to the SBE or its designated agent.

AREAS OF COMPLIANCE	SOURCES OF DOCUMENTATION	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
FINANCIAL	Audit report, financial records, reporting schedule, etc.	Div. of Financial Services, Office of Charter Schools
GOVERNANCE	Concerns brought to the Office of Charter Schools, board agendas and minutes, review of policy making committees, interviews	Office of Charter Schools
INSTRUCTION	School site visits by the Office of Charter Schools educational consultants	Office of Charter Schools
ACCOUNTABILITY	ABC accountability results, EC compliance records, SIMS/NC WISE records	Div. of Accountability Services, Div. of Ex. Children Services

Note: *Reports from the above DPI departments will be sent to the Office of Charter Schools, copied to the charter schools, and forwarded to the Charter Schools Advisory Committee.*

TIMELINE FOR RENEWAL

DATE	ACTION
<i>August</i>	Renewal Packet emailed to eligible schools.
<i>September</i>	DPI staff returns Compliance Sheets to Office of Charter Schools.
<i>September</i>	Charter Renewal Application Process (conference call)
<i>September</i>	The Office of Charter Schools submits non-compliance reports from DPI to appropriate schools for inclusion and explanation in their final Renewal Report.
<i>October</i>	Emailed Renewal Self-Study due to the Office of Charter Schools.
<i>October</i>	Mail a signed, hard copy of the Cover Page to the "Office of Charter Schools Attention: Jean Kruft." Also, enclose the following information with this letter – (1) copy of your board's by-laws including any amendments or changes from the original document (2) copy of your current student handbook and (3) copy of the most recent board policy and procedures manual.
<i>October</i>	Office of Charter Schools review team completes the initial screening.
<i>November</i>	Charter School Advisory Committee receives electronic copies of Renewal Self-Studies, DPI Compliance Sheets, and the Office of Charter Schools Report for review.
<i>November</i>	Via conference call, the Charter School Advisory Committee subcommittees identify schools with areas of concern. Those schools will be notified by the Office of Charter Schools to appear at the next CSAC meeting while also creating Corrective Action Plans.
<i>December</i>	Corrective Action Plans due to the Office of Charter Schools from schools that were identified with areas of concern.
<i>December</i>	Presentation of Corrective Action Plans to the NC Charter School Advisory Committee Meeting.
<i>December</i> (of charter year 9) – <i>November 07</i> (of charter year 10)	Schools will implement Corrective Action Plans which will be monitored by the Office of Charter Schools and appropriate divisions of the Department of Public Instruction.
<i>November</i>	The CSAC makes final renewal recommendations to the SBE.
<i>January</i>	State Board of Education receives renewal recommendations from the CSAC (no action; discussion item).
<i>February</i>	SBE takes action on Renewal recommendations.

RENEWAL RUBRIC

Charter School Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Lead Administrator: _____

Period of Initial Charter: _____

Recommendation by the Charter Schools Advisory Committee:

☐

10Year Renewal

☐

Renewal less than 10 years. The number of years recommended _____

☐

Non-renewal

Charter School Renewal Rubric

To receive a recommendation for renewal, the school must meet the ten-year renewal criteria set forth in each of the following rubrics or complete implementation of a corrective action plan as set forth in section B.

A. REQUIREMENTS FOR RENEWAL

1. ABC Accountability

Ten-Year Renewal	The school must attain a performance composite at or above 60% proficiency. If a school performs less than 60% proficiency for three consecutive years, they will not be allowed to receive a 10 year renewal. A K-2 school must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Charter School Advisory Committee (CSAC) that the school has achieved academic growth during the term of the current charter.
------------------	---

2. Financial Compliance

Ten-Year Renewal	The school has met all financial criteria set forth by G.S.115C.238.29F(f) and in SBE policies, or has previously corrected any deficiencies in meeting those requirements to the satisfaction of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).
Action Plan Required	Any school that does not meet the foregoing ten-year renewal criteria shall be subject to the correction of deficiencies provision set forth below.

3. Governance Compliance

Ten-Year Renewal	The school has met all governance criteria set forth by G.S. 115C-238.29E and in SBE policies, or has previously corrected any deficiencies in meeting those requirements to the satisfaction of the DPI.
Action Plan Required	Any school that does not meet the foregoing ten-year renewal criteria shall be subject to the correction of deficiencies provision set forth below.

4. Exceptional Children Compliance

Ten-Year Renewal	The school has met all Special Education criteria set forth by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Act, the North Carolina statutes covering Special Education, and SBE policies, or previously corrected any deficiencies in meeting those requirements to the satisfaction of the DPI.
Action Plan Required	Any school that does not meet the foregoing ten-year renewal criteria shall be subject to the correction of deficiencies provision set forth below.

5. Enrollment Compliance

Ten-Year Renewal	The school meets the enrollment requirements set forth by G.S. 115C-238.29B(b)(12) and SBE policy.
	Any school that does not meet the foregoing ten-year renewal criteria shall be subject to the correction of deficiencies provision set forth below.

B. CORRECTION OF DEFICIENCIES

If a charter school does not meet any one or more of the ten-year renewal criteria, the Charter School Advisory Committee (CSAC) **may** grant a school time to create and implement a corrective action plan. The action plan shall address what the deficiencies are, how the school will proceed in correcting the deficiencies, which parties will be responsible for implementation of the plan, and when implementation will take place. The CSAC and the appropriate division(s) of DPI shall set the parameters for completion of the action plan and its implementation. The period for completion of the action plan and its implementation may not extend beyond the end of the first semester of the final year of the school's current charter. If the CSAC and the DPI determine that implementation of the action plan has corrected the school's deficiencies the CSAC **may** recommend renewal of the school's charter.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the CSAC may at any time recommend that the SBE begin revocation proceedings of the charter of any school in accordance with G.S. 115C-238.29G.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-008

Policy Title: Policy regarding the definition of a charter school

Current Policy Date: 09/14/2000

Other Historical Information:

Statutory Reference:

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

Definition of a Charter School

In determining whether the status of a Charter School or Charter School applicant is either one school or actually more than one school, the State Board of Education will consider the following factors:

1. Whether there is a single governance structure.
2. Whether there is a single school administrator.
3. Whether there is a single curriculum.
4. Whether there is a single set of board policies.
5. Whether there is a duplication of grade structure.
6. Whether there is a single uniform lottery policy.
7. The location of facilities and their proximity to one another.
8. Whether the school has one name.
9. Whether the school is one fixed entity.

Note: The above are among many factors to be considered in making a determination, no single factor is conclusive and the list is not exclusive.

Possible Board Action

1. The Charter School application be denied.
2. The request for an enrollment increase may be denied.
3. Only one of the two schools is approved for funding.
4. Both schools are approved for funding.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-010

Policy Title: Policy delineating assistance and program evaluation of low-performing charter schools

Current Policy Date: 10/04/2001

Other Historical Information:

Statutory Reference: GS 115C-238.39F(d)

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

First Time Low-Performing (LP) Designation

- The LP school shall submit a corrective action plan to the Office of Charter Schools within 60 days of the official notification of its low performing status. The corrective action plan shall address all areas of academic deficiency and state specific actions to correct these deficiencies. The Office of Charter Schools may request that experts in leadership, curriculum, and instruction review the action plan prior to acceptance. Contracted persons or DPI personnel may make these reviews.
- The school shall participate in workshops and staff development programs as directed by the Office of Charter Schools. The Office of Charter Schools will present a report of these activities and school participation to the CSAC and the SBE.

Second Time Low Performing or Repeated Low Performance Designation

- The school shall undergo a program evaluation, staff development, and leadership training as prescribed by the evaluation team.
 1. The school shall be assigned a program evaluation team that will consist of persons with expertise in the areas of leadership, curriculum, and instruction as necessary. The team may consist of contracted personnel or DPI personnel with expertise in the previously stated areas.
 2. Every effort shall be made to select an evaluation team that has expertise in the style of instruction focused on in the school's charter and mission.
 3. The program evaluation team in coordination with the school shall perform the following functions:
 - a) assess the deficiencies of the school;
 - b) develop a corrective action plan which will encompass program evaluation, curriculum design, curriculum integration with the NC Standard Course of Study, instructional methodology, leadership training, and any other areas the program evaluation team deems appropriate;
 - c) assist in the implementation of the action plan;

- d) submit a written and oral evaluation of the report of the school's progress to the CSAC prior to its submission of a final recommendation to the SBE; and
 - e) the SBE in its discretion may request a detailed oral presentation from the evaluation team.
- Any school refusing to cooperate in this process may be subject to revocation.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual

Policy Identification

Priority: Effective and Efficient Operations

Category: Charter Schools Administration

Policy ID Number: EEO-U-011

Policy Title: Process for a charter school to be designated as an alternative charter school

Current Policy Date: 03/04/2004

Other Historical Information: Previous board dates: 09/11/2003

Statutory Reference:

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

In order for a charter school to be eligible to participate in the alternative schools' accountability model in the ABCs (see HSP-C-013), the Charter School Advisory Committee (CSAC) must determine that the school is eligible and make a recommendation to the State Board of Education (SBE).

Eligibility for charter schools' inclusion in the ABCs as an alternative school is to be based on these criteria:

1. The school serves students in grades 6-12, or serves students in a residential setting. A non-residential school applicant must have a high school component to be eligible to apply to use the Alternative School Accountability Model.
2. At least three-fourths of the school's population, i.e., 75% of students, are at-risk as defined in HSP-Q-001, I.B. of academic failure and must exhibit one or a combination of the following descriptors:
 - a. historically truant,
 - b. exhibiting significant behavioral problems,
 - c. involved in the juvenile justice system,
 - d. returning from juvenile justice settings or mental health treatment facilities, or
 - e. suspended or dropped out from traditional schools.

If the CSAC determines that a charter school is eligible, it will recommend the school to the SBE for inclusion in the ABCs using the alternative school model. The CSAC will review each school thus designated on a three-year cycle. Upon review of each school applying for a three-year renewal of its designation, the CSAC will use the criteria listed in this policy to make a recommendation to the SBE whether or not the charter school will continue under this designation.

APPENDIX C

Application and Revocation Statistics

Charter School Application Statistics

Year of Final Approval	# of Applications Submitted	# of Applications Receiving Approval	# of Voluntary Relinquishments	# of Revocations	# of Approved Schools
1997	65	34	2	0	32
1998	66	32	2	1	61
1999	53	28	7	4	78
2000	54	17	3	1	91
2001	33	9	3	1	96
2002	17	2	4	0	94
2003	26	4	0	1	97
2004	19	2	0	0	99
2005	12	1	4	3	97
2006	19	7	1	1	93
2007	6	NA	NA	NA	98
Totals	370	136	26	12	98

APPENDIX D
Charter Schools by County

Charter Schools by County

County	# of Charter Schools	County	# of Charter Schools
Alamance	3	Mecklenburg	11
Avery	2	Moore	2
Beaufort	1	Nash	1
Brunswick	1	New Hanover	2
Buncombe	3	Northampton	1
Burke	1	Orange	2
Cabarrus	1	Pamlico	1
Carteret	2	Person	2
Chatham	2	Robeson	1
Cherokee	1	Rockingham	1
Columbus	1	Rutherford	1
Cumberland	1	Scotland	1
Durham	8	Stanly	1
Forsyth	5	Surry	1
Franklin	1	Swain	1
Gaston	2	Transylvania	1
Guilford	3	Union	1
Henderson	1	Vance	1
Iredell	3	Wake	13
Jackson	1	Warren	1
Johnston	1	Watauga	1
Lee	1	Wayne	1
Lenoir	2	Wilkes	1
Lincoln	1	Wilson	1
Total Charter Schools 98			

