
2010
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Welcome to the Idaho Charter School Authorizers' Resource Manual. The purpose of this volume is to provide information and resources to public school boards and superintendents as they weigh the decision about whether to grant a charter to a petitioner in their district and then how to support excellence and accountability once authorized. It is also a resource for charter school developers and existing charter schools, to support effective school-authorizer relationships.

The resources provided in the manual are not intended to convince districts to authorize or not, but rather, to provide as much information as possible to support informed decision making and clear expectations of the responsibilities of authorizing. This volume is neither pro nor con charter but rather PRO student. All the stakeholders in education, the teachers and parents, the superintendents and board members, the State Department of Education and Idaho Charter School Network, the taxpayer and the decision makers share a common vision - children who are prepared to successfully accomplish their goals, gain entry and complete college or other post secondary training, and be a self-sufficient, contributing member of their community.

The State Department of Education along with the Idaho Charter School Network believes that the charter school movement, though small, can make a contribution to the vision for choice and continuous improvement in education in Idaho. We believe the quality of Idaho's charter school sector is dependent in part on strong authorizers. Although the quality of a particular school depends primarily on the effectiveness of individual developers and operators, the quality of the broader movement depends, in large part, on the effectiveness of the authorizers who approve and oversee these schools. Providing all students with a high quality education and parents with a choice about the school that best fits their student and family, is what the charter movement is about. Every student in Idaho succeeding.

A charter school is defined as a semi-autonomous, outcome-based public school of choice operating with a

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Introduction

Public Charter School Act of 1998

Legislative Intent
It is the intent of the legislature to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, students and community members to establish and maintain public charter schools which operate independently from the existing traditional school district structure but within the existing public school system as a method to accomplish any of the following:

(1) Improve student learning;

(2) Increase learning experiences for students;

(3) Include the use of different learning and on-line learning;

(5) Create new professional opportunities for teachers;

(6) Provide parents and students with expanded choices;

(7) Hold the schools established under this chapter accountable for meeting measurable student educational standards.

( I.C. §33-5202)
governing board who oversees the philosophy, educational program, and activities. It is a nonprofit, publicly funded, and nonsectarian entity operating independently within the existing public school system and is governed by the conditions of the approved charter and all federal and state laws.

Charter schools were formed on the assumption that one educational size or approach does not fit all—neither all educators nor all parents nor all students. Charter proponents recognize many benefits of the charter idea, including:

• the creation of new public education options for underserved children and communities;
• opportunities for educators to work in public schools that they help create, define, and/or manage;
• opportunities for parents to make decisions about the public school that they think best meets their children’s educational needs; and
• models for school governance and accountability that can be applied to public education more generally.

Authors are charged with ensuring that charter schools fulfill their public responsibilities, including open and nonselective enrollment, responsible use of public funds, compliance with civil rights and other applicable laws, and academic fulfillment of federal and state requirements; and meet any additional terms of their charter/performance contracts. An Authorizer in Idaho is limited to a local board of trustees of a school district in this state, or the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, as defined in Section 33-5202 A(1), Idaho Code.

Nationally, there are many groups recognized as authorizers - school districts or LEAs are the most common, followed by commissions and universities. In some states hospitals or other non-profits may authorize a charter school. In Idaho, authorizers must either be a school district or the Idaho Commission of Public Charter Schools.

Charter school authorizing is a responsibility that local or state education agencies—school system authors—might prefer avoiding. But, there are many good reasons to consider the charter opportunity. It is clear that providing public accountability for charter schools carries a new and challenging set of obligations for any authorizer, it also carries many opportunities for students and families in a school community.

Authorizers, as mentioned earlier, may be one of many groups recognized as having authority to approve a charter petition. Currently, about half of the 40 charter schools operating in Idaho are district authorized and half are Commission authorized. In Idaho law, all virtual schools must be authorized by the Commission and therefore they sidestep the district where they are headquartered and go directly to the Commission to request chartering.
Message to charter schools and charter school developers.

This manual is designed to shed light on the possibilities. Research tells us that high quality authorizing is related to high quality charter schools. If you have experienced success and excellence in the absence of high quality oversight or support from an authorizer, just imagine what you can accomplish with a positive relationship in which accountability and successful innovations are shared.

A teacher shares knowledge with and learns from his or her students. By holding students accountable for their learning, the teacher sets the bar for excellence just above their reach and continues to support and challenge them to reach that ever rising bar. That is what we hope will happen with authorizers in Idaho. Not only will the authorizer who follows the principles and standards of quality charter authorizing hold schools accountable to deliver on the promises of their charter but they will help them to exceed even their own expectations for student performance.

In the Charter School Act of 1998, the first priority for the Legislative Intent was 'Improved student learning'. A key challenge that may be impairing the charter movement nationally and here in Idaho, is the broad misalignment in expectations among charter school operators, authorizers, funders and other stakeholders about how to measure and judge school quality. The Charter School Quality Consortium and Consensus Panel convened over the course of three years in order to establish a consensus among national leaders and organizations working to bring quality educational options to underserved families regarding academic and operational performance measures and practices that define quality charter schools. To accomplish their goal of disseminating this information, the panel published A Framework for Academic Quality. In the time since publishing the framework it has become known as the BCSQ Project¹ or Building Charter School Quality. The Consensus Panel recommends four essential indicators of academic quality: student achievement level, student progress over time (growth), postsecondary readiness and success for high schools, and student engagement. As we continue to explore measures that provide a reliable indication of the performance of charter school students in Idaho, the framework can provide a common core of quality indicators, measures, metrics and benchmarks for meaningful dialogue among charter schools and between charter schools and their authorizers.

It is our hope that this Authorizer Manual, with a strong disposition for student achievement, can be a tool to help align expectations and frame discussions among all stakeholders in the charter movement in Idaho.

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”~Kofi Annan
Idaho Charter School Primer
Charter schools are free public schools that are open and available to all students. A charter school gives parents the choice of sending their children to a school that uses innovative methods to provide a quality education in a smaller, more responsive learning environment. Charter schools are part of the public education system and are committed to improving public education.

IDAHO CODE TITLE 33 CHAPTER 52
- Idaho’s charter school law was passed in 1998.
- Teachers, parents and community members may establish public charter schools.
- Public charter schools operate independently from the existing traditional school district structure, but within the existing public school system.
- The number of start-up charter schools is currently limited to 6 per year.
- A charter may not be granted to or operated by a for-profit entity. No private or parochial school may convert to charter status.
- A public charter school is organized and managed under the Idaho non-profit corporation act.
- A charter school board of directors functions independently of any school board in any district.
- Charter schools may be district conversion schools or new start-up schools; to date all are new start-up schools.
- Local boards of trustees or the Idaho Public Charter School Commission may grant charters. If the IPCSC grants a charter, the school becomes an LEA.
- Idaho has a seven member, Governor-appointed, Charter School Commission (three from local boards of trustees, three from charter school boards, and one at large member).
- Authorizers may revoke charters; to date none has been revoked.
- Charters are granted for an indefinite time period.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT OF IDAHO’S CHARTER LAW
Charter schools were established as a method to accomplish any of the following:
- Improve student learning;
- Increase learning opportunities for all students with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students;
- Include the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- Utilize virtual distance learning and on-line learning;
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;
- Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public schools system;
- Hold the schools established under this chapter accountable for meeting measurable student educational standards.

CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE ACCOUNTABLE
- Charter schools are required to report to their board and authorizers regarding their students are meeting the measurable educational standards as set forth in the charter
- Charter schools complete annual fiscal and programmatic audits.
- Charter schools comply with federal laws, state laws, local ordinances
- Charter schools participate in all statewide assessments.
- Charter schools must be accredited.
- Charter schools may participate in the Idaho Charter School Network Accountability Plan. (www.idahocharterschoolnetwork.com)
- Ultimately, charter schools are accountable to the marketplace.

DISTINGUISHING ELEMENTS OF CHARTER SCHOOLS
- They play an important part in school reform by serving as research and development centers for the public education system.
- They are pioneers and innovators—mission driven schools created by educators and community members who envision a school committed to a particular purpose and philosophy.
- Charter school legislation honors parents’ rights to make informed choices about their children’s education.
- They have a record of high student achievement. When they fail, they are closed, not unlike a business.

FUNDING FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS
- State funding for charter schools, like other public schools is based on Average Daily Attendance (ADA).
- Charter schools have no bonding authority and so pay facilities costs with operations funding.
- They may request a 25% advance for start-up purposes in the first year and in years of substantial growth.
- To date approximately 11 million dollars have been granted to Idaho charter schools through a federal Charter School Support Program Grant.

Source: Idaho State Department of Education; Charter Start Manual
Idaho Code Title 33 Chapter 52
Principles & Standards 2009; National Association of Charter School Authorizers
Building Quality Charter Schools - A Framework
The purpose of charter school authorizing, according to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), is to improve student achievement. A quality authorizer engages in responsible oversight of charter schools by ensuring that schools have both the autonomy to which they are entitled and the public accountability for which they are responsible.

Throughout the United States there are a variety of groups who, through legislative action, have been granted the right to authorize a charter school. These include districts, state boards of education, state commissions, universities and hospitals and other non-profit organizations.

An Authorized Chartering Entity is defined in Section 33-5202 A(1), Idaho Code, and means either the local board of trustees of a school district in this state, or the Idaho Public Charter School Commission. In 1998 when the first charter law was passed in Idaho, it provided only for the board of a school district to authorize. In 2004 the law was amended and provided for the formation of the Idaho Public Charter School Commission. All virtual charter schools in Idaho automatically go before the Commission to request authorization and other prospective charter schools who are referred to the Commission by a district.

A district policy that outlines the responsibilities of the district and any prospective charter school is an advisable step for districts even before the first charter is authorized. Both the Boise School District and Meridian District who are both authorizers, have policies that can serve as a model to other districts. They both cover the law thoroughly as it relates to both the district and the charter. When developing or updating a district policy, there is an opportunity to infuse the policy with nationally recognized best practices in authorizing; additionally, a district can

Agreeing to Authorize

As an Authorizer, will you regulate process or performance?

Regulating for process, says Jim Griffin, CEO of the Colorado League of Charter Schools, is a default response by authorizers who are not adequately equipped or committed to holding charters accountable for performance. Holding schools accountable for performance presupposes an authorizer setting clear outcomes on a school-by-school basis, combined with an evaluation system to measure each school's performance against those expected outcomes. (2004)
tailor the policy to reflect some of the needs or challenges of the district.

Consider this excerpt from the Boise District policy regarding oversight:

**Review of the Charter School**

The Board shall retain the right to review, at least annually, the degree to which the charter school is meeting the terms of the petition. (Independent School District of Boise; Policy Manual: Education Agency Relations 10000 pg2)

It isn't just the right but the responsibility of the authorizer to hold the charter accountable for academic performance, fiscal solvency and ethical operation. The policy could acknowledge the shared responsibility for quality and academic achievement and the authorizer's role of effective oversight.

When creating a policy, a district must comply with the state law and rule; however, a district may structure the application process so that it is both fair to applicants but takes into account their capacity for reviewing and considering petitions. In the Meridian School District, for instance, charter petitioners must submit a letter of intent prior to submitting a full petition for consideration.

**Time Line for Establishing a Charter School**

The board will only accept charter school petitions one day each year. A letter of intent to submit a petition must be filed with Joint School District No. 2 between June 15th and July 15th. A copy of the charter petition in electronic format, either a .doc or a .pdf file must be submitted to the clerk of the board, Joint School District No. 2, 1303 E.100 Central Dr., Meridian, ID 83642, no later than 4:30 p.m., on the second Friday of August. Joint School District No. 2 will follow timelines established in Idaho Code 33-5205 regarding public hearing requirements and decisions granting or denying charter petitions based on the one day a year that petitions may be submitted. (Meridian Joint School District No.12, Policy Code No. 206 Page 3 of 6)

In a 2000 study of the Los Angeles Unified School District, JoAnn Izu identified two major challenges in the relationships between districts and charter schools:

1) finding a workable balance between autonomy and accountability for charter schools and
2) managing the district-charter school relationship within a large, bureaucratic, complex system.

The Idaho State Department of Education - Office of School Choice is available to support developing charters and charter authorizers. We will outline here some of the principles of effective authorizing recognized by national groups, including the National Association of
Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). Additional resources are continuously being developed and additional web resources will be listed at the end of this section.

To achieve effective oversight and accountability, NACSA recommends the following principles for quality charter school authorizing:

- approach authorizing deliberately and thoughtfully with the intent to improve the quality of public school options;
- support and advance the purposes of charter school law;
- be a catalyst for charter school development to satisfy unmet educational needs;
- strive for clarity, consistency, and transparency in developing and implementing authorizing policies and procedures;
- be a source of accurate, intelligible, performance-based information about the schools that they oversee;
- be responsible not for the success or failure of individuals schools, but for holding schools accountable for their performance;
- use objective and verifiable measures of student achievement as the primary measure of school quality;
- support parents and students in making decisions and staying informed about the quality of education provided in charter schools; and,
- make the well-being of students the fundamental value informing all decision-making and actions. (2009, pg2)

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO A DISTRICT BOARD OF AUTHORIZING A CHARTER SCHOOL?**

This is a very important question and one that all school boards should ask themselves even prior to being approached by a charter development group.

**Are there any benefits to this relationship? Should we consider authorizing a charter school?**

When charter schools first arrived on the American educational landscape in 1991, few people suspected that within two decades, thousands of these schools would be established across the country, serving almost a million and a half children. In Idaho, charter school law was passed in 1998 and in the years since 45 schools have opened, five have closed and over 14,000 students currently attend. Idaho's earliest charter high schools are seeing their first college graduates.
Any parent or student who had the benefit of a charter school that met their needs would say 'Yes', there are a number of important benefits to the district and the families in the community. What are some of these benefits? Authorizers can use chartering as an indispensable, practical strategy for educational improvement. Charter development is an essential way to create small learning communities when large schools are the district norm. Research tells us that many students do better in a small learning community. Charter development can create specialty schools when resources for the development of magnet schools are not available. Starting a school for the arts, sciences or professional technical education can benefit students with highly engaging and meaningful connection to their academic and life goals. Charter development provides a venue for teachers and other educational leaders to explore entrepreneurial strategies that they might otherwise not consider in a large district school. District authorized charters have the advantage of autonomy to consider different schedules and curricula, alternative class and age distinctions and many other variables that may improve academic outcomes.

According to Lubienski and Weitzel in The Charter School Experiment (2010), "Research and experience are beginning to show state and district authorizers that they can serve needs through chartering that are not being fulfilled through traditional public schools."

