

**Testimony of Josephine Baker  
Chair  
District of Columbia Public Charter School Board  
Before the  
Committee on Education, Libraries, Parks &  
Recreation  
December 17, 1998**

**Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:**

**I am Josephine Baker, chair of the DC Public Charter School Board, and for twenty-five years, a teacher in DC Public Schools. I applaud the Council for giving us this opportunity to talk about the steps our Board is taking to create a system of accountable, high-performing schools.**

**There's a banner in our office that says "We Charter Success." It's more than a slogan. It means that the Board approves only those applicants who demonstrate a compelling vision of education, strong educational leadership, a commitment to the community, and management that can handle the considerable fiscal and organizational demands of public charter schools.**

**Let me say a word or two about the effort we make at each stage to ensure success.**

- **We are already receiving detailed monthly financial statements from each school.**
- **We are creating a networked system that will enable the Board to review data on academic and organizational progress.**
- **We are working with the schools to create a user-friendly format for annual reports required by law.**
- **And although we have been doing site visits and other monitoring since long before schools opened, we expect to give approval in January to a set of formal procedures for dealing with any school that falls seriously out of compliance with the terms of its charter -- up to and including revocation.**

**But compliance alone does not create success. From the outset, we have tried to work as partners with our schools - being available to hear their concerns, helping to work out nut and bolts problems, and in general, trying to strike the right balance between autonomy and accountability.**

**We're particularly proud of one joint effort: The DC Charter League of Accountable Schools. The "CLAS of 98," as it's called, is a consortium of schools chartered by this Board,**

- The application process itself is exceedingly demanding, involving multiple stages of review by staff, technical experts, and the Board itself. In this cycle, we received 13 applications. We have given final approval to none at this point, <sup>but</sup> and have granted provisional approval to ~~just~~ 4.
- We have developed a detailed charter for each school opened this year. It goes well beyond the basic requirements of the law, because we think schools should know up-front what is expected of them.
- We are now in the process of developing detailed accountability plans with each school. These will identify the academic and non-academic outcomes sought for students, plus organizational and fiscal objectives, and indicators by which to measure progress over time. Every parent, policymaker, and taxpayer will be able to look at reports based on these plans, and know how well schools are succeeding.

**These steps are the cornerstones of success at the school level. But of course, the Board itself must also provide effective monitoring and oversight for the schools it charters. This involves the following initiatives:**

**which have banded together to develop new accountability systems that can serve as a national model for charters and other public schools. This effort has been recognized by a grant from the Walton Foundation, which will underwrite the League's efforts over the next 18 months.**

***I'm joined at the witness table by Mrs. Irasema Salcido, principal of the Cesar Chavez Public Policy Charter High School, and now I'll ask her to discuss how these accountability efforts work at the school level.***