

Phone 508

CONSULTANT SERVICES • SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION • BOARD POLICY • WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

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Dec. 10, 1988

Dear Mr. Kaldene,

Pleased to hear from you.

Believe Janet is wrong - not sure my use of "charter" is quite the same. I see it as a lever for restructuring the school district over a ten-year period. (Will have to have an "insertion session with her!")

Would be delighted to get together somehow over Christmas - however, we'll be in Milwaukee from Dec 22 through Dec 27 (Back the 27<sup>th</sup>).

Working on a couple of items - will send you copies.

Sincerely,

Ray Budde

(sending copy of Education by Charter to Mrs. Johnson.)

THE  
EDUCATIONAL  
CHARTER

key to new ways  
to view . . .

- school district policies
- roles of principals and superintendents
- diverse values of the community
- parents' desires to be involved in schools
- educational needs of children and youth
- teachers' responsibility for instruction
- knowledge, information, and media
- resources outside the school district
- accountability for dollars spent for education
- planning for the future

Been worked  
on this more  
early 1970's  
(not continuous (v.))  
Two some early  
stations  
js

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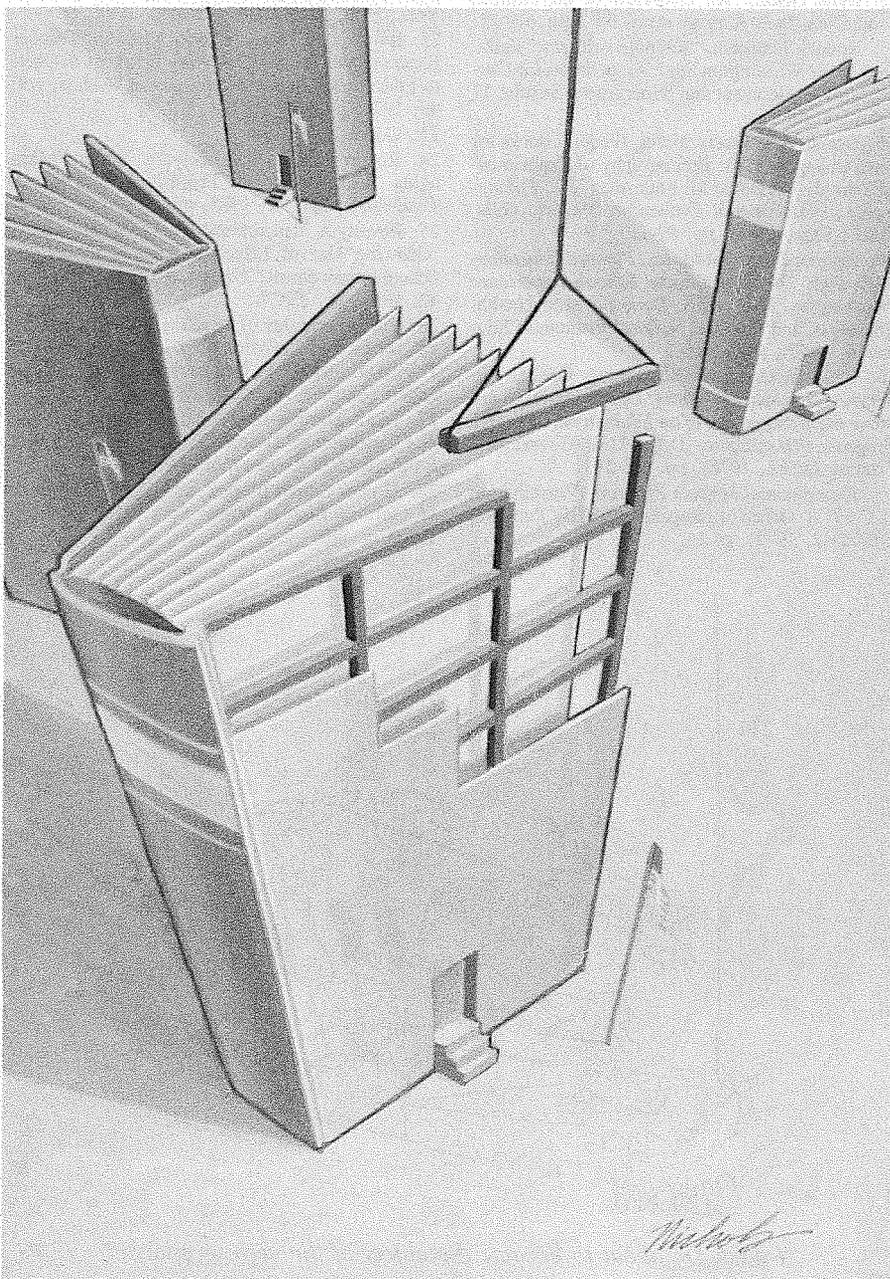
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# Education by Charter