Charter schools serve a number of school system and community interests. The following benefits may be a match for any number of districts both small and large, urban and rural, which could support meeting the needs of students more completely.

**EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES.** "There is a growing body of evidence indicating that students in charter schools, on the whole, are performing as well as students in traditional public schools and may be making learning gains at a faster rate than their public school counterparts" (Tucker & Haft, 2003). In more recent years here in Idaho, Wang (2009) found that charter school students outperformed non-charter students on ISAT tests. Parents surveyed in the Wang study also reported that their students were more successful in a charter school than they had been in a non-charter school. If gains are faster in charter schools than underperforming students have an opportunity to make up lost ground.

**ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY.** Charter schools, like many small districts in Idaho, operate with lower overhead and generally, fewer public dollars than traditional public schools. Charter schools do not have access to local property tax dollars or the ability to pass emergency bond levies or request a levy for building or other projects. In Idaho, there are no state funds for charter school facilities. Charter schools, according to the State Department of Education operate with

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<th>Revenues</th>
<th>Average Charter</th>
<th>Average District</th>
<th>Charter % of District</th>
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<tr>
<td>Property Taxes</td>
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<td>$1,448</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Funds</td>
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<td>$781</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Funds</td>
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<td>$1,248</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$8,078</td>
<td>$8,767</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Source: Idaho SDE, Race to the Top Federal Application, 2009*
slightly more state funds per student ($5403 compared with $5290); with zero dollars in property taxes compared with $1448 on average in district schools, and $406 compared with $781 in federal funds. Charters generally receive more funds per pupil in both grants and fund raising dollars due to both opportunity and the engagement of parents. (Idaho SDE, Race to the Top Federal Application, 2009). Where do charter schools find efficiencies? Principals report that they save money having a much less robust “central office” than do traditional public schools. They place virtually all decision making authority and work at the school level. Many charters address diminished public support with strong private fundraising.

Many charter school repurpose commercial or closed public buildings for their facilities. Huge amounts of donated and parent labor often make the renovations possible. Among those who lease a facility, more than half are repurposed buildings. Nearly 1/3 of those who own their buildings have repurposed building and 2/3 have newly constructed facilities. Fast growing districts like Coeur d’Alene have benefitted from nationally recognized Coeur d’Alene Academy in a number of ways. Beyond the educational excellence offered to over 600 students, the city has not had to build additional facilities to accommodate a growing population or to increase the number of district employees.

CLIMATE OF INNOVATION. One of the intentions of the legislation in Idaho as well as in most states was to bring innovation to education. Recognizing the rapidly changing work environment of our time, and an educational system that was lagging behind. While only one of seven legislative intents, it is an important one. The idea that charter schools might serve as pilot sights for educational ideas that could help transform the public system as a whole was embraced by some in Idaho. The Harbor Method which was developed in Idaho first implemented at Liberty Charter School in Nampa, has been replicated in 8 charter schools throughout the state as well as replicated by the Boise Independent School District in one of their previously underperforming schools. The method was implemented at Owyhee Elementary School without the district school being converted to a charter.

"Emphasis on innovation has, to some degree, served as a red herring for the charter movement. It tends to extol novelty for the sake of being “new” rather than for the better outcomes at which all innovation should aim" claimed Tucker and Haft (2003). This emphasis has sometimes provided reluctant authorizers with an excuse to deny an application for a proposal that otherwise showed every promise of successfully addressing a school system need. In the case of Payette River Technical Academy in Emmett or Meridian Medical Arts Charter in Meridian, they clearly brought an innovative approach to their
districts offering high-end professional technical programs where none or few existed before.

Despite claims to the contrary, there is both anecdotal and research-based evidence that charter schools in Idaho are innovative and are helping to effect change in the larger school system. Schools may innovate in curriculum and instruction, they may have a very different school week with innovative wrap around services. They may develop robust hybrid program blending online and classroom instruction. There are numerous accounts of school districts introducing a particular program soon after a charter school emphasizing the program proved to be popular. In Boise the creation of both a Harbor School and a Montessori School. In Meridian, the development of an Arts School and IB School. Some other districts have implemented elements adopted from charter practices. In Pocatello/Chubbuck, for instance, elementary schools emulate the 'Morning meeting' concept that is integrated into the Expeditionary Program at Pocatello Community Charter.

**Parental Demand.** Creating charter schools within a district can be an answer to increasing parent involvement through responding to the market demand. Parental interest in and satisfaction with charter schools has been consistent and dramatic. Surveys of parents who have had the opportunity to enroll their children in charter schools consistently indicate satisfaction with their decisions. In 2009 a study of Idaho Charter Schools by Northwest Laboratories found that 97% of all charter parents were very happy with their students' school. Reports of long waiting lists to attend charter schools are commonplace and in Idaho over 7,000 students have expressed interest in attending a charter school. If districts and the Charter Commission in Idaho immediately doubled the number of charter schools that they authorized to 12 rather than 6 per year, it would still take several years to absorb all the students on current waiting lists. It is a clear testament to demand that nearly every charter school in Idaho has a waiting list and that so few have failed over the last 12 years.

**No Child Left Behind Interventions.** NCLB requires that students at schools that miss their adequate yearly progress targets for two or more consecutive years must have the opportunity to transfer to higher-performing schools. School districts are required, even charter schools, to communicate to parents what the school's AYP status is and what other options are available to them. High-performing charters schools, both existing and new, can be among the options. In many cases, while districts may have a more robust array of services to offer the parents of a child with special learning needs, the small size and culture of a charter school may be the best choice for that child's success.

**Shared Control.** Authorization of a charter school by a district presents a little recognized paradox. Charter law dictates the level of autonomy ascribed to a charter school; but school system authorizers can achieve greater control or influence over the whole of the public education outcomes in their district by delegating operational control to charter schools. When an authorizer approves a charter petition, they can collaborate with the charter developers on the design and focus of the school. They can guide development of any program that they believes will meet the needs of students in the system.
**Relationship.** When a district is open to authorizing a charter school, it has a much greater opportunity for a working relationship that will be complementary rather than competitive. When a district declines the opportunity, most tenacious charter developers in Idaho will go to the Commission. Unless the district found something remarkably weak in the charter petition, the Commission of Public Charter Schools is likely to authorize the school. If the charter opens, parents and students will vote with their feet and many will elect to try out the new, smaller school. Charters and districts working together can create a more complete system of education for their community.

**School System Needs - Chartering May Be a Solution**

Districts regularly engage in needs assessments and strategic planning for their districts. They do so in response to changing budgets, changing populations and growth, new and altered challenges and student outcomes. Authorizers can assess the current opportunities and needs of their district and ask the question, “What educational opportunities are not currently (or sufficiently) available in my district that ought to be for the benefit of students, parents, and teachers?”

The answers may be many and may arise from a needs assessment or perhaps, come to the attention of the district from a parent or teacher. Among districts in Idaho, some have partnered with charters to address unmet needs. Some examples:

- OWL Charter Academy in Nampa is an example of a school created to address needs of particular types of students with severe learning challenges.
- Idaho Arts in Nampa is an example of a particular educational programs - a creative arts school and Sandpoint Charter is an example of a projects-based program.
- Interest from the community in having an Expeditionary and Outward bound program compelled both Boise and Pocatello to authorize EL schools in each of their districts.