APPENDIX E

Charter Schools

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Academy of Moore County www.academyofmoorecounty.com	Moore	K-8	128	1997	<p>The Academy of Moore County is a charter school established in 1997 to offer area students an alternative to traditional public schools. As a charter school, the Academy is a tuition-free public school with the atmosphere of a private school including small classes, uniforms and a dedicated and highly-trained teaching staff.</p> <p>We are dedicated to improving education for all students with focus on preparing students for high school honors classes.</p> <p>Our diverse student population is a reflection of Moore County. Our faculty are certified and held to the highest standards.</p> <p>Enrollment at the Academy is open to all area students in grades Kindergarten through 8th in Moore and surrounding counties. The Academy adheres to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study with emphasis on a well rounded, traditional education.</p>
Alpha Academy http://www.alphaacademy.net/	Cumberland	K-8	138	2000	<p>Alpha Academy is a college preparatory school that fosters a commitment to continued learning, mutual respect and support, strong interpersonal relationships, and shared interests and goals among a diverse population.</p> <p>Alpha Academy offers boundless opportunities to explore, uncover, and pursue interests while building on existing knowledge. This ignites creative thinking and sustains an ongoing exchange of ideas.</p> <p>Alpha Academy provides a challenging, dynamic academic program that integrates the best of traditional education with new and emerging technologies. Creative teaching strategies empower students and teachers to reach the highest standards of educational excellence.</p> <p>Alpha Academy's team approach to learning emphasizes and values interactions among students, faculty, staff, and parents, while building educational partnerships among individuals, community groups, schools, foundations, and corporations.</p> <p>Alpha Academy motivates students to identify and achieve their potential for academic accomplishment, co-curricular achievement, global awareness, and responsible citizenship.</p> <p>Alpha Academy supports the pursuit of life long learning and the sharing of knowledge through teaching and mentoring.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
American Renaissance School www.amerren-charterschool.org/ www.armsnc.org	Iredell	K-8	560	1998	Providing opportunities for experiencing a Renaissance of the Mind takes dedication and collaboration. Together with the local Statesville business and service organizations, our professional staff aims to enable "free-to-risk learning." From the unique and vibrant physical characteristics of our historical school building to the project-based, interactive curriculum, students are exposed to a superior liberal arts education. Cooperative grouping and problem solving are basic components of our daily learning. In addition, teachers facilitate a constructivist educational environment by incorporating the latest in technology-based learning, children's literature, and cutting edge, hands-on professional practice. The North Carolina Standard Course of Study provides a basic foundation for our learning objectives, but American Renaissance Charter School is committed to expanding and extending these core requirements with a philosophy that invites discovery and inquiry - life long learning skills and thinking processes that ensure the possibility and reality of each individual's continuous and ongoing Renaissance of the Mind.
Arapahoe Charter School www.arapahoe.charter.k12.nc.us/	Pamlico	K-8	346	1997	<p>The Arapahoe Charter School will be a teacher/parent directed community school. Teachers and parents will be required to be involved in the governance of the school and share in the responsibility for the educational achievements of their students. Teachers and parents will become partners in the decision-making process.</p> <p>Arapahoe Charter School will provide students and parents in Pamlico County with an expanded choice in educational opportunity.</p> <p>With the community's strong support of the Arapahoe Charter School, with parents and teachers who share in the vision of a parent/teacher directed community school, and with willing students and dedicated educators, we are confident that we will be able to prepare our children to be productive and meaningful citizens.</p>
Arts Based Elementary www.wsabes.org	Forsyth	K-5	386	2002	Arts Based Elementary School (ABES) is a public charter school that charges no tuition and is open to everyone. We teach children the basics and beyond through first-hand encounters with dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. ABES' K-5 students will achieve high academic performance. They learn in classes led by creative and caring certified teachers and through arts partnerships with local arts and cultural agencies. ABES provides imaginative learning experiences to nurture student character development, self-esteem, and self-confidence. The school works to advance important values and appreciation of art and beauty, democracy, families, individual freedom, personal responsibility, and building social capital -- a better and more inclusive community.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
ArtSpace Charter School www.artspacecharter.org	Buncombe	K-8	320	2001	<p>At ArtSpace Charter School students learn core content subjects (math, language arts, science and social studies) through the arts (dance, drama, music and visual art). Academic skills and concepts are applied and experienced in artistic contexts. Arts Integration allows students to explore their acquired knowledge and skills, while providing teachers the opportunity to authentically assess student learning. The school offers a complete education through integrated curricula based on the visual and performing arts, utilizing an experiential approach. We believe in a family oriented, cooperative approach to education that encourages parental involvement and community relationships to nurture responsive citizenship</p>
Bethany Community Middle School www.bcmschool.com	Rockingham	6-8	126	2000	<p>BCMS provides academic and character education to 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in accordance with the North Carolina standard curriculum. BCMS is a member of the National Middle School Association and follows philosophy and guidelines recommended by that organization, which is outlined in their position paper entitled "This We Believe."</p> <p>Community participation is key aspect of our charter school. BCMS supports a variety of traditional athletic programs such as basketball, soccer and baseball on the interscholastic level. The sports program teaches teamwork, encourages athletic development and involves the community in cooperative activities. Volunteers are involved everyday throughout the school. Many of the extracurricular activities of the school have parent volunteers leading them. Students see their parents and community neighbors taking an active part in the life of the school.</p> <p>BCMS vigorously supports citizenship along with character development in its students. Community service activities are built into the curriculum. Students are encouraged to be part of the PTSO (Parent, Teacher, and Student Organization). A great diversity of elective courses is available to the students allowing for individual choices and development of the whole person theme. Personal responsibility and character growth are emphasized.</p> <p>BCMS attempts to exemplify in its own conduct the behaviors it advocates in its students. Students are encouraged to make conscious choices about adopting values and developing positive character traits. Presentations by staff and guests are expected to reflect the school's support of the national guidelines on factual delivery of information without advocating religious preferences. Students are encouraged to avoid making prejudicial choices. The school avoids bias in its employment and other decisions with regards to ethnicity, race, religion or country of origin. BCMS is seeking to extend its boundaries, strive for excellence, constructively employ innovation and be the greatest contributor it can to the development of the succeeding generation. Most importantly our school is encouraging its students to do the same.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Bethel Hill Charter School www.esinc.net/bhcs	Person	K-6	370	2000	<p>The Bethel Hill Charter School educational focus is to provide an expanded learning environment by way of lowering teacher-pupil ratio while raising expectations in the academic areas of reading, writing, and math as outlined in North Carolina's Standard Course of Study. Strong emphasis will be placed on developing a love for learning and, equally important, respect for themselves and others in a multi-cultural, student-centered environment.</p> <p>Bethel Hill Charter School is dedicated to increasing academic performance for all children with an emphasis on allowing academically gifted children to move forward and to offer at-risk children the opportunity to work in groups that better meet the needs of these children. We plan to use <u>Core Knowledge</u> as a large part of our curriculum, integrated into the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.</p> <p>Core Knowledge is based on the premise that we learn new knowledge by building on knowledge we already know. Students are offered a coherent sequence of specific knowledge that builds each year. This will provide teachers, parents, and the expected diversity of students continuity in each subject area each year. The Core Knowledge Sequence is a detailed outline of specific knowledge to be taught in Language Arts, Math, American and World History, Geography, Science, Visual Arts and Music. You can view the Core Knowledge Web Site at http://www.coreknowledge.org.</p>
Brevard Academy www.brevardacademy.org	Transylvania	K-8	177	1998	<p>It is the mission of Brevard Academy to provide high quality education for a diverse community of students, Grades K-8, in a nurturing environment that motivates children in the pursuit of personal excellence. As a partnership between teachers, students and parents, the school is dedicated to the development of the whole child and to the enhancement of the values of respect and responsibility. The school is located on the camp-like grounds of the world famous Brevard Music Center, where nature is a part of everyday learning.</p> <p>Small class sizes allow for a truly individualized education that meets the needs of each child. We strive to educate the whole child and teach more than to "the test."</p> <p>We strive to assure that the Brevard Academy graduate will be literate, articulate, competent in information communication and technology, creative across the curriculum and globally aware. To this end, the School has adopted Core Knowledge as the foundation of its curriculum.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Bridges	Wilkes	K-8	162	1997	Creating a nurturing environment where children can tingle with excitement is the mission of Bridges School. The school is founded with the conviction that making connections defines the learning process. Bridges is a place that addresses the needs of certain children that are failing to thrive in their current educational settings. The whole community -- teachers, students, and parents -- become the bridges that link life and learning and provide a deeper understanding of the concepts, patterns, and principles which are the foundation of our world.
Cape Fear Center for Inquiry www.cfci.net	New Hanover	K-8	337	2000	The Cape Fear Center for Inquiry is committed to promoting students' abilities to think and create in personally meaningful ways through an inquiry-based, integrated curriculum in a nurturing environment. The founders of the school believe that good teachers are the most important factor in a child's school experience. We therefore decided to give hiring preference to licensed teachers and to keep the teacher/child ratio low. In grades K/1 the maximum class size is 18, in 2/3 it is 20 and in 4-8 it is 22. Because of the importance of the teacher/child relationship, especially for younger children, in our elementary grades teachers stay with their classes for two school years. We loop kindergarten to 1st grade, 2nd grade to 3rd grade, and 4th grade to 5th grade. Due to the increasing complexity of the curriculum, the middle grades do not loop. Instead, the teachers are departmentalized so that each can focus on teaching his or her specialty area.
Cape Lookout Marine Science High School www.nccoast.org/education	Carteret	9-12	141	1998	Cape Lookout Marine Science High School, located at 1108 Bridges Street in Morehead City, is a small charter high school with a focus on marine science. Charles Elliott, head of the science department at Cape Lookout, works to involve his students through restoration projects and since Cape Lookout focuses on marine science, oyster and marsh restoration fit well into the curriculum.
Carolina International School www.CarolinaInternationalSchool.org	Cabarrus	K-9	417	2004	Carolina International School is a college preparatory public charter school in Harrisburg offering grades K-9 in 2006-7 and adding a grade each year to be a full K-12 school. Our educational program emphasizes international education, environmental studies, and inquiry-based, project-centered learning on a 36-acre wooded campus with streams and natural wetlands.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Carter Community School www.carterschool.org	Durham	K-8	165	1998	<p>Carter Community School seeks to develop a community of learners, who are prepared to function as knowledgeable citizens in society, through participation in learning experiences that make learning relevant to their everyday lives.</p> <p>Carter Community School is committed to having all students achieve at or above grade level at all grades, annually. In order to ensure that all children are making continuous progress, the school will focus on closing the gaps between and among Carter Community students, and their counterparts in other educational settings.</p> <p>Children will use creative ways to translate into real world settings, the skills that they have learned. This will make them become globally conscious, better decision makers who are connected to the learning that takes place in the school, and the community at large.</p>
Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge www.cgwsoc.org	Forsyth	K-12	414	1997	<p>Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge serves students in grades K-12. Roughly, we serve 75% African American students, 20% Hispanic/Latino students, and the remainder is Caucasian students; and over 87% of our students participate in the National Free & Reduced Lunch Program. A single parent heads over 80% of our households. Over 60% of our parents have not completed high school, nor received their GED.</p> <p>Our key features are an emerging comprehensive academic core program, small class size, a full computer lab, on-site counseling, home-school coordination, a Progressive Studies/Enrichment Center, a daily after school program, a Saturday Enrichment Academy, band, art, and string orchestra. We provide an atmosphere of respect for parent views and involvement and a focus on meeting the needs of a diverse student population.</p>
Casa Esperanza Montessori www.cemcs.org	Wake	K-6	279	2003	<p>Casa Esperanza Montessori preschool and charter school uses Montessori philosophy and pedagogy in English-Spanish dual-language and Spanish enrichment multi-grade classrooms. The Casa Esperanza community of families, educators and dedicated volunteers actively fosters enthusiasm for learning, independence, individual academic progress, cultural awareness, and social and emotional well-being.</p>
Central Park School for Children www.centralparkschoolforchildren.org	Durham	K-5	274	2003	<p>The Central Park School for Children is committed to nurturing and guiding the natural eagerness of each child to explore, grow, and relate to others. The school is founded on three principles: that children are naturally full of life, power and confidence; that the best available research should guide our methods; and that children develop best in a community where curiosity, challenges and learning are valued. The school is creating a community of partners to guide, cherish and be amazed by the children.</p>
Charlotte Secondary School www.charlottesecsecondary.org	Mecklenburg		274		<p>Balanced & comprehensive liberal arts education with emphasis on civic education, integrated arts & humanities for grades 6-12; Paideia for 6-8; Comprehensive curriculum; 9-12 College Prep; Partners: National Paideia Center, National Humanities Center, NC Civic Education Consortium, & the American Youth Policy Forum</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Charter Day School www.charterdayschool.org	Brunswick	K-8	702	2000	<p>Charter Day School (CDS) is a tuition-free public school of choice serving students from Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Bladen and Pender Counties in North Carolina. School Founder Baker A. Mitchell, Jr. and Headmaster Mark T. Cramer opened The Roger Bacon Academy ~ Charter Day School in 2000 with 53 students. Today, the school serves 703 students in grades K-8.</p> <p>The school has been honored by the State Board of Education for achieving "<i>Honor School of Excellence</i>" status. It has also been recognized as a Top-25 School out of more than 1,850 K-8 schools throughout the state for the academic growth of its students. For 2005-6, over 92% of the students scored at or above grade level on the North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) reading tests. The school serves a student body that is 41% economically disadvantaged.</p> <p>The Hallmarks of our Educational Program Include: Achievement-based Curriculum, Proven Instructional Methods, Direct Instruction Learning Teams, Nurturing by Small Group Interaction, Emphasis on Traditional Values, Student Uniforms Promoting Academic Team Spirit, Student Pledge Promoting: Self-motivation, Self-reliance, Self-discipline</p> <p>Our School is dedicated to providing the highest quality education in a safe, clean, spirited, and morally strong environment.</p>
Chatham Charter School www.chathamcharter.org	Chatham	K-8	277	1997	Chatham Charter School was among the first 37 schools who gained charter status back in July of 1997. Over time our enrollment has grown from 120 to currently 274 students in grades K-8. Chatham Charter School serves students from the Siler City area, several from all over Chatham County and a few from Randolph, Lee and Wake County.
Children's Community School www.ccsch.org	Mecklenburg	K-5	503	2004	Children's Community School is a public charter school located in Davidson, NC. Children's Community School believes that every child can and will succeed in ways that reflect his or her own aptitudes and interests. Our mission is to use The Basic School educational program to provide an optimum environment for learning.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Children's Village Academy	Lenoir	K-6	114	1997	<p>"The mission of Children's Village Academy is to establish a model learning institution for the advancement of outstanding academic performance among children at risk for failure. Our primary goal is to provide a positive learning environment, which will produce students who are well grounded in their psycho-social and cultural well-being, and who are known for their upstanding moral fiber, citizenship, and passion for learning.</p> <p>The Children's Village Academy (CVA) is one of North Carolina's original charter schools. It was established in 1997 to serve grades K-3, but has since expanded to grades K-6.</p> <p>CVA is located in Kinston, North Carolina, a small city of approximately 23,000, with an average income of about \$26,500 and an unemployment rate of 6.7 percent, and over twice that for minorities.</p>
CIS Academy www.cisnet.org/cisrobesson/default.asp?_=599	Robeson	6-8	106	1997	<p>The CIS Academy, established in 1997, provides students at-risk for school failure with the academic, social and individual skills necessary to successfully learn, stay in school, and graduate from the Public Schools of Robeson County.</p> <p>The academy offers an educational option for students having difficulty functioning in the traditional school setting. Some of the assets of the academy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small class sizes (no more than 16 students per class) • one-on-one assistance and intervention • individualized and structured educational plan for each student • service learning and life skills activities

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Clover Garden www.clovergardenschool.com	Alamance	K-12	429	2001	<p>Clover Garden School is a special place! We take our educational pursuits seriously in a relaxed, respectful environment. Teachers and students develop meaningful relationships complemented by many involved parents. Our governing board of directors are dedicated to the mission of the school and keeping the school pointed in a direction that is efficient and successful. Our Parents Teachers Together (PTT) organization is a working group of parents and supporters who never stop their efforts to make the school the best it can be. The Site Advisory Committee (SAC) provides that valuable link between the school and community to keep everyone at the pulse of our school goals.</p> <p>CGS is not an alternative school in the traditional sense. Simply, CGS gives parents and students a choice in their child's education. CGS is not for everybody because of its profound expectations in academics and behavior. We respect different learning styles and understand every student wants to find a special place in his/her school. Students need teacher-directed instruction, academic support at home, and the ability to deal with the various performance pressures at school. CGS strives to make positive things happen for students.</p>
Columbus Charter School www.charterdayschool.com/columbus/	Columbus		NA		Traditional caring environment that emphasizes traditional values & direct instructional methods; Unites & balances all subjects – language, math, art, music, history & sciences – by teaching each as method for expressing ideas with standard rules and classical examples for study in each area.
Community Charter School www.commchart.org	Mecklenburg	K-5	144	1997	Community Charter School is an emergent learning, arts integration public school located near Uptown Charlotte. The community is our classroom. Community Charter School's curriculum is: Interdisciplinary: integrating all areas of learning and emphasizing connections among cultures; Emergent: following the interests and expressed designs of the children; Constructivist: building on and connecting to the child's previous experiences and knowledge; Collaborative: making decisions together that affect students, staff and parents; Community Oriented: using the resources within the CCS community and in the community at large including business, government, museums, libraries, theatres, and community service organizations.
Community Partners High www.cpchsonline.com/	Wake	9-12	87	2000	“Where Education is a Process, Not an Event” Community Partners Charter High School (CPCHS) is a publicly funding educational choice for grades 9-12, located in the heart of Holly Springs, NC. Currently the town's only public high school, CPCHS offers a student-centered environment, with low student-teacher ratios. We have many student activities, including clubs and an extra-curricular athletics program where any motivated student can play.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Crosscreek Charter www.crosscreekcharterschool.com	Franklin	K-8	211	2001	Our school opened in August of 2001. The vision of this school's child-centered and family-oriented learning community began with a group of parents in Franklin County who dreamed of a school for their children where "every child could be empowered to reach their potential as a lifelong learner." Today our faculty, staff, and parents continue to provide academic and social activities that allow children to find and practice their individuality. Like any school, we constantly seek ways to grow and continue to learn with our students how best to create a school that is innovative and enriching in its practice.
Crossnore Academy www.crossnoreschool.org/academy	Avery	K-12	92	1999	Virtually all Crossnore residents, plus eighteen students from the community who benefit from the structure and intensive care approach to instruction, attend Crossnore Academy. The Academy is a year-round school, with four 45 day quarters for a total of 180 school days. The Crossnore School began as a school in 1913 when there were only one room schoolhouses in Avery County. When public education became available for all children, Crossnore leaders refined their role to care for orphaned, abandoned, abused and neglected children. Those children also attended public schools. Time and change continued to refine the needs that Crossnore met. Eventually, it became difficult for local schools to meet the needs of Crossnore residents and in 1999, Crossnore founded Crossnore Academy as one of the 100 original charter schools. Attendance is open to community students whose special needs can best be served by the specialized teaching faculty.
Crossroads Charter High www.crossroadscharter.org	Mecklenburg	9-12	225	2001	The mission of Crossroads Charter High School is to serve as a lighthouse for students, parents and the community by providing educational solutions and innovative teaching techniques in an effort to achieve academic excellence for high risk students, whether they are termed "high-risk or academically gifted." The purpose of the Crossroads Charter High School is to evaluate and design an individual education plan to orchestrate the students' education for success in the future. By defining the strengths and weaknesses of each student's abilities, the Crossroads' administrators, and faculty etc. can actively assess their progress through the education experience
Dillard Academy www.dillardacademy.org	Wayne	K-4	114	1998	Dillard Academy K-4 Charter Public School opened on August 10, 1998 with dedication and mission to serve the students in Wayne County, North Carolina and in Goldsboro, in particular. Housed at the old Dillard High School building located at 504 W. Elm St. in Goldsboro, the charter school continues the tradition of educational excellence that was the hallmark of Dillard High School.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Downtown Middle School www.dtns.org	Forsyth	5-8	379	1997	The Downtown Middle School is a North Carolina Charter School that has been serving the citizens of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County since it was chartered in 1997. The downtown location make our school accessible from all areas of Forsyth County and also appeals to many families that have either parent employed by a company located in the downtown area. This tuition-free, state supported school offers an innovative learning approach that involves the family and community in the development of the child. It provides parents with an alternative choice for their child's educational development. The innovative teaching styles that are central to The Downtown Middle School philosophy allow students to become active participants in the construction of knowledge. Besides receiving rigorous instruction in the core academic areas, students at The Downtown Middle School also are provided with a broad based exposure to the fine arts. Instruction in instrumental music, visual arts, and drama are an integral part of the overall educational approach that has been adopted by the faculty, administration, and board of directors of the school. The school serves students in grades five through eight and has an enrollment of approximately 375 students.
East Wake Academy www.eastwakeacademy.org	Wake	K-12	786	1998	East Wake Academy fulfills its mission of maintaining a safe, challenging and creative learning environment. This environment strives to develop character and self esteem while equipping students with the skills needed for a rigorous curriculum and to thrive in a college preparatory atmosphere producing academic excellence. We are dedicated to instilling the values of academic citizenship by creating relationships with parents, businesses and civic partners. East Wake Academy is committed to building a strong foundation of learning while providing our students the competitive edge to win in tomorrow's world.
Evergreen Community Charter School www.evergreencs.org	Buncombe	K-8	372	1999	Evergreen Community Charter School is a learning community committed to the pursuit of excellence in the holistic education of mind, body, and spirit. We prepare students for successful lifelong learning, environmental responsibility, and service. We value the voice of every member of our community. Evergreen offers an academically challenging, developmentally appropriate, experiential, holistic, child-centered education. We strive to nurture a life-long passion for learning as we challenge our community to discover their individual gifts, to honor their inner worth, to strive for excellence, to pursue respectful and ethical relationships with themselves and others, and to find their own path of service. Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) emphasizes hands-on, project-based instruction to encourage high academic achievement and personal growth. We embrace the Positive Discipline model of character development and classroom management which, with natural and logical consequences, promotes personal responsibility. The progress of students is evaluated through multiple criteria assessment strategies and a work sampling portfolio system linked to the North Carolina standards