*Are you looking for a way to restructure your school district that will insure the continuing improvement of instruction? If so, Mr. Budde provides one model.*

.....  
BY RAY BUDDE

**E** DUCATION by charter is a model for restructuring school districts that promotes long-term, continuing improvement of education. Under a charter system, groups of teachers request funds directly from the school board to carry out specific instructional programs; the two or three layers of "administration" that have evolved between teachers and school boards over the last 150 years are removed.

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## WHAT IS A CHARTER?

The idea of a *charter* as a "written agreement" goes back well over a thousand years. One of the best-known early charters is the Magna Carta, the agreement that King John and the English barons signed at Runnymede on 15 June 1215. In the 17th century, English explorer Henry Hudson signed a charter

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*RAY BUDDE is an education consultant in Attleboro, Mass., specializing in school district organization and written communication. This article is adapted from his book, Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts (Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 1988).*

building upon the past, not a discarding of it; and the amount of past development conditions the amount and variety of what can be done at present."<sup>28</sup> Thus such reforms as those advocated by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy and by the Holmes Group — reforms that attempt massive changes, veritable revolutions — may be doomed from the start.

Some research-based *evolutionary perspectives* are now emerging, and they are beginning to influence both oral tradition and politics. These evolutionary perspectives touch on such issues as class size, mastery learning, direct instruction, questioning techniques and wait-time, time-on-task, cooperative learning, tutorial instruction, computer-aided instruction, school reorganization, and year-round schooling. These issues directly affect educators and the children they teach.

This nation has wasted billions of dollars on poorly conceived but politically popular reform movements that have sapped the energies of schoolpeople. We need a national moratorium on reforms so that educators and local policy makers can analyze their own problems. This could lead to a new concept: *local system analysis*. Each local school district would systematically study its own cultures — yes, *cultures* — and then implement a carefully researched, well-coordinated, and well-funded plan for specific improvements. With adequate time to reflect on *real* problems and on the implications of alternative solutions, school systems could conceivably come up with intrinsically sound modifications that would genuinely improve their curricula, their instructional practices, their organizational and staffing patterns, and their delivery of social services to children in need of such services. To date, however, education reformers *have not* (in the words of Sir Isaac Newton) "stood on the shoulders of giants."

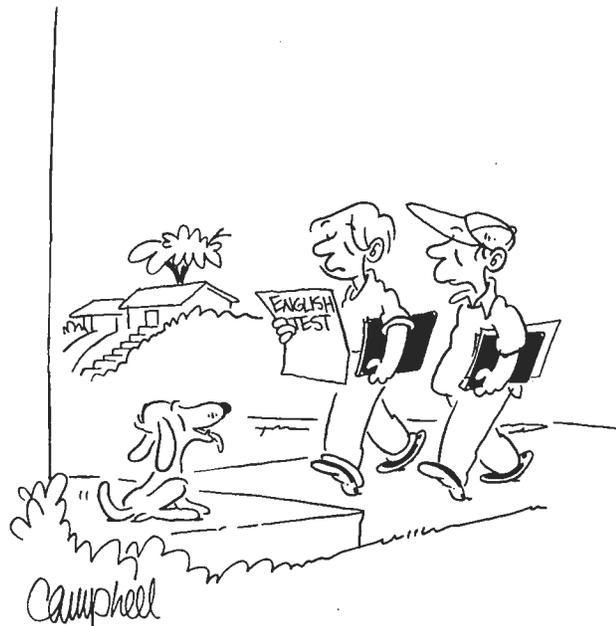
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"I think I'm about to become the object of the verb to punish."

with the East India Company that authorized him to seek a short cut from Europe to Asia through the Arctic Ocean. Hudson's charter included the objectives and time line of the mission, the responsibilities of the granting authority and of the recipient, provisions for documenting Hudson's accomplishments, a plan for compensation, and the signatures of both parties.