Often, a group of charter developers identifies a need for their own children or small group of children and begins down the chartering path without ample discussions with the district. They may not anticipate that their need could be met within their school district or they may have experienced a large system that didn’t accommodate their need or their child’s particular need.

The work of Joanne Izu (2000) in Los Angeles demonstrated that both charter schools and districts see some real benefits in the existence of charter schools (see Figure 4). The opening of new types of charters in Idaho and dissemination grants that allow charters who are experimenting with new
approaches to share them, can help districts and educators learn more about what works well for certain students and the families in their communities. Payette River Technical Charter is a good example of groups coming together to look at the work force development needs of their community in Emmett, Idaho. Together they recognized that young people would leave the community if they didn’t have the skills to fill a job in the community. Additionally, they saw students leaving town to get the type of education they could find in neighboring larger districts. By breaking down old barriers, setting clear goals and expectations, and creating new opportunities for dialogue charter schools and districts have an opportunity to transform the educational landscape.

Authorizers can stimulate the development of charters or be on the receiving end of a petition request. Both are viable routes to implementing effective school models. Once an authorizer has identified a particular need or has a teacher or principal with a proposal, it may find that the need can best be met through chartering. For example, in Emmett, Idaho, the high school principal noted that more students were taking online AP classes or looking outside the community to get professional technical education classes. The district authorized a regional professional technical charter high school with an online component that met the need of many students and will contribute to the work force development in the community. In Idaho Falls, a teacher found his own children were more successful in a private Montessori preschool program. He wanted to bring the same opportunity to students K-6 and he developed a Montessori charter school. Because of the flexibility inherent in the charter school model, it may be easier for an authorizer to encourage introduction of a particular model in the form of a charter school. A district may identify a need and not have someone on staff to take the lead. In these cases soliciting proposals may be a good route. Planning and start-up grants and the support of the office of school choice can make the development of a charter a reality.

R
ELATIONSHIPS: HOW CAN SCHOOL
DISTRICTS AND CHARTER SCHOOLS
DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE WORKING
RELATIONSHIP?

In Idaho, all charter developers must go through a number of critical steps prior to being authorized to open a school. Learning about what must be contained in a petition and completing the petition is the first huge hurdle that must be cleared. "At least one (1) person among a group of petitioners of a prospective public charter school shall attend a public charter school workshop offered by the state department of education” (I.C. §33-5205(5). Once the petition is written it must be submitted to the State Department
of Education Office of School Choice for a sufficiency review. This step insures that the charter authors have covered all the minimum bases in their petition that are required by law.

Pursuant to the public charter school rules adopted by the Idaho State Board of Education on March 10, 2005, charter school petitioners are required to submit a draft charter school petition to the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) for the purpose of determining whether the petition complies with statutory requirements (I.C. 33-5202). This review must occur prior to the petition being submitted to an authorized chartering entity (IDAPA 08.02.04. 200.03). Refer to Addendum A for complete sufficiency review form.

Charter developers are encouraged early in their process to initiate conversations with the school district where the proposed charter would be located. Most charter developers begin these conversations early to test the waters and the relationship. Regardless of whether a district has a record of not authorizing charters or has never have had this opportunity come before their board, all petitioners are required by law to submit their petition to the district first.

The typical image of a charter school authorizer is an office or, too often, one individual waiting to be handed applications, to be persuaded that a proposed charter school should or should not be approved, and to be told whether a school is doing what it promised to do. In sum, the authorizer has typically assumed a passive place in the world of charter schools. During the infancy of the charter idea, the authorizer was not recognized as a catalyst for charter school development.

School boards of trustees who have never been approached by a charter developer might consider exploring a conversation about what opportunities a charter might bring to their district. As districts construct strategic plans and identify unmet needs in their districts they might ask what possibilities for meeting the need could be accomplished by a charter rather than a program or a magnet school. Rather than merely okaying or approving a charter petition, forward thinking boards could be initiating relationships with charter developers to bring a unique program or solution to an unmet need that will benefit students in their communities for years to come. A number of strategies are possible approaches that districts might consider. Several are presented here.

**ISSUE A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS.** If a district board or superintendent identifies a particular type of program or school model that it believes would benefit a group of students or the community, the authorizer can issue a *Request for Proposals (RFP)* to encourage applications tailored to meet the identified need. If a district is committed to innovation in education or is trying to solve an ongoing issue like underperforming students in math, gang activity, or high drop-out rates, an authorizer can issue a *general RFP*. An RFP can invite the submission of all kinds of charter applications with guidance for the development of quality
applications. RFPs can provide a structured application format, review process, and timeline for both applicants and the authorizer. This approach often produces higher quality applications within a manageable structure for evaluating and comparing multiple proposals. An RFP may produce new partnerships and opportunities for educational support or new levels of parent engagement.

A very successful example of a District-Charter relationship is the Meridian Technical Charter High School and the Meridian District. The Meridian Technical Charter High School was established in 1999 and resulted from three years of study and exploration by the "Committee for More Choice in the Meridian Joint School District #2" focused on how to create educational innovation within the District. The Committee was made up of local business leaders and educators. The purpose of Meridian Technical Charter High School is to expand the academic choices available to students who are interested in the technology field.

These early steps in the dance between charter developers and authorizers can be the beginning of a very productive relationship. They are uniquely available to districts as the Commission is not likely to see their role in these ways. Most of the time, the board becomes aware of a possible charter when the developers approach the board for approval. What happens at that point can still be a win-win situation. In both Nampa and Twin Falls, professionals working in a learning lab with students with learning differences saw a great need for these students and listened to many frustrated parents whose students weren’t doing well in large schools. They each created a charter with small and specific learning environments for these students and have been assets to the districts where they enroll 30-45% students with IEPs.

**Encourage Entrepreneurial Leaders in Education.**
Within existing public schools there is no shortage of bright, creative leaders and teachers. Given the opportunity one or more of the teachers or principals might be eager to create a science school, a drama school or an alternative school. Many charter schools, including Anser in Boise and Kootenai Bridge Academy in Coeur d’Alene, have been the brainchild of a small group of dedicated teachers who felt that teaching methods and philosophies that they embraced were nearly impossible to implement in the context of a larger system. Leaving the traditional public school system to develop a unique public charter school was very successful in both cases. Looking to individuals already in the public school system who
have an idea for a particular kind of school may be a good place to start. Parents who come to a principal or superintendent with an idea for meeting a unique need in a new way, for their own children or a group of children, is another fertile opportunity for charter development. The creation of Another Choice Virtual Charter School came into being in this way. Parents whose children had special learning needs or were twice exceptional found that home-schooling seemed their only choice for their unique students. Together, parents and Advocates for Inclusion, a service provider, developed a virtual school focused on the needs of these special learners. The replication of Harbor Method schools in Idaho is another example of parents championing a cause in any number of communities.

- Sample Policies: Boise Independent School District No. 1 and Meridian Joint District No.2A
- Idaho State Department of Education Sufficiency Review
- Idaho Public Charter School Commission Petition Review Form
- NACSA Charter School Application Process
- NACSA Charter School Contracts
Charter schools began two decades ago when a coalition of Minnesota progressives and conservatives drew on an obscure idea at the periphery of social policy to propose and pass the first state charter legislation. Now, 41 states and the District of Columbia have adopted this reform, which, according to Lubienski & Weitzel (2010) "has enjoyed the support of groups as varied as market enthusiasts, teachers unions, alternative educators, and religious conservatives".

