

# 13 to vie for bit of charter-school pie

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Two applications to establish charter schools in Denver were filed on deadline yesterday afternoon, bringing the total number of hopeful groups to a baker's dozen.

During the next six weeks, the seven members of the Denver school board will decide which of the 13 charter-school ideas whet their appetite for innovation. Ob-

servers expect four or five charters, at most, to be approved.

The purpose of semi-independent charter schools within public school districts — allowed under a 1993 law — is to nurture creativity, more closely match a school's style with its community and demonstrate ways of reaching students who might otherwise fail or drop out.

"We're very happy with the

range and creativity of the proposals that have been filed in Denver," said Barbara O'Brien, executive director of the Colorado Children's Campaign, the group that led the coalition of parents and teachers that promoted the concept in the legislature.

Charter schools will receive at least 80 percent of the district's per-pupil operating revenue but will govern themselves outside the

politics of public bureaucracies. Each approved charter will develop its own contract with the school board.

The 13 Denver applicants are:

■ SAFE School, 1925 Blake St. — The acronym stands for Self-Directed Achievers for Education. It would start next fall with 90 students of middle and high school

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age. The school "will provide a highly interactive, experiential, technology-rich environment," according to the application.

■ Clayton Charter School, 3801 Martin Luther King Blvd. — The school would be an offshoot of the Clayton Foundation, which would donate space, facilities and \$450,000. The school would serve 88 students from kindergarten through third grade.

■ Denver High School — Currently located in the Tivoli, the school would remain there but gain the independence of charter status. The 120 students would receive an education based on high standards and a basic curriculum. Some would attend college courses on the Auraria campus.

■ Denver Youth Academy, 1240 W. Bayaud Ave. — The school would be run by Denver Area Youth Services, a community-based nonprofit agency. It would serve 100 middle-schoolers and seek to develop academic excellence, social skills and career preparation.

■ Savio House, 325 King St. — The school is operated by the Lions Club of Denver. The charter school would serve 10 students from west Denver "who are unable or unwilling to attend (or) benefit from the traditional public school system." Operation as a charter would be-

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gin immediately.

■ Athenian Academy — The core of this proposal is similar to the fundamental approach approved for a charter school in Douglas County, the Academy Charter School. In fact, many parts of the Denver application mistakenly refer to Douglas County. The school would promote "basic reading, writing and mathematics with integration of leadership development and computer skills."

■ Waldorf High School — This school would be an extension of the Waldorf School, 735 E. Florida Ave., which is in its 20th year. The school encourages students to be artistic, imaginative and physically active. The charter would be launched in 1995.

■ Magnet School of the Deaf — Sponsored by the Colorado Association of the Deaf, the magnet school is seeking cooperation of 15 area school districts in six counties. With a Montessori bent to the curriculum, the school seeks to

produce "citizens who are productive, independent, intelligent, questioning, fair, full members of the deaf community."

■ Thurgood Marshall Charter Middle School — To be launched by a pair of DPS teachers, the school would spend its money on teachers who would deliver a stripped-down curriculum.

■ P.S. 1 — The proposal is backed by the University of Denver, Mercantile Square Development Co. and the Tattered Cover bookstore. The school would be an "urban learning community." It wouldn't begin until at least 1995.

■ The Walker Charter School for Academic Excellence — The 125-student school would cover preschool through eighth grade and would seek to hire more black teachers to work with students in northeast Denver.

■ The Frances E. Bradford Academy of Arts, Health and Occupational Studies — The school would work with high schoolers. "Schools are places that nurture personal development," the application states.

■ Denver Charter Middle School — This would be an extension of the successful and popular Denver Knight Fundamental Academy, which emphasizes a back-to-basics approach. Some 120 students would be served in grades six through eight with classroom sizes of 15 to 17 students per teacher.