The elements of Hudson's charter are included in the educational charters between groups of teachers and their school boards. The school board, as granting authority, funds a group of teachers to carry out a particular instructional program for three, four, or five years. The "educational charter," signed by the teachers and the board, spells out the goals, objectives, and responsibilities of both parties.

Any group of teachers may propose a charter for a specific educational purpose. For example, eight kindergarten, first-, and second-grade teachers might wish to unify the kindergarten and primary-level curriculum by initiating a whole-language approach to instruction in all three grades. Or 10 high school teachers might wish to replace a chaotic system of electives with a coordinated humanities program for juniors and seniors. Or 10 elementary math and science teachers might wish to coordinate the teaching of those two subjects in four elementary schools and one middle school.

A school district can start with a few well-planned pilot charters and add more chartered programs as the idea is tested and refined. A crisscrossing system of multi-year charters would free the education system from the bonds of the "single-year operation syndrome." Redesigning curricula, building programs, providing staff development, solving such tough problems as drugs in the school — these and similar projects all need to be viewed within a multi-year context.

#### LIFE CYCLE OF A CHARTER

The life cycle of an educational charter can be divided into five stages: generating ideas, planning the charter, preparing for teaching under the charter, teaching, and monitoring and evaluating the program.

Generating ideas. The initial impetus for a group of teachers to decide to teach under an educational charter could come from any number of sources: dissatisfac-

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tion with the curriculum or with the organization of instruction; enthusiasm for a teaching strategy that has proved successful in other schools; interest in ideas picked up at a conference or during a visit to classrooms in other school districts.

This is a time of exploration and wide-ranging discussion. Parents and other members of the community who might be interested in the curricular area or age group covered by the proposed charter could join the teachers to form a discussion group.

Should there be interest in developing a charter, the group would first submit a request for planning funds — summarizing the steps it would like to take to develop a charter plan. The budget included in this request should estimate the costs of such items as planning activities, consultant services, travel to out-of-town schools, and extra-time stipends for teachers. The teachers would present their request at a regular meeting of the school board.

*Planning the charter.* If planning funds are approved, the informal discussion group becomes a charter planning committee and carries out the planning activities specified in the request for funds.

The results of the planning committee's efforts are summarized on the charter form itself. The form also includes the date of the agreement, the title of the charter, the beginning and ending dates for instruction under the charter, any necessary procedural steps, and the signatures of the board and teachers.

Most of the space on the charter form is used to describe the age group to be served, the instructional objectives, and the various resources needed to accom-

plish the objectives. These items are written in such a way that they can be observed, monitored, and evaluated during the life of the charter. The following are some of the items that might be included on a charter form:

- projected enrollment by grade level and subject;
  - applicable learning theories and the manner in which individual and group instruction would be used to maximize learning;
  - specific learning objectives, the testing programs to be used and their relationships to other testing programs, and the manner in which the test results will be used;
  - the pattern of courses and units during the life of the charter;
  - assignments of teachers, aides, clerical staff, and volunteers;
  - examples of how career development and inservice education activities (including action research projects) will be integrated with the curriculum and program needs of the charter;
  - a plan for encouraging parents and other community members to support the educational activities of the charter;
  - a plan for the use of textbooks, teacher-produced materials, computers, libraries, and media centers;
  - a program budget;
  - the organization of the charter team and its relationship to a charter advisory committee; and
  - a summary of plans for collecting data to monitor and evaluate the program and the names of two teachers to serve on a five-person committee charged with monitoring and evaluating the program.
- Preparing for teaching.* If once the school board approves the charter, the next three to nine months are spent in preparation for teaching under the charter. Activities at this stage include:
- completing the writing of the curriculum;
  - matching career development activities and inservice education activities with the objectives of the program;
  - if appropriate, restructuring the planning committee into an advisory committee;
  - assisting the teachers serving on the committee to monitor and evaluate the program in planning their documentation of charter activities;
  - designing and printing a brochure to explain the program to prospective students and their parents;
  - developing enrollment procedures,

**Under a charter system, no program, course, or service can continue year after year without being judged for effectiveness.**

taking care of scheduling, and providing space;

- creating lesson materials and ordering necessary books, audiovisual materials, and software; and
- setting up continuing consultant, clerical, and other support services as provided in the charter.

The third stage ends when schooling under the charter actually starts. Generally, though not always, this will coincide with the beginning of the school year.