Since its inception, the charter movement has been typified by bipartisan support. In Idaho, IC 33-5202, the Charter School Act of 1998, was passed in 1998 to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, students and community members to establish and maintain public charter schools which operate independently from the exiting school district structure. The intent was to improve student learning and increase learning opportunities, include the use of different and innovative teaching methods, utilize distance and online learning, create new professional opportunities for teachers and provide expanded choices, and hold schools accountable for meeting measurable student standards.

Following the passage of the Charter School Act of 1998, the first schools opened their doors in 1999 in Pocatello, Boise, and Coeur d’Alene, Moscow, Nampa and Meridian. Thousands of charter schools nationwide serve over one and a half million students. In Idaho, there are 40 charter schools enrolling over 14,000 students, approximately 5% of the total K-12 student population in Idaho.

**How does Idaho Statute Define a Charter School?**

Charter schools are established according to individual State charter school laws. The enactment of State charter school laws is solely a State prerogative, and
the definition of a “public charter school” under Idaho State law is a school that is authorized under chapter 52 of the Idaho Code to deliver public education in Idaho. (IC §33-5202A)

The following timeline provides a picture of the charter movement in context.

The federal definition of a Charter School is very specific and is consistent with state definition. In Section 5210(1) of ESEA, the term ‘charter school’ means a public school that:

1. In accordance with a specific State statute authorizing the granting of charters to schools, is exempt from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools, but not from any rules relating to the other requirements of this paragraph [the paragraph that sets forth the Federal definition];
2. Is created by a developer as a public school, or is adapted by a developer from an existing public school, and is operated under public supervision and direction;
3. Operates in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives determined by the school's developer and agreed to by the authorized public chartering agency;
4. Provides a program of elementary or secondary education, or both;
5. Is nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations, and is not affiliated with a sectarian school or religious institution;
6. Does not charge tuition;
8. Is a school to which parents choose to send their children, and that admits students on the basis of a lottery, if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated;
9. Agrees to comply with the same Federal and State audit requirements as do other elementary schools and secondary schools in the State, unless such requirements are specifically waived for the purpose of this program [the PSCP];
10. Meets all applicable Federal, State, and local health and safety requirements;
11. Operates in accordance with State law; and
12. Has a written performance contract with the authorized public chartering agency in the State that includes a description of how student performance will be measured in charter schools pursuant to State assessments that are required of other schools and

1991 - First Charter Law passed in Minnesota
1998 - Idaho Charter School Act is passed
1999 - First 8 charter schools open in Idaho
2003 - Number of schools has grown to 16
2004 - Idaho Charter School Act is amended; Idaho Public Charter School Commission is formed. Cap of 6 schools per year is introduced
2004 - All virtual school petitions will now be directed to Commission
2005 - There are 26 charter schools in Idaho
2008 - 2010 Charters grow at a rate of 5 per year
2010 - First charter is revoked by Commission
2011 - There are 45 charter schools in Idaho
pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school.

Emphasis on innovation in charter schools, introducing new instructional models or practices, is just one of the 7 legislative intents of the Charter School Act of 1998, but often surfaces as a primary intent or a criticism of charters with more traditional methods. Creating something new just for the sake of being “new” rather than for the better outcomes is a tempting pitfall. Charters innovate in many areas including decision making—including employment decision-making; operations and facilities that are based, first and foremost, on meeting the terms of the charter. Innovations stem from research, from cross-fertilization from other industries, from a variety of outside influences and visions and from entrepreneurial educators with new ideas. At all times the authorizer retains authority to intervene, as appropriate, based on fulfillment of the charter’s terms—including removing the school’s right to continue operating, if necessary. Nowhere else in public education is there such decisive authority regarding individual schools.

In Idaho, all charter schools are incorporated as non-profit 501c3 organizations. Like all public school boards, the board of a charter school must follow open meeting law as designated by state code. They are subject to public records requests and must be fully aware of the responsibilities of both of these provisions. Most charter schools use their website as a key communication strategy and post meeting announcements, agendas and minutes of board meetings on their site as well as at their physical location.

Organizational by-Laws establish rules for the operation of individual schools. Charter schools must follow the directives of their by-laws which are considered an official part of the charter. Therefore, changes to the by-laws require a change to the charter. Any change to the charter must be approved first by the State Department through another sufficiency review and then by the authorizing entity.

With regard to the officers of the corporation, a charter must follow its by-laws when seating board members. The by-laws outline how directors are appointed, elected or a combination of both. Charter schools do not need to call for a public election as other public school boards do, but charter board members are generally elected by the body of stakeholders for the school. In some cases they are elected by seated board members and in other cases, all stakeholders (parents, teachers, community members) may vote.

Open Meeting Law is especially important to any public entity and this is no different for charter schools. Like other public entities they must post all meetings and agendas in compliance with Open Meeting Law. They must allow for public input and commentary and can only utilize Executive Session per the Open Meeting Laws. They must keep minutes for all meetings and make these available to the public.
A public charter school, according to Idaho Code, shall be organized and managed under the Idaho nonprofit corporation act. The must secure insurance for liability and property loss. Under the provisions of this act they must subscribe to Sections 18-1351, Idaho Code on bribery and corruption. They must follow provisions of law with regard to ethics in governing and professional codes and standards. They must refrain from conflicts of interest in all dealings. They must conduct open public meetings and disclose any public records when requested.

Lottery is the impartial mechanism required by law and used to determine admission to a charter school. Though charter schools have been accused of 'cherry picking' or having selective enrollments, this is not true in practice nor possible according to Idaho Law. IDAHO ADMINISTRATIVE CODE IDAPA 08.02.04 State Board of Education Rules Governing Public Charter Schools clearly describes the way that a charter school shall establish an admission preference for students residing in the attendance area of the public charter school, as provided in Section 33-5206, Idaho Code. Preference is used in a very specific and restrictive way in the law. It refers to the geography or boundaries served by the school, those who return each year and siblings of returning students, the children of founders and teachers/staff of the school not to exceed 10% of the total enrollment. Idaho Code and Rules describe in great detail how a lottery will be conducted to fill the openings at any charter school.

While great attention is paid to waiting lists, it is important to know that "Each year the public charter school shall create an attendance list containing the names of all prospective students on whose behalf a written request for admission was timely received by the public charter school, separated by grade level" (IDAPA 08.02.04) Thus, families with very young children cannot place their child's name on a list years before they are ready to enter school. Waiting lists continue to grow in Idaho with over 7,000 students on waiting lists as the 2010 school year began.

Over 40% of the students enrolled in Idaho's charter schools qualify for free and reduced lunch. Nearly 9% of all charter school students in Idaho have an IEP and there is growing ethnic diversity among charter school student bodies. The one area significantly under-represented are ELL students and the charter community feels this is likely to be a reflection of the general knowledge about charter school choice being low and even more so among non-English speaking parents. Charters are required by law to inform the public of openings and lottery proceedings for their schools. They do this through traditional media including radio, newspaper, website and school media and word of mouth. Schools make considerable efforts to translate all materials into Spanish, the most common second language in Idaho but the growing number of other languages in Idaho due to immigration of refugees poses unique challenges to schools. Charters are forging relationships with many community organizations to share more information.
Funding of Charter Schools. Charter schools are first and for most, Public schools. As such, they receive the greatest share of their funding, M&O and ADA directly from the State Department of Education. Like all schools, they must construct a budget that ends each year in the black and follows all rules related to how funds are applied. Charter schools are given some flexibility in the allocation of their funds in exchange for the lack of property tax revenues.