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Exploris Middle School www.exploris.org	Wake	6-8	180	1997	The principles and practices of Exploris Middle School are based on Exploris' understanding of how adolescents learn best. At Exploris Middle School academic discipline and basic skills are addressed through broad themes. Exploris themes are project-based, focus on current global issues, and integrate the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, student questions, and teacher affinities.
Forsyth Academies forsyth.heritageacademies.com/	Forsyth	K-8	696	1999	At Forsyth Academy – a member of National Heritage Academies - we believe in a structured academic environment that incorporates a traditional curriculum with inventive approaches to learning. Our faculty is committed not only to the educational development of the child, but in creating youngsters with character and a drive to contribute to their community. Through an active partnership with parents, we are equipping students of Forsyth Academy for success in high school, college and beyond.
Francine Delany New School for Children www.fdnsc.net	Buncombe	K-8	144	1997	Francine Delany New School for Children teaches using authentic learning materials and individualized instruction, rather than textbooks and pre-programmed curricula. Students read in self-chosen age- and ability-appropriate novels, write on self-chosen topics, use primary sources for research, and use manipulatives to study math concepts. This method of teaching requires small classroom sizes and a strong sense of personal accountability from each student.
Franklin Academy www.franklinacademy.org	Wake	K-12	1075	1998	Franklin Academy encourages students to be inventive, instinctive and analytical thinkers through a comprehensively rigorous curriculum. The academy develops within its students the intellectual and personal habits upon which productive lives are built. Franklin Academy follows a Direct Instruction format for instruction of core curriculum. The goal of this is to accelerate learning by maximizing efficiency in the design and delivery of instruction.
Gaston College Preparatory www.kippgcp.org	Northampton	5-10	468	2001	KIPP Gaston College Preparatory serves approximately 260 fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth graders in rural northeastern North Carolina. Gaston College Preparatory is a free, public school of choice. Our mission is to provide each of our students with the knowledge, skills and character traits necessary to succeed in college and most importantly in life. The school is founded on the five pillars of the existing KIPP Schools: high expectations, power to lead, choice and commitment, extended time on task, and focus on results. According to the North Carolina State Testing results for the 2002-2003 school year, KIPP Gaston College Preparatory is the sixth highest performing school in the state of North Carolina. In the fall of 2005 Gaston College Preparatory will open KIPP Pride High, KIPP's first rural high school. Eventually the entire campus will serve over 480 students in grades 5th through 12th. The tremendous results of the Pride's hard work will continue to improve and eventually translate into ALL of our students having the skills and habits necessary to become successful life long learners and leaders.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Grandfather Academy www.grandfatheracademy.org	Avery	4-12	37	1997	Grandfather Academy has been established to meet the educational needs of two groups of children: those who have been placed at <u>Grandfather Home for Children</u> and children from the local area who need this specialized education. The children at Grandfather Home have become estranged from their families by emotional, sexual or physical abuse. Grandfather Academy students will be grouped with the same peers in their treatment group. The Academy will focus not only on helping students make satisfactory educational progress but will also help them become prepared to function in a public school.
Gray Stone Day School www.graystoneday.org	Stanly	9-12	242	2002	Gray Stone Day School is a regional high school located on Pfeiffer University's campus and provides a college preparatory curriculum for students living in a rural area. While developing strong character, students engage in highly challenging courses taught by high school teachers and college professors. What better place to prepare for college, than a university.
Greensboro Academy greensboro.heritageacademies.com	Guilford	K-8	710	1999	At Greensboro Academy – a member of National Heritage Academies - we believe in a structured academic environment that incorporates a traditional curriculum with inventive approaches to learning. Our faculty is committed not only to the educational development of the child, but in creating youngsters with character and a drive to contribute to their community. Through an active partnership with parents, we are equipping students of Greensboro Academy for success in high school, college and beyond.
Guilford Prep Academy www.guilfordprep.com/	Guilford	K-8	252	2001	Guilford Preparatory Academy is a tuition-free public school of choice located in Greensboro, North Carolina. Our curriculum and school program is designed to prepare students, beginning in Kindergarten, to successfully compete in college and in the global marketplace. We understand the importance of our students being bilingual and so we treat our Spanish language curriculum as a core subject rather than an elective, which is the model in most public schools.
Haliwa-Saponi Tribal www.haliwa-saponi.com	Warren	K-11	157	2000	Haliwa-Saponi Tribal School receives Title I money through a federal program meant to help low-income students. The tribal school had 146 students last year in kindergarten through ninth grade. The school will add a 10th grade for the 2005-2006 school year and expects to graduate its first senior class in 2008. There are a maximum of 18 students per grade and an average of 14 or 15.
Healthy Start Academy Charter Elementary School www.healthystartacademy.com/	Durham	K-8	398	1997	The Healthy Start Academy Charter Public School mission is to provide all students with unlimited opportunities for development of their full potential and to stimulate and promote achievement and success through effective teaching and student learning.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Highland Charter Public School www.highlandcharter.org	Gaston	K-3	99	1997	Highland Charter Public School serves kindergarten through second grade students from throughout Gaston County. The North Carolina Standard Course of Study combined with the Core Knowledge curriculum provides a strong instructional program. Our students are immersed in the basics of literacy and math with a twist of Core Knowledge. However, the basics is not the total of our program. Highland believes children need to experience the world, so experiential learning has always been a component of our curriculum. Expeditionary learning plays an important role in our curriculum. We recently purchased AlphaSmarts and plan to integrate them into all areas of our curriculum. Each 2nd grade student has an AlphaSmart to use in school, on trips, and at home. Also, our younger students use AlphaSmarts in each class for language activities and other uses as developed by the staff. The Accelerated Reader program and the Accelerated Math program help our students develop their comprehension and problem solving skills. Our students learn Spanish using videos and computer software.
Hope Elementary School www.hopecharterschool.org	Wake	K-5	113	2001	<p>The mission of Hope is to provide children with the academic, emotional and social foundation necessary to launch a successful school experience. Our goal is to draw out the potential within every child. Students will be provided with leadership skills that will enable them to become visionaries and agents of change.</p> <p>The “<i>heartbeat</i>” of Hope is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an inviting environment ▪ inquiring minds ▪ engaging students ▪ honoring differences ▪ achieving excellence

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Kennedy School www.kennedycharter.org	Mecklenburg	6-12	251	1998	<p>Kennedy Charter Public School ("KCPS") is a component of Elon Homes For Children, a private, non-profit agency that serves the needs of abused, abandoned and troubled adolescents through a variety of programs and services. KCPS is accredited by the State of North Carolina to serve at-risk students, which are students that are at risk of failing in the traditional public school setting for social, emotional, or academic reasons.</p> <p>KCPS provides a positive learning environment for students in grades 6-12 by setting high academic and social expectations for the students, ensuring that academic and behavioral goals are clearly defined for each student and encouraging behaviors that will foster success both in school and in society. In addition to providing a positive learning environment, the faculty and staff of KCPS take additional steps in the classroom to promote the success of its students. KCPS provides smaller classroom sizes than those in a traditional public school setting and students receive individualized attention through hands-on, experiential learning methods that have been shown to facilitate student success. KCPS adheres to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study as a curriculum guide and each student has a Personal Education Plan, specifically tailored for that student, which is created, to help further the academic and behavior growth of each student.</p> <p>In an effort to provide a comprehensive academic experience, KCPS offers physical education, computer skills training and Spanish classes in addition to the core subjects. The faculty and staff of KCPS and Elon Homes for Children work closely with parents and members of the community to ensure that no child is left behind and to help students exceed all expectations because failure is not an option for our youth.</p>
Kestrel Heights School www.kestrelheights.net	Durham	6-11	387	1998	<p>Kestrel Heights School was created by a group of concerned local citizens and educators who wanted to provide a "choice" in public education. We are partners with the Literacy Council of Durham, the Ackland Museum, the Lakewood YMCA, and the National Paideia Center at UNC Chapel Hill. We have been serving the greater Durham Community for ten years. We currently serve students in grades 6-12 and will have our first graduating class this year. After spending our first 8 years located in the Lakewood YMCA and our nearby Annex building we moved to our new campus in RTP just this past fall.</p> <p>We believe that all children can succeed in a safe and challenging environment that is dedicated to nurturing a community of life long learners. We believe that by fostering a community with high expectations, modeling characteristics of responsible citizenship, and focusing on the development of the whole person we will help to create a great school for all children.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Kinston Charter Academy www.kinstoncharteracademy.com	Lenoir	K-8	281	2004	As a public charter school, KCA is free of charge and open to residents of the City of Kinston, Lenoir, Greene, Jones and surrounding counties. The curriculum design includes the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, K-2 assessments, comprehensive K-8 developmental writing and balanced literacy programs. The curriculum challenges students to explore open-ended situations actively, in a way that parallels the inquiry method used by mathematicians and scientists in their work. Students will routinely experiment with examples, look for and articulate patterns, make, test and prove conjectures, and make connections among mathematical and scientific concepts.
KIPP: Charlotte www.kippcharlotte.org	Mecklenburg		NA		A college preparatory school designed to prepare students from underserved areas with academic skills, intellectual habits, & character traits necessary to succeed in high school, college, & beyond beginning with 5th grade students. Based on the national model of KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program). Curriculum is the SCOS with extended day, extended year, and Saturday classes bi-weekly. Cultivates a culture that espouses learning & hard work can be fun, strong system of rewards & consequences, & consistent focus on preparing for college.
Lake Norman Charter School www.lncs.org	Mecklenburg	5-8	635	1998	Our mission is "Together we lead, learn and serve." Lake Norman Charter School students will acquire and demonstrate leadership skills (awareness, communication, academic success, teamwork, and citizenship) to bring out the best in themselves and others. To meet school objectives, LNCS provides: A challenging academic setting; A focused classroom size averaging 22 students in core classes; A strong discipline and honor code; A strong, cooperative atmosphere; High professional satisfaction and accountability. LNCS adheres to and enhances the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
Laurinburg Homework Center Alternative Charter School	Scotland	8-12	112	1999	Laurinburg Homework Center Alternative Charter School serves at risk and economically disadvantaged students in grades 8-12. The school uses intervention strategies and successful staffing techniques to provide learning for students whose needs have not been met in the traditional classroom.
Learning Center www.naturallygrownkids.org	Cherokee	K-7	95	1997	The Learning Center is a K-7th, expanding to 8th, school that is known for its innovative methods of teaching and promoting creative programs and approaches to learning. The multi-learning style approach to education uses the Four Blocks method for language arts, Houghton Mifflin math, and across-the-curriculum science, technology and social studies programs. Both Reading and Math Intervention Programs are offered during the school day and through after school programs. Our nationally recognized nutrition program offers many extras such as Small Bites, Super Snack and Garden-Based Learning. Other extras include the Elective Program offering Sting Instruments, Chorus, Geography Bowl, Chess and Math Club, Mini and Middle REAL, Art, Project Green and Clean.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Lincoln Charter School www.lincolncharter.org	Lincoln	K-12	728	1998	<p>A strong Core Knowledge curriculum compliments the skills-based North Carolina Standard Course of Study by providing carefully sequenced and challenging knowledge in which to ground skills instruction.</p> <p>This curriculum is integrated with and supported by Open Court Language Arts, Saxon Math, and Empowering Writers. It is partnered with character-trait education ensuring a solid, challenging, yet balanced educational environment</p> <p>An integrated physical education and sports program offers soccer, volleyball, cross country, basketball, cheerleading, baseball, softball, golf and more.</p> <p>Lincoln Charter School's academic program is enhanced by many extra-curricular activities both during and after school. Offerings include exploratory classes, Beta, Student Government, Yearbook, National Jr. Honor Society, Duke University TIP, Eagle Wings Tutoring Program, Art and Chess.</p>
Magellan Charter School www.magellancharter.org	Wake	4-8	334	1997	<p>The Magellan Charter School is home to more than 330 students. These students are served by a team of twenty-five exceptional teachers in class sizes of approximately 16 students. The mission of The Magellan Charter School is to provide an academically focused educational opportunity for highly motivated students in grades four through eight. The school provides an energizing educational journey filled with experiences that are interactive and experiential.</p>
Maureen Joy Charter School www.joycharter.org	Durham	K-8	350	1997	<p>Maureen Joy Charter School will be a school of honor and excellence. It will provide a strong academic program, tailored to support life-skills such as public speaking, writing, technology, and other skills associated with preparing our students for the future. Our supportive learning environment and extracurricular programs will aim to enrich our students' educational and personal experiences. The school will be a safe haven for all students and staff, with zero tolerance for inappropriate behavior. Our students' parents will be actively involved in the educational process and assist in their children's learning. Through participation in service learning projects, we will serve our community and reinforce our lifelong commitment to the future of Durham, North Carolina.</p> <p>Small class sizes promote individualized instruction and foster close student-teacher relationships. Parents are regarded as partners in the educational process and are expected to be active participants in their children's educational achievements. A strong student services program offers guidance to children and families, treating circumstances ranging from homework and study habits to building positive peer relationships.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Metrolina Regional Scholars' Academy http://metrolina.nc.schoolwebpages.com/education/school/school.php	Mecklenburg	K-8	193	2000	The Metrolina Regional Scholars' Academy is a nondiscriminatory, public charter school that provides a differentiated, exceptionally challenging education for children of extremely high academic or intellectual ability, ages 4 to 13. We meet the distinctive intellectual, social and emotional needs of our students by providing a supportive environment in which they can meet academic challenges and develop relationships with peers of all ages. We strive to prepare our graduates to become independent, productive, responsible and creative individuals capable of making original contributions to society.
Millennium Charter Academy www.mccacademy.com	Surry	K-7	334	2000	Millennium Charter Academy is an independent public school, serving grades kindergarten through eight, structured to move forward thoughtfully, purposefully and relatively quickly fueled by its leadership, staff, and parent body and guided by a well-defined mission statement. The reputation of the school is growing in the community as a place where children can be well educated. The growth alone in enrollment and the facility is a good indicator of MCA's potential. Millennium Charter Academy is distinctive for its small class size, innovative approaches, attention to moral character development, a strong sense of community, and the high quality of its teachers. As of January 2003, Millennium Charter Academy is recognized as an Official Core Knowledge School. This means that MCA has fully implemented the Core Knowledge Sequence into its curriculum, and that it is included and taught at each grade level whenever possible.
Mountain Community School http://www.tmc.school.org/	Henderson	K-8	162	1999	The Mountain Community School's instructional program reflects our philosophy that each child deserves the opportunity to pursue academic excellence. By having a curriculum strong in basic skills, rich with "core knowledge" and relevant to daily life, children will be inspired to succeed within their personal framework of aptitude and interest. Coherence of curriculum and integration of topics of study will be primary goals. Teachers will coordinate the curriculum across grade levels and use teaching methods which accommodate different learning styles. Additionally, we intend to give children the sense of ownership of their school and of belonging to a greater community, therefore instilling pride, self-reliance and responsibility, which are essential for developing self-directed, life-long learning skills.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Mountain Discovery Charter www.mountaindiscovery.org	Swain	K-8	135	2002	<p>Mountain Discovery Charter School teaches the NCSCOS through the use of an Expeditionary Learning model. Students are engaged in a hands-on course of study to build a solid foundation and life-long love of learning. The students are engaged in an experientially rich, hands-on course of study developed to maximize each child's potential to become a responsible citizen of the local and global communities.</p> <p>Parents, students, teachers, and staff are dedicated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fostering individual learning styles. ▪ Nurturing and facilitating our children's natural abilities to think creatively and critically. ▪ Promoting self-confidence through respect for self, others and the environment.
Neuse Charter School www.neusecharterschool.org	Johnston		NA		Fostering individual learning styles; nurturing and facilitating our children's natural abilities to think creatively and critically; and promoting self-confidence through respect for self, others and the environment.
New Century School www.newcenturyhs.org	Alamance	9-12	82	1998	A welcoming and innovative small school, New Century Charter High School is located in a restored mill beside the Haw River, where students participate in river stewardship projects, environmental science research, and canoeing classes. An excellent faculty, a focus on science and art, and a connected community are the school's essential qualities.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
New Dimensions School www.newdimensionschool.org/	Burke	K-5	87	2001	<p>The mission of The New Dimensions School is to create learning environments and opportunities that support students' self-directed learning and love of learning. Our mission is accomplished by using students' interests, talents, and abilities as the building blocks for academic learning and achievement.</p> <p>The New Dimensions School is built on four basic beliefs about student's learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All students have interests and talents that form the foundation for meaningful academic achievement. ▪ Students are most successful in school when teachers and parents work together to help students learn how to learn. ▪ Student's learning is most successful when caring communities contribute to strong school, home, and community relationships. ▪ Research findings on student's learning best inform school practices. <p>At New Dimensions, we foster a love of learning through our interest-based project approach. Our academic program offers students the opportunity to explore interests through meaningful inquiry. Our multi-age classrooms are the places where applied research and evidence-based practices inform innovation, excellence, efficiency, and alternative approaches to education in schools located right at home in the communities where children live, grow, and learn.</p>
Omuteko Gwamaziima www.omuteko.net/	Durham	K-8	91	1999	<p>The Nguzo Saba (seven principles of nation-building) and Ma'at (virtues of truth, justice, harmony and balance) form the philosophical foundation for the school.</p> <p>At Omuteko Gwamaziima, we believe the key to unlocking a child's learning potential is through improving their self esteem. We do this by teaching about the rich African and African American heritage they share. We also teach that although society often values only one way of looking at a situation, the world can be viewed through many, equally valid perspectives. The school allows children to see the world relative to their own heritage.</p>
Orange Charter School http://orangecharterschool.org/	Orange	K-8	187	1997	<p>Orange Charter School will nurture a community of academic and artistic distinction, as it enriches each student's cultural literacy. We believe that the combination of a small school setting and small class size makes for a uniquely individualized educational experience. In addition to delivering the content-rich Core Knowledge© curriculum, OCS also teaches the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
PACE Academy www.pace-academy.com	Orange	9-12	105	2004	<p>The mission of PACE Academy is to support the academic growth, emotional development, and professional readiness of all students. We believe community-based learning promotes sound decision making, encourages independent problem solving, and provides our future workforce with prerequisite skills necessary for securing and maintaining post-secondary employment.</p> <p>The educational program of PACE Academy will address the academic, social, and vocational needs of high school students. Students will meet graduation requirements following the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Instruction at PACE Academy will be guided by the principles of the self-paced learning model. Encouraging students to work at their own pace to accomplish academic goals will increase time for one on one assistance, opportunities for cooperative learning, and authentic assessment, while reducing competitiveness, minimizing social pressures, and limiting stress within the classroom. After careful examination of each student's educational history, review of cumulative records, and extensive academic performance and skills assessments, PACE Academy staff will guide students to create a personal education plan based upon the North Carolina Occupational Course of Study or Career Prep Course of Study for grades nine through twelve.</p>
Phoenix Academy www.pahp.com	Guilford	K-9	418	2000	<p>Mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve student learning • Increase learning opportunities for all students • Encourage the use of different and innovative methods; • Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site; • Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system; • Accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results and provide a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems
Piedmont Community School www.pccharter.org	Gaston	K-11	733	2000	<p>The Piedmont Community Charter School will provide an academically challenging curriculum. We will provide an environment enabling student development of character, morals, and responsibility. The school will foster a constant and continuous relationship between families, teachers, and the community. We believe in nurturing an educational atmosphere which leaves all participants with a life long love for learning that enables them to become positive contributors in their community. The School teaches the Core Knowledge Curriculum aligned with the NCSCOS. PCCS is proud to be an official Core Knowledge School and national visitation site.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Pine Lake Preparatory www.pinelakeprep.org	Iredell		NA		Principles: Prepare, Nurture, Lead and Engage; Standards-based elementary with essential skill-building in core subjects and the arts that accelerates toward rigorous college prep curriculum in middle and high; SCOS, Core Knowledge, AP/college, languages; Service based learning; Field experiences, travel & senior project preparation.
PreEminent Charter School www.preeminentcharterschool.org	Wake	K-8	527	2000	PreEminent Charter School, located in southeast Raleigh, realizes that a sense of purpose and community are the hallmarks of any successful school. We believe that children's dreams can be realized only if they receive a proper and well-rounded education; one that includes academic excellence, character education, and parental involvement.
Provisions Academy www.provisionsacademy.org	Lee	6-12	69	1999	<p>Provisions Academy is Lee County's sole Charter School. Concerned community members founded Provisions Academy in 1988 primarily to combat the county's high dropout rate. The goal was to create a small school environment that on the one hand would discourage truancy and reduce the dropout rate, and on the other, would provide individually tailored academic experiences that would stimulate students to stay the course and graduate from high school. In 2006-2007 all twelve scholars who entered the senior year, graduated. Local enrollment presently is 75 of whom 12 are in grade 12 and the expectation is that the 2008 graduation rate will equal that of 2007. Presently, the faculty has an international flavor, representing seven nationalities.</p> <p>Throughout its first Charter period the School has filled the local need of providing an alternative setting for students in grades 6-12 who have not succeeded in performing at their full potential in their previous schools, usually more regular public schools. Generally, these students have struggled with academic or behavioral issues, often with both. Provisions Academy has catered to such at-risk teenagers by offering the intimacy of a small school environment coupled with a small class size and specialized attention. In this way, Provisions Academy has filled the need for selected students to form relationships with teachers and peers, which will enable them to grow to be integrated members of a working community.</p> <p>Generally, faculty members believe that they work successfully with at-risk students as well as the high achievers and their positive impact has been witnessed in reduced rates of dropout, truancy and tardiness. Gain can be recognized also in improved attitude to work and reduced instances of anger or aggression, traits which are highly important but not quantified easily. Provisions Academy, therefore, has advanced the chances of its students becoming effective workers, responsible citizens and caring family members and so has filled the need that was upper most in the goals of its founders.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Quality Education Academy www.qeschools.org/	Forsyth	3-8	158	1997	<p>The mission of the Quality Education Institute (QEI) is to maximize the educational potential of children in small group setting by providing a stimulating educational environment that will develop each student's intellectual, cultural, emotional, physical and social potential to the fullest, and to effectively educate and utilize parents, communities, and community organizations in the education of children.</p> <p>Quality Education Schools is known for its holistic approach to the high academic achievement of its students and its strong emphasis on academic excellence, family involvement, cultural awareness and personal responsibility. Its motto is, "We will raise the quality of life of everyone we touch."</p> <p>At Quality Education Schools, we believe everyone has something to offer that will help this world be a better place. We invite the community and businesses to roll up their sleeves and get involved in the education of our community. With this passion, the students, parents, staff, Board of Directors, and community have united in this effort designed to benefit the entire society.</p>
Queen's Grant Community Schools www.queensgrantcommunityschool.org	Mecklenburg	K-8	729	2002	<p>Located just east of Charlotte, N.C. in the town of Mint Hill, you will find Queen's Grant Community Charter School. This school opened his doors in August of 2002 starting with grades K-5 and an enrollment of 643. Since its opening it has added an additional grade each year until it reached full capacity in 2005 with an enrollment of 720 students in grades Kindergarten - 8th. The school must hold an annual lottery each year to decide which new applicants will have an opportunity to attend the school the following year in August.</p> <p>Queen's Grant Community Charter School is highly regarded for its academic excellence, its strong emphasis on moral focus, which is apparent with the many ways it is always giving to people in need, fund-raising for various charities or disaster relief funds, and of course taking care of those families in need who are part of our own Queen's Grant family.</p>
Quest Academy www.questcharter.org	Wake	K-8	134	1999	<p>Quest Academy provides a quality, accelerated academic program for motivated students pursuing high intensity training outside the classroom. The student may be involved in athletic participation or performances in fine arts. This activity does not equate with religious or youth activities and should include professional instruction outside of the home.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Raleigh Charter High School www.raleighcharterhs.org	Wake	9-12	520	1999	<p>Raleigh Charter High School challenges college-bound students in a creative and supportive atmosphere to become knowledgeable, thoughtful, contributing citizens.</p> <p>We graduate citizens of the world by creating an interconnected learning environment that combines a demanding college-preparatory education with a curriculum that teaches and models citizenship skills. We involve our students in many resources of downtown Raleigh—the government, performing arts, social services and the international community. RCHS will be a place of opportunity for highly motivated students and actively involved parents.</p>
Research Triangle Charter Academy www.researchtrianglercharteracademy.org	Durham	K-8	711	1999	<p>Research Triangle Academy (RTCA) serves the families of Research Triangle Park and Durham, North Carolina. Research Triangle Park is one of the largest research parks in the world and just four miles from downtown Durham.</p> <p>In the fall of 2002, the academy moved to a new building on Ellis Road. The building was designed to provide a functional learning environment for students. The building has a full gymnasium, an art room, a music room and a library/media center. Playground and soccer fields let students “be kids” and participate in outdoor, organized activities. The building is carpeted, air conditioned and wired for computer access. The typical classroom has ample space for students’ desks, a teacher’s desk, workstations and casual areas for informal learning.</p> <p>Working in partnership with parents and community, the Research Triangle Charter Academy will offer a challenging, character-based education. By providing a strong curriculum and an atmosphere of high expectations, students can master basic skills and realize full academic potential in preparation for higher education and life-long learning.</p>
River Mill Academy www.rivermilljags.org/index.php	Alamance	K-12	515	1998	<p>The educational focus of the charter school is to set a new standard in North Carolina for kindergarten through grade 12 by motivating all students to achieve their full potential. The goal is to assist parents in their mission to develop exemplary young citizens with superior academic preparation, equipped with analytical thinking skills, a passion for learning, and a virtuous character all built upon a solid foundation of knowledge.</p> <p>Part of River Mill’s mission is to include challenging academic curriculum and a strong discipline and honor code.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Rocky Mount Prep. School www.rockymountprep.org	Nash	K-12	855	1997	Rocky Mount Preparatory is a K-12 public charter school with a core mission of college preparation. The school presently has 850 students. The beautiful physical plant is 92,000 sq. ft and cost 10.3 million dollars. An administrative building which houses a state of the art media center, two large classroom buildings (K-5 and 6-12), and a multipurpose gymnasium compliment the academic mission of the school. An Occupational Course of Study program is also available.
Roxboro Community School www.roxborocommunityschool.org	Person	7-10	216	2006	<p>It is the mission of Roxboro Community School (RCS) to achieve and maintain educational excellence by providing a small, inviting and nurturing school that focuses on grades seven through twelve. RCS will value and respect each member of our school family, thus enabling everyone to become effective productive citizens. RCS will provide an environment that will direct our students to focus on relevant and rigorous learning that will continue after high school.</p> <p>Roxboro Community School is built on the following core beliefs</p> <p>Children learn best in a nurturing, supportive environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A quality education teaches children to be critical thinkers, who are independent, life-long learners. ▪ An ideal curriculum that focuses on relevant learning that is creative and mindful of different learning styles and offers academic choice, while maintaining high academic standards. ▪ Active involvement in community service and civic projects is the best means of teaching students their responsibility as citizens and the importance of their role in shaping the future of their community.
Sallie B. Howard School www.salliehowardschool.com	Wilson	K-8	688	1997	The mission of the Howard School is to provide powerful, high quality learning experiences within a culture where children are happy, eager learners who work cooperatively and diligently to achieve the highest standard of excellence and personal satisfaction in all their endeavors; where children are being prepared academically, technologically, and socially to compete successfully in the 21st century global marketplace; where children develop a lifelong love of learning in a climate that celebrates cultural diversity and values each student's unique combination of gifts and intelligences; where dedicated teachers, staff, and administrators with high standards and high expectations model behavior and attitudes expected of educated individuals; and where a community of parents, business and community members have significant decision-making involvement in shaping school policy and engineering the success of high quality public education.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Sandhills Theatre Arts Renaissance School (STARS) www.sandhillsrenaissance.com/	Moore	K-8	242	1999	<p>Why we are here: .</p> <p>To provide a unique and truly well-rounded, arts-infused education for students in Moore County and surrounding areas, particularly those with a serious interest in one or more artistic disciplines</p> <p>To help our students appreciate the beauty of life through the study of the arts, and to understand that study as essential to their developing personalities and to the survival of a literate and humane culture</p> <p>To reach all students using the arts as valuable tools, and to help them take ownership of their own education by tapping into Gardner's multiple intelligences in the classroom</p> <p>To utilize various ways of teaching for children with diverse backgrounds and learning styles</p> <p>To make the arts come alive for all our students, and to give back to the community in which they live through public exhibitions and performances</p>
Socrates Academy www.socratesacademy.us	Mecklenburg	K-2	144	2005	<p>The mission of the Socrates Academy is to work in partnership with parents and community to encourage our students to reach their full potential by developing critical, analytical thinking skills and becoming self-confident in a high achievement, multicultural, disciplined environment. Particular emphasis will be placed on developing proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics both in English and Greek through the use of the Socratic Method.</p> <p>The Academy will add a grade each year so that by the year 2009 the Academy will be serving Grades K-5.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
SPARC Academy www.sparcademy.org	Wake	K-8	138	1998	<p>SPARC Academy was founded on the vision of Raleigh Educator, Jackie Mburu. SPARC Academy is an offshoot of Mrs. Mburu's summer program SPARC (Summer Program of Academics and Recreation for Children). Parents of children participating in this summer program were impressed by the academic improvement and supported the creation of a charter school.</p> <p>After applying in August 1997, the State Board of Education approved SPARC Academy's application for its charter school March 5, 1998. The school opened its doors in September 1998. Presently, SPARC Academy is educating children in grades Pre-K through 8.</p> <p>SPARC's vision is to promote excellence in student achievement, teacher performance, parent participation and community involvement--important criteria in "preparing our children to assume future roles as global citizens in a technologically sophisticated world." SPARC's goal is that each student reaches or exceeds grade level by the end of the year.</p> <p>SPARC's approach to promoting excellence in student achievement is based on the belief that each child has a unique set of gifts and talents that, when respected and properly nurtured, will enable optimal development, strong academic performance and competent social adjustment. Academic skills and character building are inseparable</p>
Sterling Montessori Academy www.sterlingmontessori.org	Wake	K-8	489	1997	<p>Sterling Montessori Academy and Charter School strives to serve the educational needs of children and their families by providing a safe, healthy learning environment where, in keeping with the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, children can progress at their own rate and learn to respect themselves, others, and their environment.</p> <p>Our school is comprised of two separate educational entities. The Academy serves children ages 3 - 5, and is a tuition based program. The Charter School serves children ages 6 - 14, which includes Kindergarten through 8th grade. Each institution has individualized admissions procedures.</p> <p>Sterling Montessori Academy & Charter School uses the philosophy, method and didactic material of Dr. Maria Montessori (1870 - 1952). Montessori education, based on children's developmental needs for freedom within limits, mandates a carefully prepared environment. The prepared environment guarantees exposure to materials and experiences that develop intelligence as well as physical and psychological abilities. The materials are self-correcting, interesting to children, and developmentally appropriate.</p>
Success Institute	Iredell	K-8	96	2000	<p>The mission of Success Institute is to provide a holistic and challenging educational environment that enhances both students and their families. The Institute uses the MicroSociety Program to teach students financial literacy.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Sugar Creek Charter School www.thesugarcreek.org	Mecklenburg	K-8	568	1999	Sugar Creek Charter School is committed to providing an environment that's conducive to learning for all students that sets high expectations for student behavior and academic achievement. Sugar Creek Charter School is a uniform school and students are required to adhere to a strict uniform policy. The School's Code of Conduct has been designed to guide the efforts of teachers and staff in creating a safe, orderly environment and to reinforce the primary mission of the school: demanding academic learning. The Code, which states clearly all school-wide rules governing student behavior as well as the consequences for breaking the rules, serves as a contract among parents, students, and staff. Paramount to our mission of providing students with the skills necessary to reason, communicate, and live with dignity in our society is the character development of our students. Character education lessons are integrated daily in to the curriculum for K-5 students. Each lesson is based on a monthly school-wide character virtue. Middle school students attend a daily Life Skills class that focus on the same school-wide character virtues and social skills training.
Summit Charter School www.summitschool.org	Jackson	K-8	171	1997	Summit Charter School educates children from kindergarten through eighth grade. The school's philosophy is based on Ernest Boyer's The Basic School and focuses on School as Community, Climate for Learning, a Coherent Curriculum and Character Education. We are located in the western most part of North Carolina.
Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy www.tjca.org	Rutherford	6-12	461	1999	Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy, TJCA, is a public, charter school, offering a college-preparatory education to students in grades six through twelve. TJCA is open to North Carolina students. There is NO TUITION. Students from Rutherford, Cleveland, Polk, and McDowell Counties currently attend TJCA. TJCA has plans to add a K-5 Core Knowledge Program to begin in the 2007/08 school year.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Tiller School www.tillerschool.org	Carteret	K-8	201	1998	<p>The Tiller Charter School in Carteret County, North Carolina, is an elementary school with grades K-5 which uses creative teaching to encourage academic excellence and life long learning.</p> <p>The Tiller Charter School is dedicated to establishing an educational setting where self-motivated, lifelong learners develop. We strive to do this in an environment that provides the security for students to learn without fear of failure and where dignity, self-discipline and responsibility are valued.</p> <p>Our charter school program emphasizes a low student to teacher ratio of 16 to 1; a challenging academic program including communication skills, mathematics, science, history, geography and technology. Enrichment through the arts is also emphasized, as well as a social curriculum emphasizing the values of caring, respect, trustworthiness, fairness and citizenship.</p> <p>We are a group of diverse families who have chosen to be part of a shared educational community called the Tiller School. Our goal is for children, parents and teachers to become shared owners of a school in which we all feel involved, at home, and have appropriate control. Our children spend a significant portion of their lives here. Through modeling and teaching social responsibility, we strive to provide a family atmosphere that is "safe," safe to make mistakes, safe to try out new ideas, and safe for disagreement with one another.</p>
Torchlight Academy www.torchlightacademy.org/	Wake	K-5	305	1999	<p>Torchlight Academy helps students become a benefit to themselves, their families, and their communities. We help each child to discover, develop, and nurture the innate gifts and talents they have. Torchlight Academy delivers a strong education by providing reading, writing, arithmetic, respect, black history, character development and strong bond between home and school.</p>
Two Rivers Community School www.tworiverscommunityschool.net	Watauga	K-8	129	2005	<p>Two Rivers Community School has a comprehensive K-8 educational design. Our approach combines rigorous academic content and real world projects -- learning expeditions -- with active teaching and community service. Two Rivers Community School is an Expeditionary Learning School (ELS). ELS focuses on teaching in an engaging way. Faculty members receive intensive professional development in curriculum, teaching practices, and building a strong school culture.</p>