*Teaching under the charter.* This fourth stage comes when the school is in operation, with students in classes and teachers teaching. Budget status reports are provided on the first day of each quarter. Career development activities and inservice education activities are to be carried out as planned. If there is a need to replace staff members, the charter or school board policy will spell out the procedures.

This fourth stage continues throughout the life of the charter. However, three or four months should be allowed before beginning the fifth and final stage: monitoring and evaluation. Teachers need adequate time to adjust to an organizational framework in which they have day-by-day control and within which they are responsible for their professional work.

*Program monitoring and evaluation.* The plans for program monitoring and evaluation should be stated clearly in the charter in a way that allows the outcomes of the program to be observed. The teachers who serve on the committee to monitor and evaluate the program document charter activities. This committee also includes a teacher and an administrator from outside the building in which

the chartered program is housed and a chairperson from outside the school district who has expertise in the curricular area or with the age group to which the charter applies.

Early in the final year of the charter, the committee summarizes its conclusions and makes one of three recommendations: 1) renew the charter as currently operating, 2) renew the charter with recommended changes, or 3) don't renew the charter for specific reasons. The committee's recommendation is submitted to the school board, along with the charter team's request for funds to plan for renewal or the team's final report.

#### IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL CHARTERS

In addition to freeing schools from the straitjacket of single-year operation, restructuring the school district through education by charter achieves at least four goals.

1. *The roles of teachers and administrators are redefined.* Education by charter gives teachers control over instruction. Teachers' instructional activities are monitored and evaluated by an "inside/outside committee" during the life of the charter. Groups of teachers secure funding for instruction directly from the school board. Awarding charters to groups of teachers creates a strong sense of collegiality that works to counter the much-criticized individualistic, "closed-door" model of teaching.

Administrators develop a more realistic definition of "educational leadership." Gone is the diffuse and heavy burden of *being responsible for instruction.* The superintendent needs to have vision and skill in long-term planning. Principals continue doing what good principals are already doing: supporting their teachers and creating a safe, positive climate in which students can learn and grow.

2. *The operation of school boards*



*"How did he manage to come up with so many questions on parts unknown?"*

*changes.* Education by charter changes the nature of school board meetings and operations. The board spends more and more time on matters related to why schools exist. The annual budget is built by focusing on the objectives and costs of specific instructional programs. What better way for school board members to learn about school programs and services than to spend 30 to 60 minutes of every meeting listening to presentations and discussions from groups of teachers and acting on requests for planning funds and educational charters?

3. *A continuing cycle of curriculum improvement and renewal is set in motion.* Once a school district has changed all its programs and services to a charter system, every course and every service is subject to public review by the school board at least once every five years. No program, no course, no service can continue year after year, decade after decade, without being judged for its effectiveness in meeting its stated objectives. Tying career development activities and inservice education activities directly to the program objectives and needs spelled out in the charters helps insure a continuing flow of new ideas to members of the charter team.

4. *All parties face the challenge of identifying the knowledge base for the entire school curriculum.* As more and more charters are granted, school board members and professional educators find a workable, pragmatic knowledge base into which all parts of the school curriculum fit. The boundaries of those parts are determined by the ways in which "subject matter" is defined in the educational charters. However, the overall pattern and rationale of the curriculum must still be determined.

Models for such a pattern are hard to find. Undergraduate and graduate education no longer operate under any well-organized plan that could provide a ready model. Problems, solutions, and teaching and research areas in colleges and universities seem to be subdividing within disciplines and crossing disciplinary lines.

Education by charter is but one model of restructuring school districts. It won't solve all of education's ills or meet the needs of all districts. However, educational charters have a built-in organizational framework and well-defined processes to insure the continuing improvement of instruction. ☐

## Decentralizing a School District by Chartering *All* Schools

by Ray Budde

I would not expect local school boards, administrators, and teachers' unions to be enthusiastic about the growing interest in *charter schools*. After all, charter schools as presently envisioned are to be funded out of scarce public moneys but would operate "outside the system."

One might ask, "Why haven't local school leaders allowed individual schools to become more autonomous and more responsible for their own destinies?" My response is that people in the major roles of an organization are generally frozen in established power relationships. Quite naturally, they oppose fundamental organizational change because they might lose the status and benefits they have achieved. Changing who has the power -- or who is perceived to have the power -- is a very, very difficult thing to do.

Those in power in a school district seldom change the organization for idealistic reasons like better student learning or more parent involvement. However, local school leaders *might* change the organization of the school district if they felt they were under *dire threat from the outside*. And I believe that they are.