When a district authorizes a charter all of the federal funds flow through the district. With that comes requirements for monitoring and assistance with that program. For example, with regard to special education, the district should treat the charter as if they are another school in the district. The district special education director is designated as the charter’s special education director. Becky Martin is the State Department’s Special Education Coordinator for Charter Schools. She does the initial verification of the new charter schools and is also available to assist with the monitoring and/or trouble shooting of any issues that arise for the charter, parents, students or district related to the special education services at the charter school.
The process of developing a charter school is not for the faint of heart. It is not a challenge to be taken lightly and even some of the most impassioned educators or parents have become discouraged and may drop out of the race prior to reaching the finish line of opening a school. The requirements are rigorous and a time commitment of nearly two years prior to opening the doors is fairly typical.

The Idaho State Department of Education, Office of School Choice is the primary support entity for charter school development. In collaboration with districts, the Idaho Commission of Public Charter Schools and the Idaho Charter School Network, they provide an array of technical support to help insure high quality charter schools.

Idaho code requires that every new charter school development group send representation to the Charter Start Workshop offered each spring and fall. During this offering, requirements and resources are thoroughly reviewed so that charter developers clearly understand the expectations of the Idaho Charter School Act, the responsibilities of operating a public school and the resources available at the State Department.

The timeline at the state level for the approval process for a new charter school can be generally applied to all new charter schools. The exceptions would be any local requirements or deadlines set by district policy. These should be made clearly evident on the district website but are the responsibility of the charter developer.

According to Idaho Code 33-5202, only six new charter schools may be open each year and no more than one per district. While additional schools may be authorized in any one year, they would be assigned a number and opening date by the Idaho State Board of Education.
Condensed Timeline for Charter Approval Process*

**Submit petition to SDE for sufficiency review by July 15th.**

Within 30 Days

**Sufficiency Review completed**

**Virtual Schools:**
May make amendments to petition. Submit to Public Charter School Commission by **September 1st**.

Within 60 Days

**Public Charter School Commission**

Within 60 Days

**Trustees must hold a public hearing.**

Within 60 Days

**Approve**

**Denied**

**All Other Petitions:** May make amendments and submit petition and sufficiency review to local school district board of trustees by **September 1st**.

Within 60 Days

**Trustees must hold a public hearing.**

Within 60 Days

**Within 60 Days**

**Within 60 Days**

**Within 60 Days**

**Approved:**
Petitions submit a copy of approved petition and notification of approval form to State Board of Education and SDE. SBE assigns a number and date of anticipated opening. Only 6 new charter schools may open each year.

**Denied:**
Petitioners may file a Notice of Appeal with SDE, State Board of Education and authorizer. The Appeals process is outlined in detail in the charter school manual.

**Referred:**
Petitioner takes their request to the Public Charter School Commission.

*See Charter School Launch Manual pg 12-17 for additional details.*
Charter school developers may spend over a year preparing their petition. The first step of every process is a sufficiency review of the petition conducted by the State Department of Education. The sufficiency review is designed to insure that each petition meets the minimum essentials required by law. All potential authorizers are encouraged to examine petitions for quality, innovation and solid educational philosophy. Active dialogue between the petitioner and authorizer can further illuminate the vision for the school and the unique need that it may fill in a district or community. A packet with a comprehensive rubric to score the petition for sufficiency is included on the resource cd.

After a sufficiency review has been conducted by the State Department of Education the results of the review will be returned to the petitioners. The next step is to submit the petition and sufficiency review findings to an authorized chartering entity for review and consideration for approval. Completion of the sufficiency review process does not ensure approval of the charter school petition, nor does it establish that the school cannot be challenged for failure to comply with state or federal statutes, rules or regulations at some future date. The SDE does not waive its duty to enforce such laws by performing the sufficiency review. For additional questions about the sufficiency review process, contact Michelle Taylor, School Choice Coordinator, State Department of Education, mtaylor@sde.idaho.gov.

The task for the charter developer are just beginning when the petition is approved. According to I.C. §33-5205(5) "at least one (1) person among a group of petitioners of a prospective public charter school shall attend a public charter school workshop offered by the state department of education". This two-day workshop is typically offered in the spring and fall and covers many important topics related to public school operation. Proof of attendance must be submitted by the petitioners to the authorized chartering entity. Technical support provided by the State Department of Education continues to be available to all charter developers throughout the process. Additionally, charter developer may get support and technical assistance from the Idaho Charter School Network, the Idaho School Boards Association and established charter schools.

Application for a charter program grant may be underway during the approval process or shortly after. Many charters in recent years have used a portion of their charter program grant to hire a start-up coordinator. This individual serves at the pleasure of the board and can be a huge assistance in getting many of the operational steps underway. These may include but aren’t limited to moving forward on a site for the school, begin negotiations for many services needed such as busing, lunch, text books, and training. The start-up coordinator may assist the board in conducting a search for the principal/director, teachers and other staff. They may be asked to monitor the grant funds and begin purchases for the school’s opening. Advertising and conducting the lottery are also essential activities in the spring prior to the opening of school.

A relationship between a district and charter school can often result in services being offered to the charter through a contract with the district. These arrangements have been very successful in some districts and can include special education services, food services and
busing, bookkeeping and accounting services and purchasing or data services. Additionally, some charter schools have shared staff and facilities with districts. The opening of a charter may present an opportunity for a district to lease or sell an unused building or increase program space by partnering with a charter school for new space.

The Idaho Public Charter School Commission was established in law in 2004. As a state with both district authorizers and the Commission as an alternate authorizer, Idaho has been assessed nationally as having a strong charter law. The requirements of authorizers to monitor both process and progress or outcomes of the charter schools, however, is not clearly articulated in the law. As the authorizer of 25 of the 40 charter schools currently operating in Idaho, the Commission is the single most experienced authorizer. They have established any number of oversight strategies and tools that could be very useful to first time authorizers.

The Commission consists of seven, Governor-appointed members and is staffed by the Office of the State Board of Education. The make-up of the Commission is outlined in statute and must include individuals who represent a geographic cross-section of the state and people with experience in both charter schools and local school boards. Visit the Commission’s website (www.chartercommission.id.gov) to learn more about the commissioners and view all meeting minutes.

Virtual Schools in Idaho are most often established as charter schools. The Idaho Digital Academy is an exception in that it is not considered a public school, but rather a program funded directly by the state. Some district and charter schools are beginning to develop hybrid programs using virtual instruction to supplement or enhance classroom instruction. There are currently 8 virtual charter schools and 1 Virtual Distance Education Academy in Idaho operating as charter schools and serving students throughout the state.

A virtual school is defined by Idaho Code as "a school that delivers a full-time, sequential program of synchronous and/or asynchronous instruction primarily through the use of technology via the internet in a distributed environment. Schools classified as virtual must have an online component to their school with online lessons and tools for students and data management. (I.C. §33-5202A(8)). All petitions to establish a new public virtual charter schools must be submitted directly to the Idaho Public Charter School Commission who is the authorizing entity for all virtual schools in Idaho. Virtual schools may or may not have a relationship with a primary curriculum provider but all virtual charter schools are incorporated as Idaho Non-Profit organizations. They are required, like any other public school, to hire highly qualified teachers, participate in all AYP and state testing activities and abide all state and federal education, charter and special education laws.
It is the intention of all virtual charter schools to serve students across several or many districts. Currently, two virtual schools, Kootenai Bridge Academy and Another Choice serve students in a more restricted geographic area with plans for expansion over time. All other virtual schools serve students throughout the state.