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Union Academy www.unionacademy.net	Union	K-10	793	2000	Union Academy is a pathway by which children mature into confident young adults who are highly prepared and motivated to make positive contributions to their local and global communities. As a school of challenge, character, and community, Union Academy places great value on: high standards and expectations for academic achievement and continuing education; high standards and expectations for character and personal integrity; school as a community of students, teachers, families, and friends; commitment of service to others. Union Academy is accredited by SACS and NAIS for grades K-12.
Vance Charter School www.vancecharter.org	Vance	K-8	405	1999	Our mission is to teach and inspire each child to become an independent thinker and a contributing citizen with a life-long desire to learn. Each child will be given a collectively supportive opportunity to reach his or her greatest potential with small class sizes, a safe and nurturing environment, active parental involvement and a strong curriculum that is enriched with service learning and the Core Knowledge Sequence.
Voyager Academy www.voyageracademy.net	Durham		NA		The mission of Voyager Academy is to provide students in grades four through eight an academically challenging environment in which motivated learners, working in a small, nurturing setting may realize their potential through experiential and traditional educational opportunities. The school's belief is that students, working with dedicated faculty and families, will excel in their academic goals and real world pursuits.
Washington Montessori www.wmpcs.org/	Beaufort	K-8	248	2000	Washington Montessori is committed to the development of the whole child, enabling him to draw upon all his gifts and reach his greatest potential. We encourage personal responsibility both socially and academically. Each child is allowed freedom of choice and is offered guidance in setting individual goals. Our mission is to inspire academic excellence; to nurture curiosity, creativity, and imagination, and to do so within an environment rich with warmth, kindness and respect. As a Montessori school, the classrooms are always busy with children purposefully moving about the room working and learning. Early lessons are taught with hands-on materials addressing the child's developmental need for information to be presented in a concrete manner. Later, as the students become older the materials follow their intellectual development and become more abstract. Lessons are given in small groups thus allowing the teacher to present the information at the skill level of the students and to ascertain each child's comprehension of the material presented.

Charter Name School Website	County	06-07 Gr Span	Enrollment	Year Open	Brief School Description/Philosophy
Wilmington Preparatory Academy www.wilmingtonace.org/	New Hanover		NA		<p>Wilmington Preparatory Academy's programs will train children for high school, college, and life beyond.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on mastery of Reading, Writing, & Math ▪ Cultural literacy through the CORE KNOWLEDGE sequence ▪ Global Geography and History classes daily for all students, K – 8 ▪ Fine Arts Training: K-8 Drawing/Sketching, Mandatory musical training ▪ Longer school day and school year ▪ Optional after-school program until 6:00 p.m. ▪ Character education program that teaches personal responsibility. <p>Wilmington Prep will open as a K - 4th grade school in August 2007, adding a grade each year to eventually become a K - 8 Academy. The school will use Comer strategies to create a welcoming environment for parents and will feature a character education program that stresses personal responsibility.</p>
Woods Charter School www.woodscharter.org/	Chatham	1-12	284	1998	<p>Our philosophy is to instill a strong sense of personal responsibility and character that prepares students for graduation, college and life. Our goal is to enable all students to maximize their own potential through a rigorous academic program. Part of our program is teaching each student based on individual student abilities.</p> <p>Our philosophy is a unique blend of principles built on the three programs that make up the Woods curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NC Standard Course of Study (Grades 1-12) ▪ Core Knowledge Program (Grades 1-8) ▪ Advanced Placement Program (Grades 9-12)

APPENDIX F

Selected Characteristics of Charter Schools

Diversity of Students

Year	Charter or LEA	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
2001-02	Charter %	1%	1%	2%	40%	56%
	LEA %	1.5%	1.9%	5.6%	31%	60%
2002-03	Charter %	1.5%	1%	2.2%	37.7%	57.5%
	LEA %	1.5%	1.9%	2%	31.2%	59.4%
2003-04	Charter %	1.5%	1.5%	3%	36%	58%
	LEA %	1.4%	2%	6.6%	31%	58%
2004-05	Charter %	1.4%	1.5%	3.2%	35.7%	58.2%
	LEA %	1.5%	2%	2%	31.3%	57.5%
2005-06	Charter %	1.4%	1.5%	3.5%	34.6%	59%
	LEA %	1.4%	2%	8.6%	31%	56%

Exceptional Student Population

Year	Charter School EC Student %	LEA EC Student %
2001-02	13.4%	14.3%
2002-03	13.8%	14.3%
2003-04	13.1%	14.3%
2004-05	13.2%	14%
2005-06	12.3%	13.8%

APPENDIX G

Report from PUBLIC IMPACT

“WORKING THE CURVE” FOR NORTH CAROLINA’S CHARTER SCHOOLS

Bryan Hassel, Ph.D.