### Evidence of *dire threat* to traditional school district organization

The emergence of charter schools may be the final wake-up call to local educational leaders that the organization in which they are enmeshed is no longer viable. And there have been numerous other wake-up calls during the recent past that have mostly gone unanswered:

- Over fifteen years ago, the effective schools research established that the individual school (rather than the school district) was the unit of focus for reform and improvement.

- In the studies and reports of the 1980's, the American public education system was "weighed in the scales and found wanting."
- International studies of student achievement on basic skills consistently show American students scoring significantly lower than students from other industrialized nations.
- Over a quarter of a million children are now being educated at home. The number of "home schoolers" may well exceed 750,000 by the end of the century.
- The increasing interest in parental choice of their children's schools is based on the assumption that competition will reward the better schools and cause the poorer schools to improve or close.
- The increasing vulnerability of the men and women who fill the position of superintendent of schools may indicate that the centralized organization is no longer manageable by one person at the top.
- The America 2000 program is relying heavily on forces and talents outside local school districts to create "break-the-mold schools."
- The Edison Project, under Chris Whittle's leadership, hopes to enroll 2,000,000 students in a national network of for-profit "new American schools" by the Year 2005.

This list provides sufficient evidence that there is a *dire threat from the outside* to how local schools are presently organized and how they function. The hierarchical, bureaucratic model may have been appropriate during more stable times; but it is no longer a responsive framework for local education in the volatile, rapidly changing world of today. But where do we look to find the structural timbers for a new, more viable framework for local education?

Private sector provides a model for a new organization for the school district

In our society, education has always looked to the private sector for new forms of organization. In the nineteenth century, school leaders borrowed the "factory model" from manufacturing and created *graded schools within a centralized school district*. (With few exceptions, this is how local education is still organized.)

Today American business finds itself challenged by intense global competition and a revolution in technology. In order to survive, many corporations are abandoning bureaucratic structure by flattening the hierarchy. Middle management is "downsized" by eliminating unnecessary white collar and support personnel. Power and responsibility are pushed as close as possible to where goods are made and where goods and services are sold. The central concept of the private sector's "new organization" is *decentralization*.

Education would do well to follow the private sector in its move to decentralize. To do this, the hierarchy of the school district needs to be flattened. The "central office" (administrators, supervisors, specialists and support staff) needs to be downsized. Power and responsibility have to be pushed as close as possible to education's consumers, the pupils, their parents, and other citizens of the community.

#### **Decentralize by chartering *all* schools in a district**

Legislators and other policy makers are finding the notion of chartering schools an attractive means for reinventing schools from scratch. Given provisions for parental choice, these charter schools would compete against existing schools, which would have to improve or ultimately close.

I see an additional greater opportunity for the use of the concept of chartering schools: a strategy for decentralizing school districts.

I believe school board members and leading educators in many schools districts are feeling heavy pressure to change. They may be looking for a way to change things to respond to this pressure. I would suggest that they consider decentralizing their districts through school charters. This strategy would place responsibility for results close to where learning takes place.

A new decentralized school district would have a lean, central office that would serve as a support for autonomous schools. An inside-outside school monitoring and accountability function would insure that each school and major program would be examined and reviewed every five to seven years.

The magnitude of this opportunity for restructuring becomes evident when the number and sizes of school districts are considered. Obviously, medium to large districts would have the most to gain by decentralizing. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, about 1500 of the 15,000 school districts have enrollments exceeding 5000 students. But these 1500 districts enroll about two-thirds of the nation's students. If decentralization through school charters becomes widely adopted, the number of students in chartered schools could exceed 20,000,000!

I would not discourage the use of charter schools as a means of introducing competition among schools. But let's examine the potential (and let's provide some planning money) for those school boards who want to charter schools in order to decentralize their school districts.

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Ray Budde is a writer and consultant in school district policy and organization. This has been excerpted from the author's Chartering All Schools — Strategy for Decentralizing a School District (in progress).

A word on school choice. *Decentralizing a school district* and *giving parents a choice of schools* are not mutually exclusive processes. *Decentralizing* implies a change in the governance of a school district. *Parental choice* involves changing the way children are enrolled in particular schools. The element of choice will probably create competition among autonomous schools within a decentralized school district. Allowing choice across school district lines would add to the intensity of competition for pupils.