Related Resources

- Sufficiency Review Packet
- IDAPA 08 TITLE 03 CHAPTER 01 08.03.01
- RULES OF THE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Included on Disc
Once a charter petition has passed the mustard of a sufficiency review by the State Department, the next step is submitting it to the District Board in which they are located. As outlined in earlier chapters, there are many noted advantages to a school district authorizing a charter school. Parents in many communities are eager for greater involvement and choice in the type of education program that best suits their student. All charter developers, district superintendents and boards want successful schools and high student achievement. Success begins with a strong vision, petition and plan.

Best practices in charter authorizing suggest that chartering entities appoint a standing committee or team to review charter applications. Conducting a thorough evaluation of a charter school petition is both an art and a science. Quality application evaluation requires a team of individuals bringing the diverse expertise needed to evaluate all aspects of the application.

Charter schools like any public school, are complex organizations. They require strong educational, financial, legal, facilities, governance, and management plans. Evaluating the quality of an applicant’s plans and capacities in all these areas requires people with a range of experience, expertise and skill.

School districts generally have an array of staff with sufficiently broad and deep expertise to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the charter petition. Within the school board, however, this may not be the case. Some boards, therefore, engage district personnel or third-party evaluators who can add specialized expertise, credibility, and balance to the process.

Within District policy, the board may establish both internal deadlines for accepting charter applications as
well as a framework or schedule for the board to follow in their evaluation process. These should include:

- Written application evaluation to rigorously assess the quality of the school’s plans in core design areas - rubric can be helpful in this process so that quality indicators are built in from the earliest stages,
- Interview with the applicant/s to assess the capacity of the petitioner to implement the plan as described in the written application;
- Solicitation of public input which can take the form of public hearings or a request for written testimony. This can answer the questions about need and desire of the community for the development of a charter school.

Idaho Code makes clear the time restrictions imposed on the chartering entity within which to give a response to a charter application. From the time the application is received, the board has 60 days to hold a public meeting and than an additional 60 days to provide an answer to the petitioner. Ideally, dialogue to share plans and information, time to rigorously assess the application begin even before the application is submitted. It is clear that having a well outlined process is advisable to make the best use of the rather limited window of opportunity. A high quality application process provides predictability to authorizers and charter applicants alike. Deadlines at the district level should be fair and congruent with state code and deadlines. Authorizers should exercise professional judgment in defining the requirements of a charter school application in a manner that is consistent with the purposes of the charter law and national best practices.

The amount of time allowed for the evaluation of an application is important and doesn’t happen overnight. The timeframe in Idaho code, two 60-day periods, allows authorizers sufficient time to conduct a thorough, multi-stage evaluation. In Idaho, a charter must be authorized by January 1st to open school the following fall allowing for a solid 6-8 months to prepare to receive students.

The Idaho Public Charter School Commission, as mentioned in the last chapter, is the authorizer for 25 of the current operating charter schools. They receive all petitions for virtual schools and will receive all petitions that are referred from districts to the Commission. They have established many best practices since their inception. The rubric for evaluation of a petition has been shared by the Commission to be included in this volume and can be found on the cd. In addition to a thorough review of the written petition, charter developers must appear before the Commission to present their petition. This would most often occur at the public meeting for a district board. This presents an important opportunity for the authorizing entity to fully understand the mission and intention of the charter petitioners.

During a presentation, the board may explore with the petitioner what plans they have for facilities, what capacity for sound governance, what types of evaluation and assessment they will employing to demonstrate student achievement as well as the added value they bring to
the community. These are important issues to dialogue about insuring that the charter petitioner is well informed and realistic about the challenges of opening a school.

NACSA suggests that there a number of important post-approval steps that charter schools be required to complete before beginning operation. In Idaho, any new charter school that applies for federal charter program funds is required to have a pre-opening audit as well as annual audits each year of the grant.

Approval of a charter application is the first big hurdle but many more will follow before students are sitting at desks in a classroom. In many states newly approved charter schools are required to execute a legally binding contract between the school’s governing body and its authorizer before beginning operation (See Contract Policy Guide). In Idaho, the charter generally serves as this contract. The charter school is legally bound to carry out the promises outlined in the charter. Additionally, NACSA suggests that there is benefit in clearly crafted contracts that spell out the relationship and roles of the parties involved in chartering. In the case of district authorizers, for instance, the charter may look to the district to negotiate busing or food service, business management or special education services. This does not occur when the Commission is the authorizer as they are not the provider of these services. Commission authorized charter schools would still be free to contract with their local district for services and several charters do so.

How will a newly approved charter school demonstrate its readiness to begin operation? The pre-opening audit can be one tool to assess this readiness. The Idaho Charter School Network employs a process to evaluate new charter schools. The school opening checklist found on the resource cd covers an array of important school features and activities ranging from securing proper insurance and building occupancy permits, safety and evacuation protocols to purchase of curriculum and the hiring of staff.

Facilities are generally the biggest challenge for a new charter school. Many elect to open new schools in portable classrooms or leased space. Districts may have unused space that could be negotiated with a charter school. Additionally, when leasing or repurposing commercial space, charter schools need to comply with all health and safety provisions for school occupancy and the expenses that accompany renovations.

NACSA has the following recommendations and best practices for state policy related to the charter school petitioning process. Here is a brief comparison with Idaho’s law I.C. §33-5200 the Public Charter Schools Act of 1998.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NACSA Recommended Best Practice for State Policy¹</th>
<th>Idaho Code</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define the essential educational, operational and financial information to be included in a charter school application.</td>
<td>I.C.33-5205(3)a-u IDAPA 08 Title 02 Chapter 04 202 Petition Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow authorizers to set a charter school application cycle and annual timeline that meets the needs of both charter school applicants and authorizers. State policy should also indicate how much time an authorizer has to evaluate an application. NACSA recommends no fewer than 90 calendar days.</td>
<td>IDAPA 08 Title 02 Chapter 04 201.01 An authorizing chartering entity may adopt its own charter school petitioning policies and procedures describing the petition process. Such policies must comply with Title 33, Chapter 52, Idaho code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require authorizers to implement a sound multistage application process that thoroughly evaluates the applicant’s capacity to open a quality public charter school.</td>
<td>IDAPA 08 Title 01 Chapter 04 205.05 Required Substantive Review of Petitions. The substantive review of the merits of a petition by an authorized chartering entity shall be for the purpose of determining whether petitioners have demonstrated compliance with Title 33, Chapter 52, Idaho Code. Neither Idaho Code nor Rule specify how quality will be assessed by the chartering entity. A multistage process is described in code and rule with regard to timelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower authorizers to define and enforce standards for charter school approval. Chartering decisions should be based solely on whether or not the plan for a new charter school – and the demonstrated capacity supporting that plan – meets educational, organizational, and financial standards</td>
<td>During review only compliance with Title 33 Chapter 52 Idaho Code is identified. Charter school responsibilities after opening are more descriptive in the areas of compliance. None of these describes levels of quality assurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require approved applicants to execute a contract with their authorizer and demonstrate readiness to operate prior to school opening</td>
<td>In Idaho law the charter document “as approved by the chartering entity” is the document that outlines the terms and conditions that the charter is responsible to fulfill. There is no mention of a contract between authorizer and the charter school in Idaho code.</td>
</tr>
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**Related Resources Included on Disc**

- Sufficiency Review Packet
- Idaho Public Charter School Commission - Petition Review Form
- Charter School Opening Checklist
The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and other national charter organizations including West Ed in California have a number of recommendations to support effective working relationships. We will summarize a few of those here.