Dana Brinson, M.A.

of

Public Impact

*Presented to the North Carolina Blue Ribbon
Commission on Charter Schools*

December 2007

“WORKING THE CURVE” FOR NORTH CAROLINA’S CHARTER SCHOOLS

Report Submitted by Public Impact to the
N.C. Blue Ribbon Commission on Charter Schools
December 2007

North Carolina opened its first charter schools in 1997 and has opened 139 schools since. With a cap of 100 charter schools operating in the state at any given time, North Carolina has effectively reached its cap several times in recent years, applications to open new charter schools have dwindled, and many counties in the state have yet to open a single charter school. Of the nearly 100 schools now open, many are spectacular successes, performing in the top 10% the state’s public schools. Far too many, however, fail to outperform their own poor-performing district counterparts, and have not kept the promise of providing an innovative and effective program in which North Carolina’s students can achieve their full potential. When North Carolina first considered charter schools, there was no evidence about performance, only speculation on both sides. Now that we have a decade of charter school efforts in the state, it is possible to use data and experiences to examine the effects of charter schools on students and the state.

Ten years into the charter school program, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Charter Schools was convened and charged by Chairman Howard Lee of the North Carolina State Board of Education to:

- 1) Evaluate where the state is with charter performance including current and past legislation, current board policies, etc. that have affected charter school functioning;
- 2) Determine where the charter sector needs to improve and develop goals for the future;
- 3) Identify how current legislation can enable achievement of these goals or if legislation needs to be adjusted to allow the state’s charter school program to improve; and
- 4) Assess current board policies to determine if they need to be adjusted or if new ones are necessary

This report from Public Impact is designed to assist the Commission in its efforts by:

- Presenting an evaluation of how well the current charter school program in North Carolina has met each of the six legislative purposes of chartering
- Identifying areas for improvement across every element of the charter school system
- Providing options for policy, legislative, or leader action changes

This report is based on examination of data on charter schools in North Carolina, interviews with key stakeholders in the state, and research on the experiences of several national charter organizations and the best charter school systems in the country.

EVALUATION

Charter school legislation in North Carolina listed six official purposes of the charter school program; progress on these goals is outlined below:

1. Improve Student Learning

Charter schools' success in improving student learning has varied widely from school to school.

Each year, North Carolina calculates a "Performance Composite" for each public school, including charter schools. The Performance Composite is a measure of the percentage of tests taken at a school that were passed by students. As a result, 100 is the maximum Performance Composite.

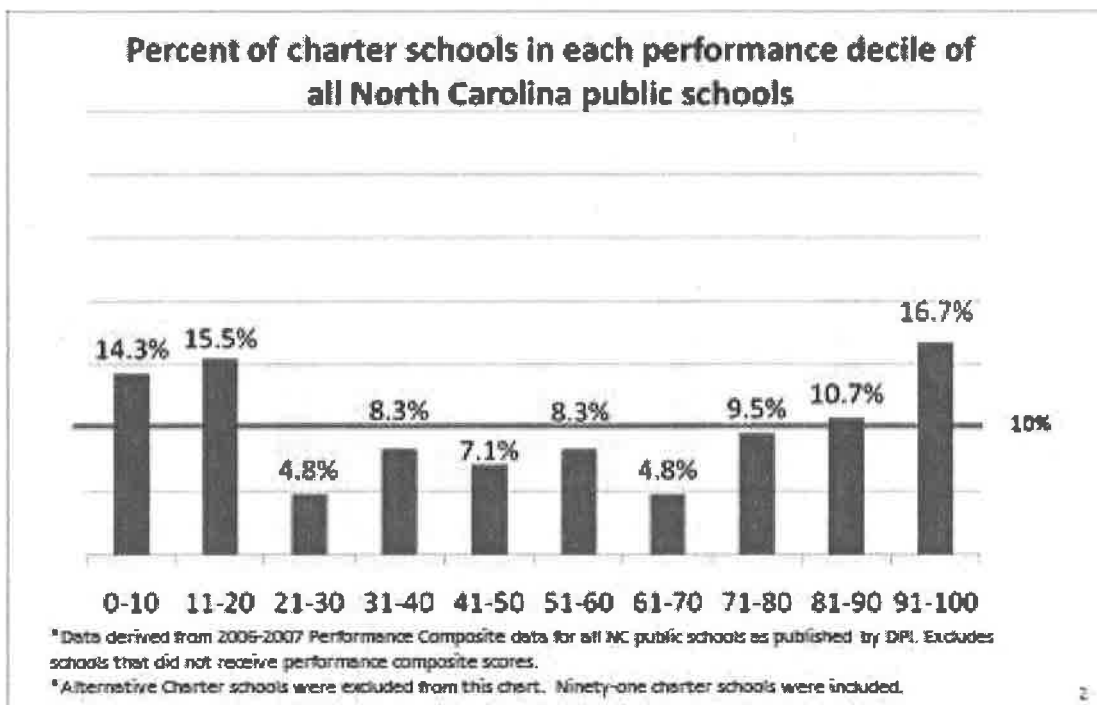
Examining the overall average charter school Performance Composite does not shed much light on the question of how well the state's charter schools are performing. As in other states, there is great variation in performance across charter schools (and other public schools). More illuminating is to examine the distribution of charter schools to see how many are at the top, middle, and bottom of the performance range for public schools as a group.

To conduct that analysis, we ranked all of NC's public schools in order of Performance Composite and divided them into ten equal-sized groups, called "deciles." We determined what Performance Composite was needed to place a school into each of the

ten deciles. Then, we determined what percentage of charter schools fell into each of the deciles. If charter school performance was distributed equally to that of all public schools, we would expect to see exactly 10% of charter schools in each decile. If a larger percentage of charter schools fell into a decile, that means charter schools were over-represented in that particular decile.

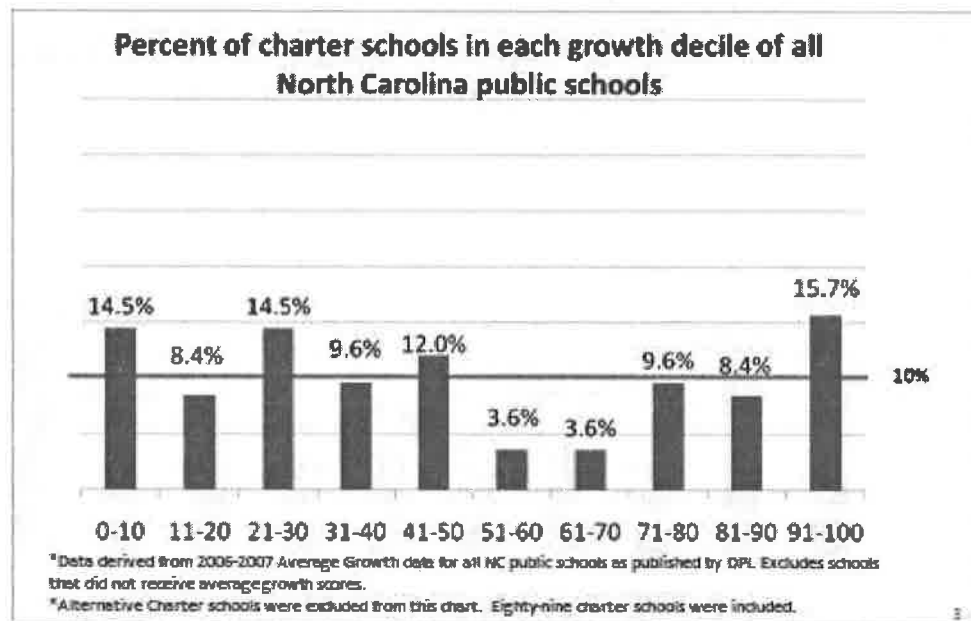
As the graph below shows, over 27% of North Carolina's non-alternative charter schools performed in the top two deciles for public school performance in 2006-2007. At the same time, nearly 30% of North Carolina's non-alternative charter schools performed in the bottom two deciles. That is, charter schools are over-represented among the best- and worst-performing schools in the state. Overall, 50% of North Carolina's charter schools scored at or below median performance in 2006-07, and 50% performed above the median.

2006-07 NC Charter Performance



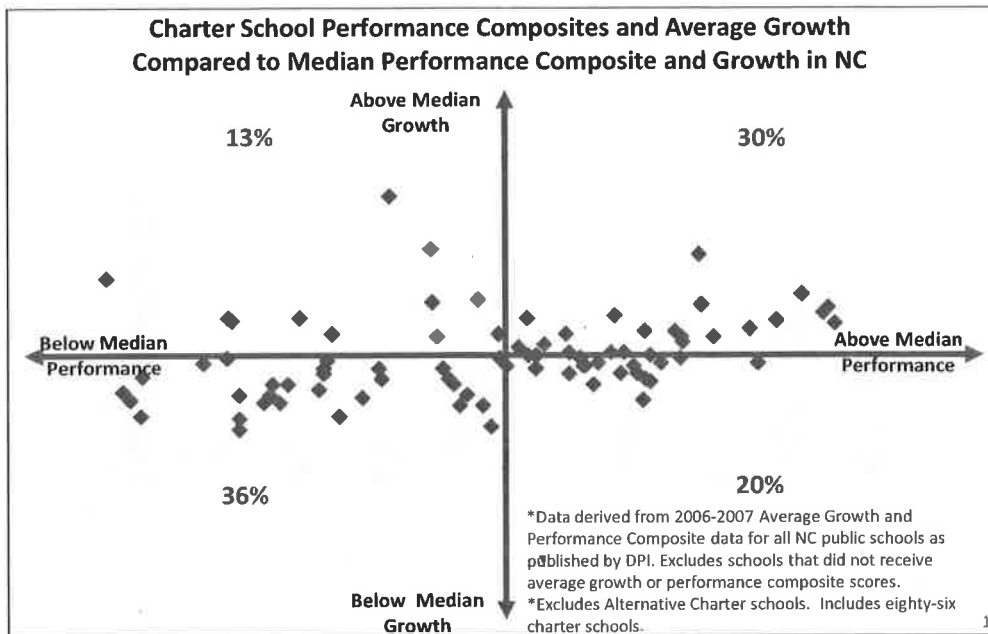
Some have argued that poor academic achievement of some charter schools is a result of the types of student populations they serve, including high-poverty, urban communities. These advocates have argued that a growth model—tracking individual students’ test score gains over time—would better demonstrate that schools are improving individual student performance. The data from North Carolina’s growth analysis for the 2006-07 school year, however, do not bear this out. In addition to determining each school’s Performance Composite, North Carolina also calculates each school’s “average growth” over the course of each academic year – a measure of how much children in the school progressed on the state’s tests. The graph below shows that 59% of charter schools grew at a rate that was at or below the median of average growth for the state. Over 15% of charter schools, however, were in the state’s top decile for growth. As with performance, charter schools are over-represented at both the upper and lower ends of the range.

2006-07 NC Charter Growth



Of even more concern, however, is the fact that nearly three quarters of schools below the median Performance Composite (72%) were also below the median for growth in 2006-07, as the scatter plot below demonstrates. In other words, most charter schools that were behind the state’s norms in performance lost relative ground in 2006-07.

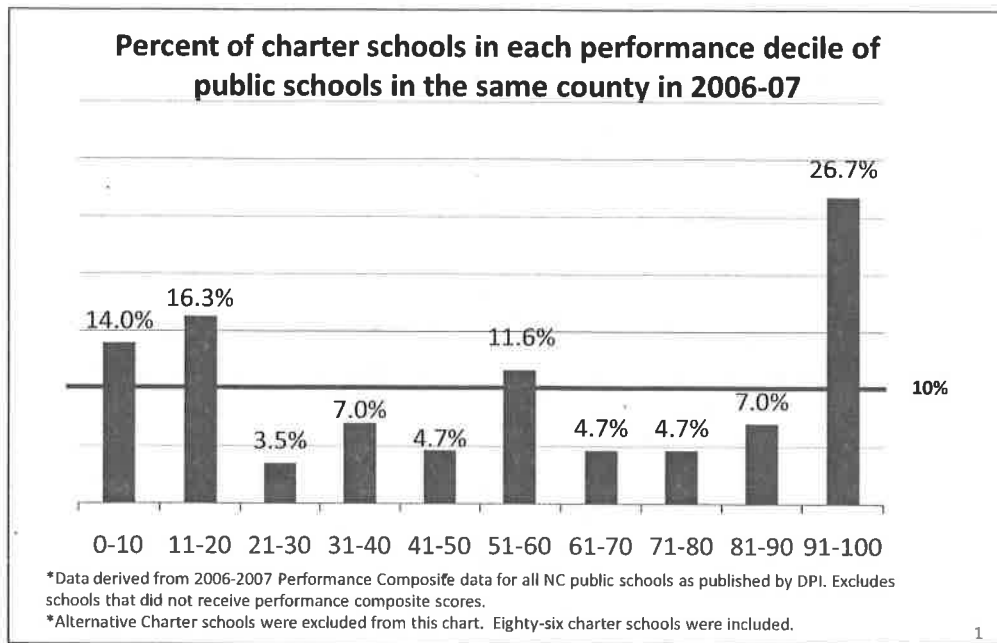
2006-07 NC Charter Performance and Growth



We were not able to analyze individual student-level growth data for this report. Other researchers, however, have done so. The most comprehensive study, a 2006 report by Robert Bifulco and Helen Ladd from Duke University, found that students [on average] “make considerably smaller achievement gains in charter schools than they would have in public schools.”¹ This finding is based on a subset of students for whom the researchers were able to observe growth rates in both charter and non-charter public schools.

When comparing charter schools to their district-led counterparts within the same county, however, nearly 27% of charter schools perform in the top decile of public schools. A similar proportion, roughly 30%, of charter schools perform in the bottom two deciles as we saw above in the statewide data, and about 55% of charter schools perform at or above the mean (versus 50% on statewide data). Charter school performance, then, fares more favorably when assessed on a local basis.

Charters in Their Home Counties



2. *Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as at risk of academic failure or academically gifted.*

North Carolina's charter schools provide greater school choice for those students in greatest need of academic support whether because of socioeconomic disadvantage, special education need, or gifted status.

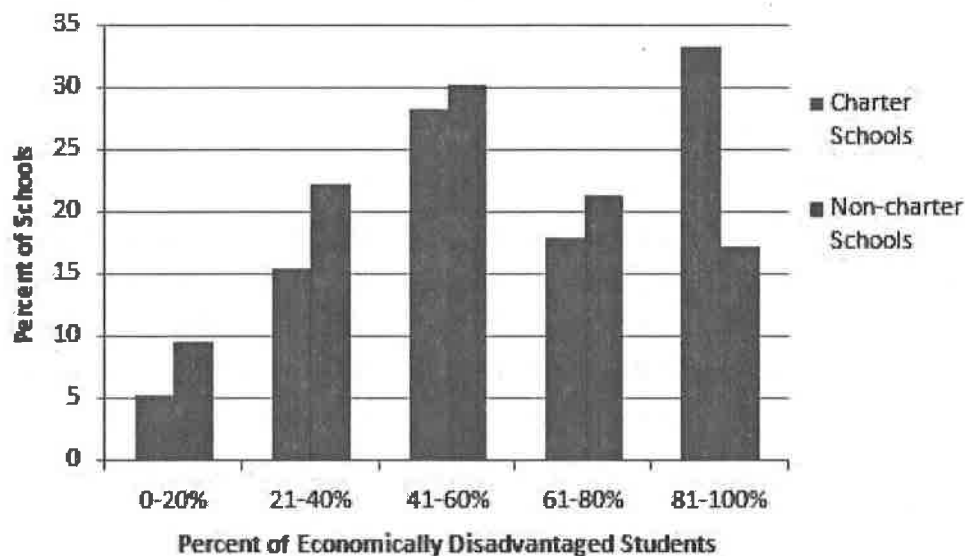
Jack Moyer, Director of the Office of Charter Schools, made a statement before the Commission on October 17, 2007 that 60% of North Carolina's charter schools identified themselves in their initial applications as specifically seeking to educate "at-risk" students, a wide-ranging term which can include students with behavioral and emotional disabilities, special education needs, low socioeconomic status, or other risk indicators for academic failure.

One commonly-used measure of the degree to which schools are serving at risk students is the percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunches. Since students must come from low-income families to be eligible, participation in this program is thought to be an indicator of a wide range of disadvantages that may

place students “at risk” in schools. Charter schools present a challenge in this regard because many of them do not participate in the free and reduced price lunch program because they regard the administrative burden of doing so as too great to justify the small amount of funding they would receive. As a result, data on free and reduced price lunch eligibility are available for only 39 of the 93 charter schools in 2006-07.

As the chart below indicates, nearly four out of five North Carolina charter schools that did submit student economic data serve student populations in which more than 40% of the students are economically disadvantaged. Further, one third of charter schools serve a student population with more than 80% economically disadvantaged students—nearly twice the percentage of non-charter schools serving this population.² This indicates that a large percentage of charter schools serve a high concentration of economically disadvantaged students.

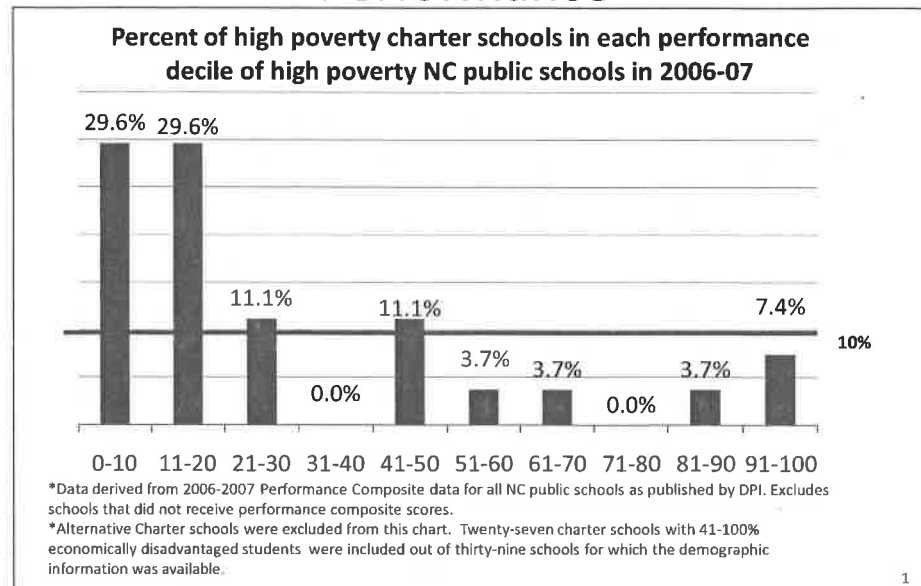
Percent of Disadvantaged Students Charter vs. Non-charter schools



Although we only have economic data on 39 of the 93 charter schools operating in the state during the 2006-07 school year, the available data allow us to compare those high-poverty charter schools (schools with more than 40% economically disadvantaged students) to district schools serving a similar population. As the chart below demonstrates, of the charter schools for which we have economic data, nearly 60%

perform in the bottom two performance deciles and 82% performed below the median of all *high-poverty* schools in the state. That is, these data suggest that most charter schools are not serving high-poverty students as well—academically—as their district counterparts.

