

January 5, 1994

TO: Gary
FROM: Sue
RE: Colorado Conference - Charter Schools

As a follow-up to our conversation this morning, here's the information you requested.

Distinctive issues in California law/experience:

These are my thoughts based on conversations I've had with folks from around the country and on the attached chart which compares the various state laws (this chart is contained in the report called: "Charter School Update.. which has been sent to all participants in the conference).

- o Political context in which the bill was developed and enacted - the voucher initiative played a large role in the discussion and ultimate passage of the enabling legislation. Based on rhetoric from the school community, most notably the CTA, subsequent to the defeat of the voucher, and on the specter of another voucher, the momentum for charters should be sustained.
- o Teacher sign-off - As I mentioned, I thought the requirement for teacher signatures was unique to our bill, but according to the chart, several other states require either teacher sign-off or level of combined support from teachers and parents. Anyway, you might want to comment on your feelings about teacher sign-off.
- o School board/business support - you might want to comment on the early and sustained support for the bill from CSBA and the Business Roundtable. I believe that CSBA's support was prompted due to 2 major factors (1) the ability to manipulate or completely get around collective bargaining and (2) the presence of the voucher initiative.
- o Start-up money - You also wanted to talk about the beneficial effects of having no start-up funds; e.g., folks start the charter schools for the right reasons and are not corrupted by money-grubbing. This also allows for greater deregulation, because the state dept. is not involved in developing and reviewing grant applications.
- o Impact on political campaigns - both Gov. Wilson and Kathleen Brown have embraced the charter school concept and called for major expansion. Your new bill, SB 1264, removes the cap on the number of charter schools.

Other issues you wanted to be reminded of:

- o Inertia, development is slow - After 1 year of implementation only 46 schools have been proposed.
- o Lack of support by school superintendents - Despite years of whining about overregulation, only 2 school superintendents have taken advantage of the charter school opportunity.
- o Lack of support by business community - Although the Business Roundtable has provided some "cheerleading" support and is working with a few schools in San Diego to develop charters, other business support (like the Chamber of Commerce) is nonexistent.
- o Equity - Same challenge as pilot programs - how do you ensure that successes/opportunities in charter schools are available for incorporation in all schools?
- o Liability issue - this has been a significant issue at some charter schools; e.g. the Oakland school (Lazear, Cesar Chavez, or whatever they have decided to call it!) had major problems. The "deep pockets" insurers have differing viewpoints on charter schools. (I would encourage you to discuss this issue with Eric Premack, because he has been involved in lots of discussions with this insurers.)

Brief Summary of Senate Ed hearing on December 1:

I dug out my notes on the hearing and here are some highlights:

Vaughn - Attendance is up to 99.6%, 80% of the kindergarten and first grade students are performing at grade level. All special ed kids are fully included in regular classes, largely because class size has been reduced from 33:1 to 27:1. They have in place a parental contract and school uniforms are voluntary. According to teacher testimony, "experts are allowed to shape their destiny at the site level" and they now work as a team and not in isolation anymore. Vaughn projects \$1 million surplus at end of 1993-94 year.

Bowling Green - 80% minority students, 48% orthopedically handicapped, current district operates in "negotiated gridlock", the charter allowed them to break free. Went to year round schedule, reduced class size to 25:1 by reducing custodial time, eliminating prep teacher thereby saving \$200,000. Also fully included all special ed kids.

Lazear/Oakland middle school - obtained land from Diocese of Oakland, lowered class size to 24:1, teachers are hired at the site and operate on year-to-year contracts. School has contracts with students (conduct, including uniforms) and with parents (4 hour/monthly participation and attendance at monthly

meetings). major problems with district - charter approved with 16 conditions attached.

International Studies Academy - Coordinated charter effort with teacher's union, charter contains provision which rolls collective bargaining contract into it, but allows for site specific changes, using this year as planning year. Public television station (KQED) is a partner in planning.

El Dorado County Community School - county operated school for at-risk and home study kids, focuses on client needs - operates before 8:00 a.m. and after 5:00 p.m., employees are not covered by collective bargaining contracts or tenure provisions, can be dismissed on 2 weeks notice.

Handouts for you to take

- o SB 1264 - the new charter bill
- o Your LA Times editorial
- o Operation Education News - newsletter by the Bus. Roundtable
- o Dept of Ed Summary of existing charter schools

Key Contact People

Bill Porter - Gov. Romer's education aide - he will try to pull you aside at dinner on Thursday night to go over the agenda

Merrill Vargo - Director, Regional Programs in SDE - she is up to speed on all schools operating in California. She also oversees the SB 1274 schools, so can comment on these if necessary.

Eric Premack - with Berman Weiler Associates (formerly with LAO and School Services), working with schools in San Diego to establish charters. He is also a good resource person on what's going on in charter schools throughout the state.

Other attachments

You also asked for a copy of CTA's material. I've attached one from the San Diego chapter. The cover letter was prepared by the local union (although it is virtually identical to one I saw in San Juan), but the attachments were prepared by CTA headquarters in Burlingame.