

**Recommendations Regarding Charter Schools  
for SBE Discussion  
December 1998**

Extend the time for evaluation of charter schools.

As noted in the evaluation reports, one year is not enough time to fully evaluate the charter schools. The overwhelming demands on schools during the first year, the quick start-up timeline, and the extent of information and procedures that they needed to learn likely impeded full attention to their instructional programs. As such the ABCs data, certification status of their staffs, and other aspects of operation may improve in the second year and beyond. A proposed minimum of three years (1997-98 through 1999-2000 with a reporting date of February 15, 2001) to evaluate charter schools is offered, with a five-year plan (reporting date of February 15, 2003) offering a fuller evaluation. It should be noted that student achievement data through the ABCs will be available for most schools in August of each year

Pursue controlled growth until full evaluation is completed.

If additional time is granted for charter school evaluation, the SBE could consider several options for additional charter schools:

- Limit new schools to the current cap of 100.
- Allow new schools to develop only in counties currently without charter schools (either before or after the cap of 100 is reached).
- Allow new schools only up to a certain percent of the LEA student population.

Require a year of planning.

Due to the difficulty in opening charter schools in the inaugural year, the State Board of Education now offers the option of a planning year at the school's choice. This planning year is one year of the five-year charter. The problems of reporting accurate data, finding qualified staff, and leadership turnover during the first year all point to the need for a longer planning and implementation period. The Charter School Advisory Committee has suggested that this year of planning be required in order to provide the kind of time that schools need to learn all the information and reporting systems, actively recruit a diverse student body, and seek appropriately credentialed staff. However, several existing charter schools said it still should be an option. If a year of planning is required, the SBE may start the five-year term of the charter after the planning year.

(Over)

Give charter schools one year to meet the legislative requirements.

If a year of planning is not required, charter schools may need one year to work through the requirements in the legislation or elsewhere. For example, one school that acknowledged that 30 percent or less of their staff were licensed last year had improved that to 90 percent for the current school year. On the other hand, a required year of planning should help to alleviate these issues.

Maintain the State Board's current policy regarding racial diversity.

The SBE passed a policy during the past year further defining the legislative requirement that charter school enrollments “reasonably” reflect the county in which they are located based on information providing from the Evaluation Section. Charter schools are to have ethnic representation falling within the range of individual schools of the residing LEA. For example, if the percent of nonwhite students among schools within a given LEA range from 30% to 70%, the charter school’s nonwhite percentage must fall within that range. Some charter schools from the first year are still outside of this range. The Advisory Committee was directed to follow-up for those schools that fall outside of the LEA range to determine if good faith efforts in recruiting have been made and otherwise determine if the ethnic composition has been adequately addressed. The existing policy seems to be appropriate and should be continued.