High Poverty Charter School Performance



In addition to providing school options to economically disadvantaged students, seven alternative charter schools in the state serve those students at very high risk of academic failure—those with histories of abuse and emotional or behavioral difficulties. For example, Grandfather Academy in Banner Elk, Crossnore Academy, in Crossnore and Kennedy Charter in Charlotte provide residential special education for students in a therapeutic academic environment that serves the whole child, aiming to increase these students' chances of academic success.³

NC's charter legislation also intended to create learning opportunities for academically gifted students. Several NC charter schools appear to provide such opportunities by offering a rigorous and college-preparatory academic program for all students. Some require students to meet eligibility tests to ensure students are prepared for their challenging programs. For example:

- The Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy is explicitly designed to serve “highly gifted” students.
- Raleigh Charter High School requires all students to be prepared for Algebra I in ninth grade and the recommendation of a prior math teacher.⁴
- Quest Academy provides a challenging academic environment for students who also have significant extracurricular involvement and requires an evaluation by a prior teacher for academic promise and emotional maturity.⁵
- The Magellan Charter School focuses on students who have mastered material at or above grade level and are motivated to learn and explore an academic program further.⁶

3. *Encourage use of different and innovative methods*

Public Impact did not conduct a thorough evaluation of individual schools, their programs, or teaching methods for this report and, therefore, cannot provide a fair assessment of innovation in North Carolina’s charter classrooms. A prior evaluation by Noblit and Corbett (2001), conducted only four years into the charter program, found that charter schools in North Carolina were not significantly more innovative in their instructional practices than their district counterparts.⁷ Rather, the value charter schools added came from smaller schools and classes as well as increased parental involvement. Noblit and Corbett noted:

- Smaller schools: staff, parents, and supporters were dedicated to a more personalized education than generally found in district schools. Small schools, supporters believed, fostered closer relationships among teachers and students and more individualized instructional approaches.
- Smaller classes: charter classes in North Carolina are generally smaller than those in district schools. Staff, parents and students believed benefits of this included an improved sense of belonging among the students and a decreased likelihood of struggling students going unnoticed.
- Parental involvement: half or more charter directors stated that over three quarters of their students’ parents “played a substantial role in their children’s education.”⁸

While we have not evaluated the use of innovative methods used in charter schools today, charters do continue to provide more intimate educational environments for their students.

Charter schools do experience many freedoms when developing and executing their programs, and this latitude can allow the use of different—though not necessarily innovative—methods when necessary. The principal of Maureen Joy Charter School, Dr. Les Stein, noted in an interview that his school was going to tackle poor math performance among his students—80% of whom qualify for free or reduced-price lunch—by providing two math classes per day.⁹ Dr. Stein noted that teachers supported this decision, and that they would begin implementation at the start of the new school year. The degree to which charter schools are using this kind of operational flexibility to develop different and innovative programs, however, would need to be examined in a more intensive research project.

4. *Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site*

The sheer existence of charter schools in North Carolina creates new professional opportunities for teachers. In addition, because teachers can obtain a leave of absence from their LEAs and continue to participate in the state retirement and health insurance programs, teachers can explore professional opportunities at public charter schools with little risk. We did not evaluate individual teacher experiences, however, and can only note that because of the inherent flexibilities available in a small school free of district requirements, teacher professional opportunities can be significantly expanded in a charter school setting.

5. *Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system*

Charter schools have lived up to the legislative purpose of creating expanded choices for parents and students. In the first month of the 2007-08 school year, average daily attendance in North Carolina's charter schools was 32,398 pupils, approximately 2% of the state's total public school enrollment.¹⁰

These opportunities, however, are not evenly spread across the state. Approximately half of North Carolina's counties have a charter school, with the other half having no charter schools. Charter schools are disproportionally serving the urban centers of North Carolina—with Wake (13), Mecklenburg (11), and Durham (8) counties serving as home

to a third of the state's charter schools.¹¹ Even in counties that already have a large number of charter schools, there is demand for more on the part of parents and, in at least one case, local policymakers. In a recent letter to Representative Weiss and Senator Stevens, Wake County Board of Commissioners supported lifting the charter school cap to help Wake County deal with its population explosion and the resultant strains it has produced on the public school system.¹² Lifting the cap would further expand educational choices available within the public school system.

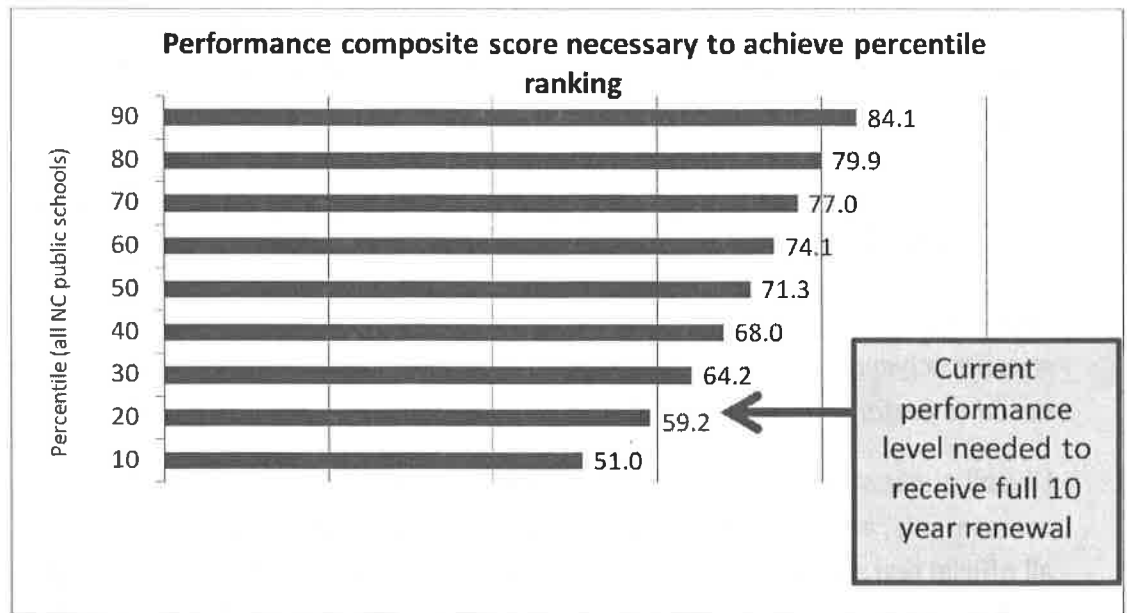
6. *Hold the schools established under this Part accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.*

Like all public schools, NC's charter schools must administer the state's official assessments, and charter schools' test results are publicly reported each year along with all official test score data. The state's website makes it possible for citizens to view performance data in one report that covers all charter schools. In addition, charter schools are subject to all of the same accountability remedies that apply to other public schools in the state. For example, Low Performing charter schools receive assistance in the same manner as all Low Performing non-charter public schools. Charter schools that fail to make AYP for several years are subject to the same remedies under No Child Left Behind as other public schools.

One form of accountability that is charter-specific is the ability of the state to close charter schools that do not meet performance expectations, or to refuse to renew their charters at the end of their terms. To date, however, the State Board of Education has never closed a charter school for poor academic performance. To be sure, schools have closed because of a lack of financial viability, which may have resulted from decreased demand for a poor-performing school, but the state has never proactively closed a school because it was failing to produce significant results with its students.

One factor that influences the likelihood that schools will be closed for academic performance is the state's minimum requirement for charter renewal. Currently, a Performance Composite of 60 is required for a ten-year charter renewal. A Performance Composite of 60, however, would place a school at the 20th percentile of public school

performance in North Carolina.



This means that a charter school can meet the state’s academic requirements for renewal even if its performance lags behind that of 80% of the state’s public schools. In this context, non-renewals for academic reasons are unlikely. In addition, as noted above, many charter schools below this threshold remain open.

In addition to holding charter schools accountable, the charter law’s intent is to “provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.” Overall, our research suggests that charter schools operate with considerable freedom from conventional school regulations. One exception is federal law and regulation, which of course is not waived by state law. As a result, while the state’s charter law intends to allow charter schools to fill a fraction of their teaching positions with non-certified teachers, No Child Left Behind’s “highly qualified teacher” provision effectively requires charter schools to meet general state requirements for teacher licensure.

Another exception to charter schools’ freedom is the reporting burden imposed on them. The state requires a large number of reports from public schools and local education agencies (LEAs) and, because charters are often considered their own LEAs, they may have an even greater administrative responsibility than district schools. The Office of Charter Schools under Jack Moyer’s guidance has developed the “Charter Mailbox” as an attempt to clarify this situation, but there still seems to be some uncertainty among schools leaders as to exactly what reporting requirements they face.

As a result, the extent to which charter legislation has shifted schools from rule-based to performance-based systems appears partial.

IMPROVING THE SYSTEM: GOALS FOR THE FUTURE AND HOW TO GET THERE

CAPS ON CHARTER SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina has chosen this time as a period of reassessment and renewal for the charter school program in the state. This reflection was, arguably, a result of meeting the charter school cap and needing some guidance on the direction forward. Thus, the cap of 100 charter schools in North Carolina has served a purpose of providing an opportunity for evaluation and reflection.

Opponents of blunt caps on charter schools, however, argue that such caps rarely serve as good policy tools. In the example of North Carolina, the cap has not ensured the opening of only high-performing, quality charters, it has not resulted in the closing of academically poor performing schools, and it has not ensured an even distribution of charter school choice throughout the state. The cap has made North Carolina less appealing to proven national programs, hindered the development of local applications, and limited school choice to roughly half the counties in North Carolina.

As a result, policymakers in North Carolina and elsewhere are considering ways of lifting or altering their caps on charter schools. In New York, for example, the legislature recently doubled the state's cap from 100 to 200. In Ohio, policymakers modified a moratorium on new charter schools to allow for replication of successful charter schools.¹³

In place of a blunt cap of 100, the state should consider allowing more charter schools to open, while strengthening the authorization, oversight, and support processes to improve the quality of all charter schools.

One option would simply be to remove the cap on charters altogether and rely on authorization and school closure to advance quality. Alternately, several "smart cap" options exist including¹⁴:

- Allowing high-performing charter schools operating in the state to replicate without the replication counting toward the cap
- Exempting high-performing charters themselves from counting toward the cap
- Exempting schools preliminarily approved by districts from the cap

- Allowing for need-oriented exceptions to the cap (exceptions could include communities with extremely low district-school performance, overcrowding, high poverty rates, etc.)
- Exempting the first charter school in a county currently without one from the cap

In addition to the “smart cap” options above, which may allow for targeted charter growth among high-quality schools and in communities that need them the most, the state should also consider allowing room for reasonable growth of charter schools that do not fall into these specific “smart cap” exemptions. All of today’s “proven” charter schools were once brand new, stand-alone charters. Arguably, therefore, the state should leave the door open for additional new schools to open, even as it focuses growth on high-performing models and high-need areas.

A blended option that includes some or all of the “smart caps” above as well as an annual limit of other new charters (e.g., 10 per year) could achieve balance between proven programs and promising new ones.

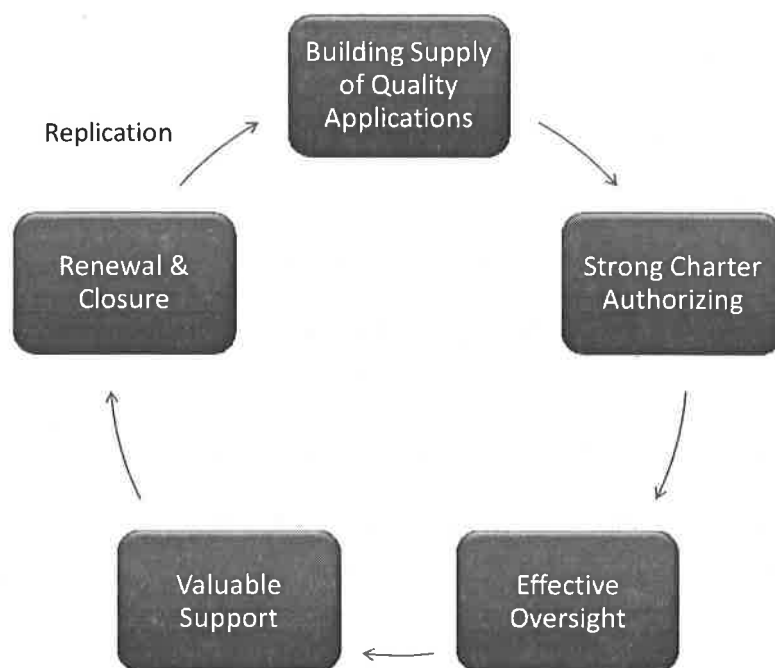
One factor to consider in the context of lifting the cap is the capacity of DPI’s Office of Charter Schools and other DPI offices to handle the increased demands associated with having more charter schools. It is likely that the Office would require additional staff if the number of charter schools increased markedly, though a slow, steady increase could probably be absorbed. Several policy options outlined below, however, would help minimize the need to increase the size of the Office, even as the number of charter schools increased. Specifically:

- Improving the authorizing “screen” would result in fewer problem schools, which now consume a disproportionate amount of DPI’s time;
- Increasing the capacity of an outside nonprofit organization to provide assistance to charter schools, including struggling charter schools, would decrease the amount of effort DPI needs to expend, on average, in supporting charter schools.
- Acting more swiftly and decisively when schools chronically fail to meet expectations would further decrease the number of problem schools, again freeing up DPI time.

POLICY OPTIONS TO COMPLEMENT A CHANGE IN THE CAP

If North Carolina elects to charter more schools, it also needs to consider a range of policy changes that will increase the likelihood that the next decade of charter schooling produces better results for children. These changes fall into five categories, displayed in the diagram below. The following sections of this report discuss each category in detail.

Elements of a Successful State Charter System



BUILDING THE SUPPLY OF QUALITY APPLICATIONS

The first element in a strong charter school program is the development of a strong applicant pool. As described below, another critical component is how well the State Board of Education decides which charters to approve. The State Board, however, can only assess those applications it receives. If there is not a strong pipeline of high-quality applicants for charters, altering the cap will have little power to extend high-quality charter school options to more children. In addition, without a direct effort to cultivate supply, there is no way for the state to employ the charter mechanism to meet its highest priorities, such as extending options to certain communities that currently lack high-quality choices, reaching groups of children who are not well-served, or experimenting with new approaches that could then be replicated, if successful, in other schools.

States and other authorizers sometimes experience discomfort when thinking about actively encouraging applicants to pursue charters. An alternative to a direct state role in building

supply is to encourage the development of a strong nonprofit charter school support organization that can play this role. This option is discussed below under Valuable Support.

Whether it is the state itself or an outside nonprofit playing the supply-building role, several activities can help ensure a robust applicant pool, including:

- State leaders using the clout of their position to issue a call for excellent charter applications
- Enticing the state's strongest non-profits to start charter schools
- Facilitating match-making between different groups that could create a charter school together
- Providing start-up grants to the most promising applicants
- Actively supporting replication of high-performing charters in the state including providing grants to support replication efforts
- Letting proven charter school programs from elsewhere in the nation know that North Carolina is "open for business" and friendly toward strong programs

Several of these options do not carry large price tags. State leaders demonstrating support for a strong and healthy charter sector by issuing statements in the media, attending conferences or information sessions for interested potential applicants, or using their connections with businesses and nonprofit organizations in the state to leverage the skills of their employees for the benefit of charter schools are all low-cost options. And, indeed, even small start-up grants can return far more on their investment if they ensure that those most promising applicants are given the opportunity and resources to develop a strong program. Charter schools that start off strong need less oversight and support down the road. Failing to foster the development of a strong applicant pool, however, can cost the state and local communities not only public funds, but also precious time in the education of children if less-than-stellar quality charters are authorized by the state.

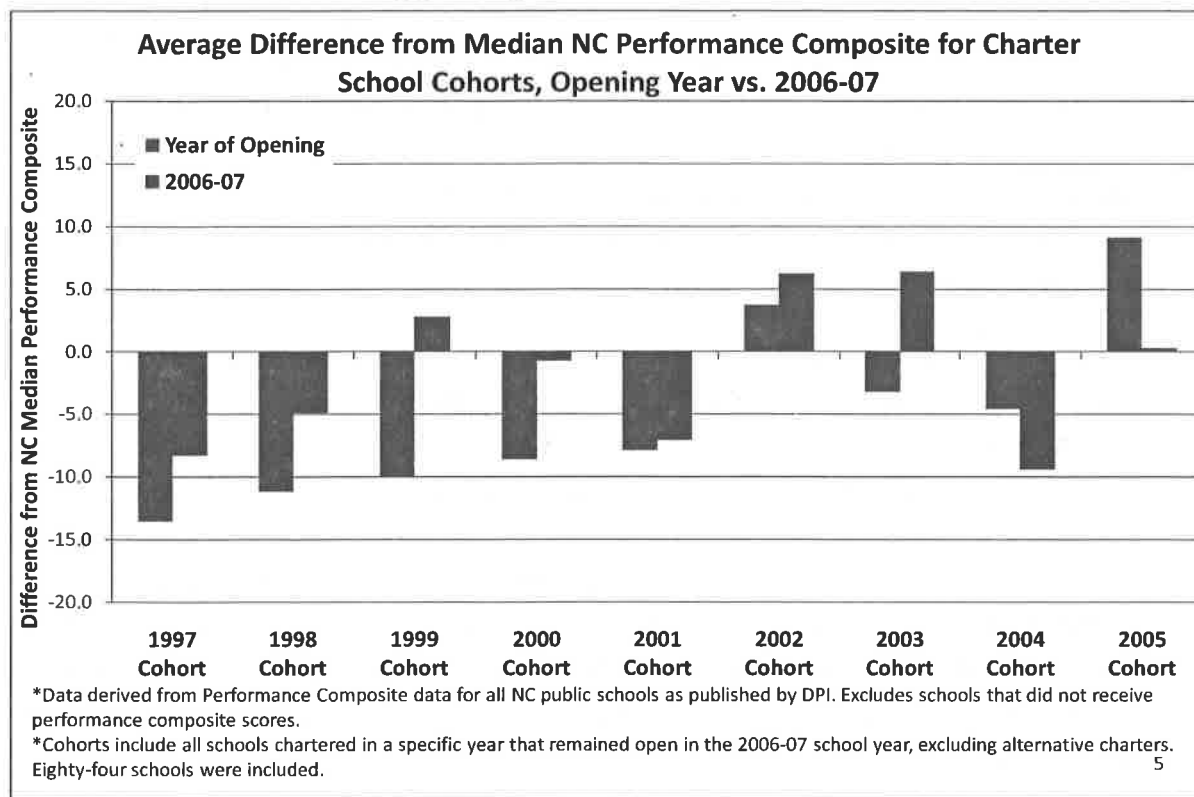
STRONG CHARTER AUTHORIZING

The initial and continued success of newly-launched charter schools in North Carolina relies heavily on an effective authorization process—application guidance, prescreening, committee deliberations and recommendations, and State Board of Education approval. Early experience

with charter approval, both in North Carolina and elsewhere, has highlighted the importance of applying a clear set of rigorous criteria for charter approval.

In North Carolina, the state has made gradual improvements in its authorization process. As the chart below suggests, these enhancements may have produced increasingly high-performing schools (measured by their first year Performance Composites) over time. At the same time, the overall performance and growth data on North Carolina's charter schools suggests that the state is still authorizing a mixed-quality group of schools. As a result, it makes sense for the state to reconsider its authorizing practices at this time.

Charter School Cohort Performance



In recent years, the growing experience base of authorizers nationally has led to an increased understanding of the practices that make up high-quality authorizing. The National Association of Charter School Authorizers, for example, has issued a set of “principles and standards” for authorizers.¹⁵ Other studies, such as Public Impact’s report for the U.S. Department of Education entitled *Supporting Charter School Excellence through Quality Authorizing*, have amplified on these points.¹⁶

Based on that growing knowledge base, Public Impact examined NC's current charter school approval practices in order to develop policy options for the state to consider. While NC's Office of Charter Schools and the former Charter School Advisory Committee have done much to improve the state's authorization process, our analysis suggests that the state could improve its authorization process by:

- **Refocusing the evaluation process on the quality of the founding team and educational plan** rather than on the applicant's plans to comply with a range of legal requirements. Currently, the checklist used to evaluate applications contains many items that are essentially compliance items for a charter school. For example, fire and safety regulations, immunization records requirements and handling of blood borne pathogens should involve standardized approaches for all schools and therefore could be part of the training schools receive following the provision of a charter. There is no reason for the State Board to spend time reviewing, in advance of charter approval, whether an applicant has promised to follow these regulations. If the state determines there is a compelling reason for the applicants to compile this information before approval, these components of the application could be checked for completeness by the Office of Charter Schools and not remain part of the evaluation committee or State Board review process.

Rather than focusing on these compliance issues, we recommend the addition or amendment of several topics in the evaluation checklist that have a substantial effect on the ultimate success of a charter school. Specifically: vetting not only the governance board but also the core founding members and future principal (if applicable); evaluating whether the mission is compelling, not simply clearly stated; assessing the research basis for the proposed instructional program; understanding the proposed methods of documenting student progress over the course of the year (that is, beyond the mandated ABCs evaluation); and evaluating the proposed behavioral code and how it will support the academic program. These are broad suggestions; we provide more detail in Appendix A.

- **Identifying a clear set of criteria that specify what the State Board of Education is seeking** in each charter application. The current evaluation checklist includes many topics, but most are not worded in the form of specific criteria against which a particular application could be judged. For example, the first question of the current checklist asks the evaluators to determine if the "Board of Directors reflects the range of knowledge and skills necessary to govern a school," but neither the application nor the supplemental resource manual define what these skills or knowledge should

include. As a result, reviewers are simply applying their own judgments about a governing board's suitability rather than following some state-established set of criteria. The same is true for much of the checklist. For more examples and detail, see Appendix A.

- **Developing a rubric** that will allow evaluators to effectively rate how well the applicants have met each criterion. The current checklist's simple plus/minus does not enable reviewers to indicate a precise enough judgment about each aspect of the application. Nor does the checklist provide any guidance about what constitutes a plus or minus rating. A more detailed rubric would both offer more gradations for assessment and explain to reviewers what makes an application meet the standards associated with each gradation.
- **Disseminating these expectations and guidelines to applicants** in order to provide a clearer sense of what is expected, improve the quality of applications received, and stress the importance of key characteristics—strength of the founding team and research supporting the academic program's effectiveness—in order for applicants to prioritize these aspects over others.
- **Requiring that at least one member of the State Board of Education's evaluation committee have expertise in curriculum and instruction.** To ensure that the State Board benefits from a thorough evaluation of the school's proposed educational plan, it would be ideal if the evaluation committee included at least one member well-versed in instructional matters. If the committee does not include this kind of expertise, it should seek detailed reviews of each applicant's education plans by a curriculum and instruction expert within DPI or as a third-party.
- **Evaluating the charter authorizing process** by identifying any indicators in the application of eventual high and low performers and incorporating those indicators into the evaluation process over time.

Staff of the Office of Charter Schools and members of the Charter School Advisory Committee—whose duties have been assumed by the Leadership for Innovation Committee—have a wealth of experience in evaluating charter schools, and indeed charter schools opening now have higher initial student performance than schools opened five or ten years ago, as depicted in the chart above. It is imperative, however, to harness the experience of this team in a coherent manner rather than relying on “gut” feelings and personal experience of committee members

when evaluating charter schools. As the committee's composition changes over the years, it is important that the institutional knowledge is not lost.

EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT

Once a school is chartered, the state's role shifts from one of approval to oversight and support. Support is discussed in the next section.

Effective charter school oversight has proven challenging nationally because of the unique balance that authorizers have sought to strike between autonomy and accountability:

- **Autonomy.** While charter schools are supposed to be “autonomous,” and thereby freed up from a range of laws and regulations that apply to conventional public schools, it has proven difficult for public agencies to offer charter schools wide-ranging latitude. In part, this challenge derives from the fact that charter schools are still subject to all federal laws and regulations, which have become an increasingly important force in public education in recent years. In addition, since charter schools remain public schools, states and authorizers naturally feel responsible for ensuring some level of compliance with basic regulations regarding the handling of public funds, the fair treatment of students and employees, the administration of required assessments, and other matters. In practice, the combination of residual federal and state requirements has limited charter schools' actual freedom of action and led to an accumulation of administrative burdens on charter schools.
- **Accountability.** Second, states and authorizers have struggled with how to implement another critical aspect of the charter idea – the notion that charter schools must meet high academic expectations or face closure or non-renewal. States and authorizers have found it challenging both to establish a sufficiently clear set of expectations for charter schools' academic performance, and to act decisively in cases where charter schools fall chronically short of whatever expectations exist.

AUTONOMY: COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR NC CHARTER SCHOOLS

All public schools are required to provide a variety of data to document academic progress, services provided to exceptional children, the health and safety of all students, and other issues vital to a strong and healthy school. Charter schools, as independently-run schools, are ostensibly freed from a variety of restrictions and requirements placed on district-related schools in order to allow for greater program innovation. Public Impact had difficulty, however,

determining exactly what reporting requirements are placed on North Carolina's charter schools. A comprehensive list of data reporting and compliance requirements does not currently exist for charter schools. The NCDPI Annual Data Plan¹⁷ lists nearly two hundred data reporting requirements, with over 150 identified as mandatory for at least some public schools. Currently, each charter school must determine if they are or are not required to complete these reports.

The Office of Charter Schools has made some strides in improving this situation for schools by developing the "Charter Mailbox" which provides due dates, contact information, and links to compliance forms. There are, however, currently less than 20 forms in the charter mailbox¹⁸ and, given the list of 200 reporting requirements for North Carolina schools, it is not clear whether the Charter Mailbox is comprehensive. This is the first year of implementation of the Charter Mailbox and it will undoubtedly develop more over time, but the current contents of the Charter Mailbox include only those forms from departments that responded to the Office of Charter School's request for information.

We recommend that the Office of Charter schools conduct a comprehensive review of the full list of NCDPI data reporting forms as well as any other reporting or monitoring requirements in order to develop a truly centralized and comprehensive list in the Charter Mailbox. Further, once a comprehensive list is compiled of currently required data reporting, we recommend that the state evaluate and weigh the necessity of each form or reporting requirement against the precept of charter school autonomy. Thorough evaluation and elimination of non-vital reporting requirements will allow charters to truly benefit from the greater autonomy they were promised.

ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY

A comprehensive academic accountability system for charter schools would ideally include four components, listed in the figure below. These components could work together as a “system” that promotes higher levels of charter school performance over time. Each element is explained in more detail below.



THE GOAL: SUCCESS FOR THE SECTOR AS A WHOLE

It will be impossible for the state to know whether charter schooling, on the whole, is a successful policy unless it begins with some idea of what would count as success for the sector. The performance information presented at the beginning of this report, for example, is difficult to interpret without some prior notion of what a high-performing charter sector would look like.

There are many ways the state could think about a sector-wide goal. One approach, proposed by way of example, would be to think of success in two ways. First, the charter sector – by virtue of the freedom it provides to driven educators and leaders – should create a large number of highly successful schools. An example of such an “excellence goal” is “30% of charter schools will be in the top decile of performance or growth for the state.”

Second, the charter sector more broadly will produce schools that are either above average or, based on their growth, on-track to become above average within 2-3 years. An “adequacy” goal of this nature would include an ideal state – above-average performance – as well as an acknowledgement that some schools will start “behind” due to their student population and require time to “catch up.” An example of such an adequacy goal would be “90% of charter schools will be (a) above the median for growth and performance OR (b) on-track to reach the median within three years, based on projections of current growth rates.”

THE BAR & THE MEASURES: A HIGHER BUT MORE NUANCED STANDARD

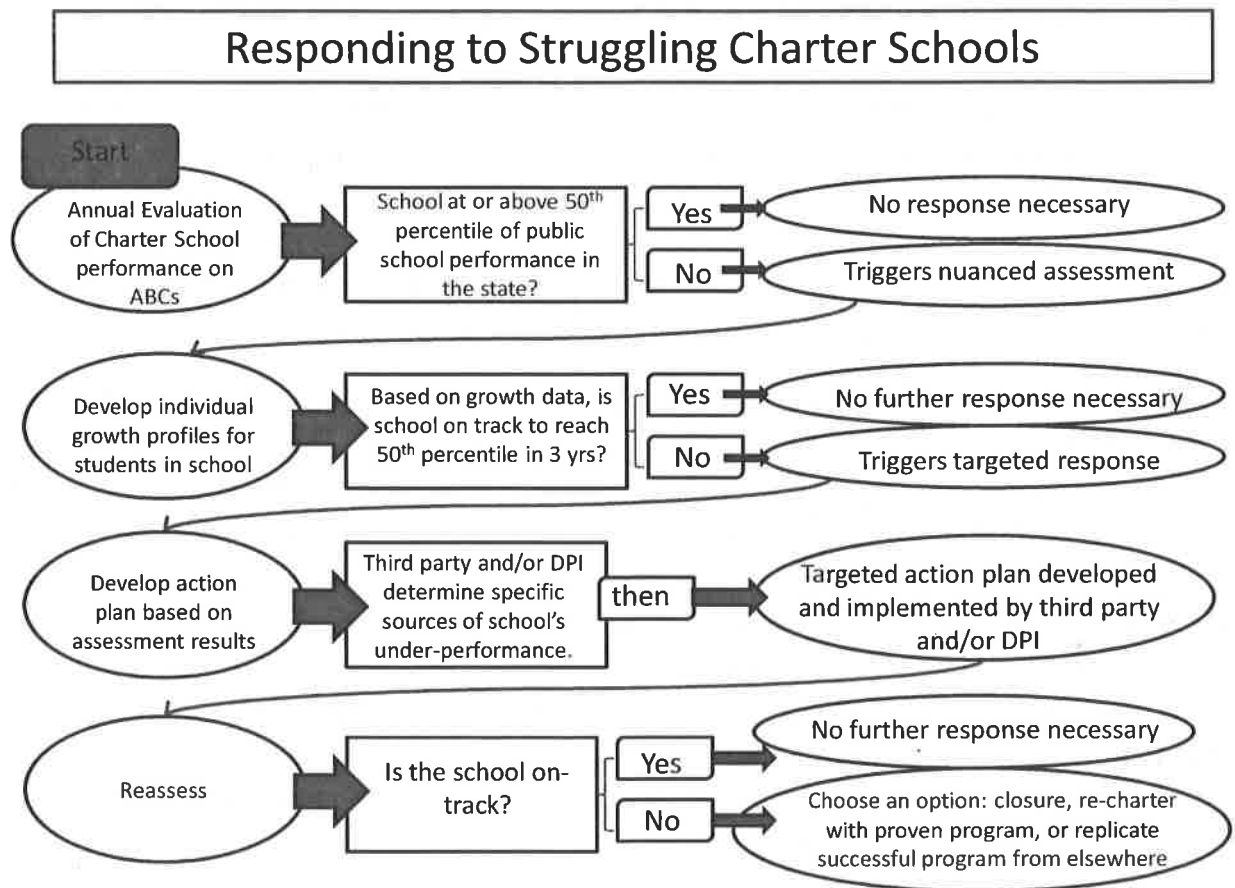
The idea behind the development of charter schools is that they will do a better job of educating students than traditional district schools if given the freedom to do so. Thus, they are given an independence from districts in order to facilitate a greater agility to innovate and meet students’ needs. Currently, charter schools in North Carolina with a composite score of 60, as measured by the ABCs program, can receive a ten-year renewal. A composite score of 60, however, is currently near the 20th percentile of all schools in the state. Any firm standard—such as a composite score minimum—must necessarily be low in order to avoid closing schools that, upon further investigation, demonstrate success at teaching their unique student populations. We suggest, rather, a higher but more nuanced bar.

Drawing on the example sector-wide goal above, a high but nuanced bar could ask each charter school to be at or above the median of all public school performance and growth in the state. There are many reasons, however, why a “good” school could perform below the state median. A school, for example, could serve a special population with a mission-specific goal of remediation, drop-out prevention, or behavioral intervention. Such schools may be good schools that are simply below the median because of their students’ starting levels of performance. The state would not, however, *assume* this is the case. Instead, it would project future performance at the school based on current student growth rates (perhaps with greater weight given to those students who have been longest served by the school being evaluated). If projections suggest that the school is on-track to reach the median within three years, the school’s performance would be deemed acceptable.

Another way to introduce nuance into the system would be to explicitly consider whether each school is attaining **mission-specific goals** that it has set. For example, a school designed to bring high school drop-outs back into education could set goals for high school completion, post-secondary attendance, and post-school employment quality. While such measures would not substitute for test-based accountability, they would provide a more complete picture of how a given school is performing, especially in the case of schools with non-conventional missions.

RESPONSE: WHAT WILL BE DONE IF SCHOOLS FAIL TO MEET THE BAR?

The diagram below shows how a nuanced analysis outlined above could establish the groundwork for a meaningful state response to low performance. Schools that fall below the 50th percentile would have the nuanced growth analysis conducted to determine if the school is making significant progress toward bringing their students up to median performance in the next three years. If the school is not on track, further investigation by a third party and/or DPI may uncover reasons for below-average performance and facilitate the development of a targeted action plan.



The Office of Charter Schools has recently hired a consultant to assist low-performing schools with improvement efforts. Given the great number of charter schools currently performing below the 50th percentile in the state, a full assessment and remedial support intervention may be too much for the Office of Charter Schools to handle at once. And, indeed, it may be somewhat counterproductive for the office that is assessing performance and handing out consequences to also provide support services. In many states with strong charter school sectors, a private charter support organization provides networking, teacher and administrator support, and academic program support. If the state advocates for the development of a strong charter support organization, as discussed below under Valuable Support, it may allow for more effective deployment of state employees in the authorizing, assessment and oversight roles while ensuring that there are support services for those schools that need them.

Whether support comes from the state or a private organization, however, if a school fails to raise student achievement despite continued remediation services and interventions, the state must consider more dramatic action, such as school closure, rechartering, or some form of school “turnaround.” This topic is discussed more fully below, under Renewal and Closure.

VALUABLE SUPPORT FROM THE STATE AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

Charter schools, like all public schools, need continued support from families, communities, private organizations and the state in order to provide high-quality programs. One form of “support” is help and technical assistance with the challenging aspects of starting and running an independent public school. Even a dedicated leadership team and strong academic program require continued professional development, guidance in the development of healthy business practices, and other matters. The Office of Charter Schools and other parts of the Department of Public Instruction currently seek to provide many of these services. In most states with strong charter programs, however, one or more private charter support organizations (CSOs) provide a variety of services to charter schools. According to a recent survey of the charter support landscape, the average charter support organization staffs one employee per nine charter schools in the state.¹⁹ While North Carolina has a League of Charter Schools that is an active advocate of charter schools, it is not currently home to the kind of high-capacity organization that exists in other states with large numbers of charter schools.

Another kind of “support” is monetary – providing the funding that charter schools need in order to function. In many states, charter schools receive substantially lower levels of operating funding than do conventional public schools. In North Carolina, operating funding for charter

schools is only slightly below that of conventional schools. On capital funding – dollars to build school buildings or to pay for leases and mortgages – North Carolina provides no direct public assistance. As a result, charter schools must use operating funds to pay for capital costs. Other states have offered charter schools per-pupil facilities dollars, access to facilities loan pools, and other forms of facilities assistance.

Especially if the state is considering expanding the number of charter schools, the time is right to consider ways to improve both kinds of support – technical assistance and facilities funding.

DPI SUPPORT: CONDUCT AN INTERNAL REVIEW

DPI and the Office of Charter schools provide a wide variety of supports to charter schools and their leaders. What is unclear, however, is the perceived or actual value of these services. We recommend that a third-party survey of charter school boards, principals and teachers collect anonymous perceptions of value in DPI's services in order to strengthen the current services charter school administrators and teachers identify as valuable, halt those that are unnecessary or ineffective, and perhaps add those supports for which charter school staff identify a need. In the next section, we recommend the fostering of a strong private support organization in the state. This internal review process could identify those areas of need particularly suited for a private support organization to fill.

PRIVATE SUPPORT: FOSTERING STRONG ORGANIZATIONS

North Carolina has nearly 100 charter schools with too many schools falling below median in performance and/or student growth. If more charter schools open in the future, there will be even greater pressure placed on the state to provide the multiple supports necessary to build and maintain a quality charter school sector. In most states with strong charter programs, one or more private charter support organizations (CSOs) provide a variety of supports to charter schools.

As mentioned above, a recent survey of the charter support landscape found that the average charter support organization staffs one employee per nine charter schools in the state and less than one fifth of CSOs have no paid staff.²⁰ In North Carolina, then, an organization with ten full-time paid employees would be necessary to provide a similar level of support to what charters in other states receive. These organizations provide a variety of services including²¹:

Services provided by CSOs

- Technical assistance & direct service (58%)
- Advocacy for schools (58%)
- Community events & conferences (36%)
- School start-up assistance (33%)
- Professional development for teachers (33%)
- Accountability planning & systems (32%)
- Leadership development (32%)
- Policies, procedures, & bylaws (31%)
- Board training (30%)
- Information clearinghouse (30%)
- Charter application assistance (27%)
- Media relations & outreach (27%)

The Office of Charter Schools currently provides many of these supports including: conferences, technical and direct assistance, board training, and leadership development. As a state agency, however, the Office of Charter Schools is limited in the amount of advocacy, media relations and outreach it can provide on behalf of charter schools because of the tension between a publicly funded office advocating charter public schools and the potential perceptions of such state support of charters as negatively reflecting on or adversely affecting district public schools.

In addition, several of the above supports—if provided by the Office of Charter Schools—may create a conflict of interest with the Office serving as both the “police” and the support. Leaders of low-performing schools or schools experiencing internal conflict may not share the full extent of their difficulties with state consultants for fear of reprimand or closure. If the state continues to serve as the single source of support, charter schools may choose to continue to struggle on their own.

Private organizations, on the other hand, can provide an opportunity for open and frank dialog and more targeted support services as a result. And private organizations—generally funded by foundation grants, fees for service, conferences and membership dues—may help alleviate the financial pressures on the state to grow its own programs to improve charter performance or to keep pace with new schools in the event of a cap increase.²² Some may ask why, given the number of charter schools in the state, a strong support organization has not already developed. This may be because North Carolina, with a fixed cap that has been met, is below the radar of national support organizations or individuals seeking to encourage the development of a strong charter sector; a charter cap increase may signal that North Carolina is

serious about its commitment to schools of choice and encourage those interested in developing a charter support organization to come forward.

We recommend that state leaders advocate the development of a private support organization that can complement the services provided by the state. The State Board of Education, as the charter authorizing body of North Carolina, along with the Office of Charter Schools and the Department of Public Instruction generally, has a duty to strengthen the application and authorization process, provide consistent oversight to ensure compliance, and take action when schools fail to provide viable alternatives to district-run schools. A well-developed private support network, then, can assist with advocacy, financing options, leadership development and training, and program assistance to help struggling schools. These efforts could pay off in the long run with fewer needs for new state hires and a more tenable situation for charter schools.

Several options are available for state leaders to foster the development of a strong CSO:

- An initial investment through grants—including federal Charter School Program funds
- State leader advocacy and encouragement for philanthropic investment in a CSO
- Outlining the roles and relationship between the Office of Charter Schools and a private CSO

FACILITIES FINANCING: RETHINKING OPTIONS

North Carolina is the largest charter school state to offer so few facilities support options; and the single option provided by the state—revenue bonds—has not proven an effective method of support.²³ There are several options for the state to amend this situation. Some involve price tags, and some do not.

- **Options requiring direct state funding**, but which would also allow for truly equitable support of these public schools: a per-pupil facilities stipend that follows the student or sharing of the Education Lottery proceeds for construction.
- **Options requiring less direct funding**: providing tax credits or breaks to companies that provide facilities support to charter schools or creating a loan-loss reserve to encourage private lending to charter schools.

- **Options requiring no funds from the state:** allowing counties to make local decisions to provide capital funding for these schools or improving the ease of obtaining revenue bonds by reducing current restrictions.

DIRECT FUNDING OPTIONS

Per-pupil Stipend

North Carolina currently provides a relatively equitable distribution of per-pupil operating funds to charter schools. That state, however, does not provide any direct facilities funding which results in charter schools appropriating twelve to twenty percent of their operating budget to securing facilities which draws funds away from hiring teachers or purchasing books, supplies, and other program-related resources. Several states and Washington, D.C. provide per-pupil facilities funding. These funds ensure that operating funds are spent where intended--on teachers and program supplies.

Education Lottery Proceeds

An equitable option to fund charter school facilities would be to open the construction portion of Education Lottery proceeds up to charter schools. This would provide a source of funding to charters without requiring any direct new money from the state's coffers.

INDIRECT FUNDING OPTIONS

Tax Credits for Private Support

Private organizations—from foundations to businesses—have provided much support for the charter movement in the forms of loaned executive time, back office services, advocacy and, perhaps most importantly, direct grants of funding and facilities. So have individuals, who often make contributions to charter schools. The state could provide an incentive for this kind of private support by granting state tax credits to companies and individuals who make contributions to charter school facilities projects.

Loan-loss Reserve

A loan-loss reserve—initially funded by the state or a combination of public-private funds—could serve as a guaranty to protect lenders and improve lending rates for charter school facility financing. For example, Indianapolis developed a charter school facilities fund through a partnership consisting of the Annie E. Casey Foundation which provided a \$1 million guaranty, the city of Indianapolis providing a moral obligation pledge for loans, JPMorgan Chase Bank

providing the funds, and the Indianapolis Local Public Improvement Bond Bank serving as a conduit for the funds and providing loan reserves from an ED credit enhancement award to secure the loans.²⁴ This public-private partnership ensures competitive rates to local charter schools and eases funding of new charter schools by ameliorating the risks involved in lending to a new institution with no credit history. An existing nonprofit organization within North Carolina, Self-Help, already provides substantial financing to charter schools in the state and beyond and could provide more assistance with such a loan-loss reserve in place.

NO PRICE TAG OPTIONS

Allow Counties to Fund Charter Facilities

North Carolina law currently does not allow county governments to provide capital funding for charter schools. If the legislature authorized counties to provide such funding, it would not require any counties to do so, but would allow willing local officials to support charter schools in this way. County leaders in Wake, for example, have specifically asked the state to endorse more charter schools to help it meet its severe over-crowding challenge.

Facilitating Revenue Bonds

State law currently allows the North Carolina Educational Facilities Finance Authority to issue bonds on behalf charter schools. Because the interest on these bonds is exempt from taxation, they pay a lower rate of interest than charter schools would typically pay in the lending market. The Authority, however, has not proven to be a good source of financing for charter schools. Though the bonds issued by the Authority are not backed by the state, the Authority has very high credit standards on the bonds it issues – standards that are too high for most charter schools to meet. As a result, even if a charter school could convince investors to buy its bonds and assume the ensuing risk, the Authority would likely not proceed with the financing.

There are two ways this source could become more viable for North Carolina charter schools. One would be for the Authority to relax its standards in recognition of charter schools' unique challenges in the financing markets. Investors would still have to agree to purchase the bonds, so the market would still exert a strong credit check on charter financing. If investors were willing, however, the Authority would not stand in the way of a financing package for a charter school.

The other would be to create a mechanism that provides the sort of security and confidence that the Authority is seeking and does not typically find with charter borrowers. Some of the ideas noted above, such as the creation of a loss reserve or tax credits for donations to these

projects, could be options for creating such a mechanism. These options, however, would carry a price tag for the state.

CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL AND CLOSURE

Deciding whether or not to renew a school's charter is a difficult decision, and closing poor-performing schools is even more difficult to make a reality. Because closing schools that are already serving children—even if poorly—is so difficult, it is even more important to strengthen the authorization, oversight, and support processes to ensure that schools that are chartered have a greater opportunity to succeed.

Still, experience nationally suggests that it is virtually impossible to design these systems so that literally no charter schools fail. As a result, states and authorizers need strong systems that enable them to act when charter schools fall chronically short of expectations. Advocates of quality charter schooling argue that simply accepting abysmal performance from a charter school because district schools are also failing is not an option. All of a state's public schools, including charter schools, should provide not simply another building that houses desks and teachers, but high-quality options to students who may not be served effectively elsewhere.

Part of meeting this challenge is developing a coherent approach to academic oversight – discussed above in the Effective Oversight section. Another critical issue, however, is creating the political will to act in cases where schools continue to fall short, despite intervention and assistance. So in addition to setting clear expectations about performance and gathering the data needed to determine whether schools are meeting those expectations, it is also imperative for North Carolina to establish a clear process that it will follow when the data show that a school is continuing to fail.

As mentioned above, a high, but nuanced bar is necessary when evaluating charter school performance. If the state implements a higher standard and more detailed assessment before considering a struggling school for renewal, the renewal considerations will be based on data that follow enduring cohorts of students and the school's trajectory over time. Further, early identification of struggling schools, valuable intervention, and third-party support can prevent schools from reaching their five-year assessment or ten-year renewal as struggling schools. For those schools that are struggling to effectively teach their students, however, it is imperative that the state take dramatic action so that students do not have to continue attending failing schools.

As the state has never closed a charter school for chronically poor academic performance, a backlog of schools that may need this kind of dramatic intervention has grown. The state

should approach this process, then, in two phases: first, it should analyze existing poor-performers and develop action plans for improvement or closure and second, the state should establish an ongoing process to deal with problems in charter schools as they develop in the future.

Thirty-six charter schools are currently below the state median for both performance and average growth. Initially, the state needs to undertake a nuanced evaluation of these schools to determine if they are effectively serving their students. School closure may be the only option, if several attempts have been made at improvement. When school closure is a poor option because district alternatives are likewise struggling, the state can consider several options including:

- Vigorously pursuing a school turnaround. Evidence from schools, businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies make clear that it is possible to turnaround a failing organization if the right leadership comes in and exerts a set of classic turnaround actions that have proven successful in many different kinds of organizations.²⁵ Finding this kind of leadership is a great challenge for the state, and a challenge that extends beyond charter schools. But this is a challenge worth tackling because of the potential to revive flagging schools, both charter and non-charter.
- Re-chartering the school under a proven operator. In some cases, a “fresh start” may be the best way to continue serving the students in a failed charter school.²⁶ In such a case, the state could issue a Request for Proposals seeking organizations willing to take on the school. Eligible operators could include other successful charter schools in North Carolina, or operators of effective multi-school networks in other states. Prospective operators would have to show past success in serving similar students, and the capacity to take responsibility for the school in question.

Closure is not the only option, but a turnaround or bringing in a proven operator will often require replacement of board members, principals, teachers, or all three. This is not an “easy out” compared to closure, but it can ensure that the students currently attending a charter remain in their school building while benefitting from a stronger academic program. Further, the nuanced evaluation conducted by the state can identify the students’ needs and inform the decision about which program should replace the failing school’s.

Whether the state pursues closure, turnaround, or bringing in another operator, however, it is clear that the state must ensure that chronically poor-performing charter schools are not allowed to fail students for a decade before being held accountable.

CONCLUSION

Charter schools in North Carolina, though serving more than 30,000 students, have not yet met the demand for school choice in this state. Some charters have waiting lists hundreds of names long, half of the state's counties do not yet have a charter school, and some county leaders—as we saw in Wake County—strongly support the opening of even more charter schools to deal with burgeoning population growth.²⁷ North Carolina has, however, met the legislative cap of 100 charters.

After ten years of charter schools, the results are mixed with some outstanding successes and some miserable failures. As the state considers how to move forward, it is clear that there are several strategic steps that can be taken by state leaders, private citizens, and the business sector to strengthen existing and future charter schools.

Public Impact recommends that the Commission build on the knowledge developed by ten years of experience and encourage policy, legislative, and procedural changes that will:

- Improve the quality of the charter application, evaluation, and authorization process to ensure future charter schools are strong from the beginning
- Work actively to strengthen current schools by further developing valuable support options and effective oversight that provides a true measure of school success
- Identify chronically failing schools to develop action plans to improve or close them
- Lift or remove the cap on charter schools to make room for proven or innovative programs that can most effectively serve North Carolina's students

Some of the best schools in this state would not exist without a charter sector. The opportunities available with charter schools—to provide small classrooms, personal relationships, individualized instruction, and an opportunity for students who may not find it elsewhere—should remain a part of public education in North Carolina. And bringing the best charter programs to more students should be a priority for educators and leaders across the state.

APPENDIX A

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS ON APPLICATION RUBRIC AND RESOURCE MANUAL

Using the high-quality charter application evaluation forms of the Mayor of Indianapolis and the Chicago Renaissance in 2010 initiative, we have identified several areas where North Carolina's charter application rubric could more effectively provide clear criteria for each section without becoming overly prescriptive. Below we describe the North Carolina evaluation rubric as it currently stands (along with the information provided in the application and resource manual) and recommend potential refinements based on the rubrics and criteria used by authorizers in Indianapolis and Chicago. These are to serve as examples only and we have not provided a full assessment of the entire rubric. For these examples, we focus on the two most important aspects of the evaluation, governance/leadership and educational plan.

Board Governance Evaluation

Strong governance is often cited as the linchpin of charter school success. The proposed board and core founding team determine the academic focus for the school, make financial decisions, hire key staff, and set the standards by which educators and students are evaluated. The founding team should, therefore, receive the greatest amount of care and attention during the application evaluation process. Careful analysis of the skills, aptitudes, and character of each member of the proposed school is vital to ensuring that the team encompasses a variety of viewpoints, skill sets, professional experiences, and personalities that will work together to ensure efficient and effective governance and a successful charter school.

In recognition of the important role of governance in charter schools, it is appropriately the first category in North Carolina's charter application evaluation rubric. The focus of the rubric, however, is currently more toward organization (requiring an organizational chart and bylaws) and less toward evaluating the capabilities of the group to launch a successful school. The first question of the current rubric does ask the evaluators to determine if the "Board of Directors reflects the range of knowledge and skills necessary to govern a school," but neither the application nor the supplemental resource manual define what these skills or knowledge should include. Further the resource manual simply states, "each board should maintain a minimum of five (5) members with a cross section of backgrounds, professions, and experiences that will assist in operations as well as instructional issues." The resource manual does not provide any further criteria for either the applicant or the evaluator to consider. Coupled with the request for only a single-page resume of each board member and disclosure of any potential conflicts of

interest, the evaluation committee may have difficulty determining if the founding team has not only the drive but also the competence and experience to launch a successful school.

In contrast, Indianapolis's application guide provides a clear description of the importance of the founding team, asking applicants to "explain your collective qualifications for founding a high quality charter school in Indianapolis and taking stewardship of public funds. Include in your description evidence of the founding group's ties to and knowledge of the local community. Summarize each person's experience, qualifications, and relevant affiliations, and explain why he or she was chosen to participate in the founding group. Explain what role each individual will play. Describe any plans for further recruitment of governing board members, school leader(s), or a business manager."²⁸

In addition, the Indianapolis charter application provides concise criteria for both the applicant and the evaluator:

"Reviewers will look for a founding group that:

- demonstrates the capacity to found and sustain an excellent school;
- can manage public funds effectively and responsibly;
- includes members who possess skills and experience in areas such as education, management, finance, and law;
- has broad, diverse representation from the community; and
- has tangible ties to the local community."²⁹

It is, of course, possible for North Carolina's evaluation committee to take these issues into consideration when they are evaluating an application, but without explicit instructions to the evaluator (or asking the applicants to consider these criteria when completing an application) there is no assurance that the evaluators will know how to prioritize what they may personally recognize as important criteria and what the rubric asks them to consider.

Educational Plan Evaluation

As with strong governance, a sound educational plan is vital to the success of a charter school—the proposed curriculum, pedagogy, and materials used in an educational plan should likewise garner significant attention from the evaluation committee. The North Carolina rubric currently asks the evaluators to consider seven aspects of the proposed academic program:

- If the instructional program is based on sound educational theory and seems likely to accomplish the proposed mission
- If the teaching approach and curriculum is designed to accomplish the school's goals and meet the student population's needs
- If there is staff development planned to ensure quality instruction
- If there are methods of meeting exceptional children's learning needs outlined
- If the curriculum and courses are aligned with the state's standard course of study
- If high school entrance and exit requirements are clearly stated, and
- If the school calendar meets the required 180 days

The final three evaluation points are largely formalities. These three should not, then, take up much time from the evaluators. The first four, however are of the utmost importance. In the application, the founding team is asked to provide the "educational theory and foundation of the model" as well as the "teaching approach and curriculum design and instructional methods, course of study, etc." The resource manual, however, provides only clarification on state requirements and asks that the applicants describe the educational plan and "do so in a manner that indicates that the chartering group is knowledgeable and competent to develop an educational plan." North Carolina's application materials do not request research-based support for the proposed model, any data or supporting evidence of the proposed program's (or its components') success elsewhere. Nor does it request the applicants provide any materials that would clarify for the evaluation committee, which is comprised of people with varying levels of familiarity with educational theory, the "soundness" of the theoretical basis of the proposed education plan. Similarly, the points about staff development and exceptional children do not convey any sense of what would constitute a promising plan within an application.

In contrast, Chicago's charter applicant is guided to "clearly articulate 1) exactly how the curriculum will be effective by referencing data-based research and the Design Team's capacity to implement the curriculum with fidelity; and 2) its successful implementation, if applicable, in schools currently existing in other districts similar to Chicago." In addition, applicants are asked to provide a detailed curriculum map and given a clear explanation of what a curriculum map is, issues to consider when developing one, and links to helpful tools.³⁰

SPECIFIC CHANGES RECOMMENDED FOR RUBRIC

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Applicant School Name:	Date:
Grade Level(s): Total # Students:	County/LEA:
Contact Name:	Conversion? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, public <input type="checkbox"/> or private <input type="checkbox"/> ?
Phone Number:	

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP:

A strong governance and leadership team is the most important component of charter school success. Evaluators should take great care when assessing these aspects of the proposed program.

	+	-	Comments
Board of Directors reflects the range of knowledge and skills necessary to govern a school			<u>Should identify somewhere what the "ideal" range of knowledge and skills would be, or certain deal breakers without which a board would not be successful.</u>
<u>Does the core founding team have the range of capabilities necessary to launch a successful charter school?</u>			<u>"capabilities" would include demonstration of past initiative, persistence, achievement, and effective team leadership.</u>