1) **Set Clear Expectations for Charter**

   Izu (2000) in a study of 13 charter schools in California found that establishing clear and specific criteria, at the outset, for approval of charters as well as renewal was critical to their success. This clarity can help establish good school district relationships from the start. When expectations are consistent, widely known, and mutually agreed upon, charter schools are more likely to see them as fair and to have fewer anxieties about how district decisions are being made. Their findings were consistent with the findings about charter schools from recent statewide evaluations in California and Wisconsin, that many districts have neither a written policy nor clear guidelines regarding approval or renewal. The absence of clear expectations and up front criteria also makes it difficult for districts to evaluate a charter school petition and further done the road, their performance.

2) **Establish a Liaison Between School and District**

   Having a district liaison for charter schools who is knowledgeable both about charter schools and about the district can help streamline communication between the two. Some districts strategy for coordinating charter school issues might be the formation of a committee comprising representatives from various divisions. In large districts, such a mechanism is probably necessary to ensure a good flow of information and greater efficiency in dealing with school requests. A coordinator or liaison can assist schools by quickly responding and insuring that requests go through the appropriate district processes.
3) **Encourage and Support Interaction Between Charter and Non-Charter Schools**

Districts can be at the forefront of creating robust professional learning communities. Like all schools, charter schools need opportunities to learn from one another about practices that have resulted in improved teaching and student learning.

A major goal of charter advocates, often reflected in language regarding legislative intent, is that the influence or impact of the charter school movement be systemic, i.e., that the reforms occurring within charters have a broader impact on the district and its other schools.

This can occur only if districts strengthen their relationship with charter schools and enhance their own capacity to learn more systematically about what does and does not work within their charter schools. Districts that want to systematically gather information on best practices emerging from charter schools should provide incentives and structures that will help charter schools meet more regularly with other schools.

More often than not, the ways in which the district learns from charters is somewhat haphazard rather than being a deliberately planned effort. When District staff participate in a programmatic audit at a charter school in Idaho; a two-day visit gives an opportunity to really see how the school operates in many different areas. In Pocatello, the result of sharing the audit experience has been the district sharing resources with the charter on business activities and the charter sharing some learning strategies with the district. Not all innovations occurring within charter schools are destined for success. Districts need to develop strategies that will help them analyze and determine just which innovations are worth recreating.

At the onset of a charter petition approval, districts might consider what they could learn from a new school, as in our example of a new curriculum developed for a particular group of high school students whose needs had not been well served in the past. In this way, the approval process becomes a way of “testing” new, break-the-mold approaches. Districts may want to pay particular attention to alternative curricula, to new staffing arrangements, or to new instructional schedules. By being clear at the beginning about the opportunities to learn from charters, districts can then set up structures to monitor the ways in which charter schools are reaching or failing to reach their goals. Districts can also set up ongoing discussions between district and charter school staffs around education reforms that might benefit all schools.

4) **Realize that a Completed Petition is Only the Beginning of the Approval Process**

For charter developers, drafting a charter petition is a time-consuming task, involving numerous meetings, several drafts and layers of review by parents, community members, and, even, funders. From the developers’ perspective, submitting the petition to the authorizer feels like it should be the end of a long cycle of hard work.
In Idaho, when the petition is submitted to the district, it can be the beginning of a new set of reviews and presentations. The 60 day window for the district to respond may cause alarm for the board who need to come to a decision and carefully evaluate the petition. They may request changes to the proposal and school board members—who ultimately approve the petition—may have more questions and revisions. Having a policy and clear expectations up front can help clarify expectations for everyone and avoid the possibility that delays are perceived as stall tactics. When a charter petitioner feels that the district is stalling or isn’t fully engaged, they may elect to withdraw their petition and go to the Commission directly. This is unfortunate in the tone it may set for future relationships.

Realizing that the process of approving charter takes time, and preparing charter developers and supporters for possible revisions, can take the surprise (and resentment) out of having to do additional work. In short, managing expectations about the work ahead and planning timelines that allow time for revisions and negotiations can lay the foundation for a better working relationship with the district.

5) ACKNOWLEDGE THE NEED FOR EXTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY
While many of those who start charter schools, especially newly created start-ups, do so to realize an alternative educational vision or approach, they must still acknowledge the district’s and state’s external accountability requirements. Districts need comparative information over time in order to assess charter schools as a strategy for reform. In Idaho, the most common would be the ISAT tests.

Charter schools must also consider how they will measure and demonstrate that the educational outcomes detailed in their charter are met. If a charter school’s goal is to create students who have exceptional problem solving abilities, how will this be measured? If the charter philosophy runs counter to standardized tests, how will they both administer the standardized tests required by the state and simultaneously develop their own performance-based assessments? These should be well documented in the petition.

6) DEVELOP A STRONG ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN EARLY.
Charters need clear goals from the outset, and they need a process in place for periodically reviewing progress toward those goals. Major changes in staff or student composition are some of the things that can change a school’s goals and the ways of appropriately assessing progress toward those goals. The district can be a source of expert assistance in helping the charter set up evaluation criteria or recommending data systems that will do a good job tracking student performance.

7) BUILD PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHARTER DISTRICT SCHOOLS. As noted earlier, charter schools can learn from one another’s experience. The Idaho Charter School Network hosts an annual conference and other meeting opportunities throughout the year. More experienced charter schools provided advice and suggestions to newer charter schools and charter developers. District personnel are welcome to participate
along with charter personnel and coming together at state department meetings also provide opportunities for networking.

8) **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STATE AND DISTRICT RESOURCES.** Many parents and some staff are drawn to charter schools in part because of dissatisfaction with their former public schools. However, it is clear that when relationships begin on strong footing and positive tone, charters will turn to the district for information and expertise on a variety of issues. Charter schools generally have a very lean staff and often, a charter principal may need to master new areas of responsibility while simultaneously juggling all of the tasks that go along with teaching a new curriculum to a new group of students. Turning to the district or the state department as a quick source of information is invaluable to charter principals and business managers. Many Idaho charters have excellent relationships with their district and look to them for guidance in areas ranging from professional development opportunities to special education laws and financial management to busing. Collaboration and open communication are likely to maximize existing resources and opportunities.

9) **LEVERAGING SHARING OPPORTUNITIES.** Many opportunities exit both at the district and the charter school for professional development. Creating rich learning communities benefits all schools and teachers. Introducing outside expertise into the district or sharing best practices among teachers and instructional coaches has great benefit for learning and cost efficiencies.

Annual reporting opportunities can be created to cover the basics of accountability while providing consideration for in-depth data analysis that can lead to continuous improvement as well as dissemination of effective strategies. Annual reporting, if relinquished to a required exercise, is an opportunity lost for meaningful growth and sharing.
According to Idaho Code, the governing board of a public charter school shall be responsible for ensuring that the public charter school is adequately staffed, and that such staff provides sufficient oversight over all public charter school operational and educational activities. In addition, the board of a public charter school shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with Title 33, Chapter 52, Idaho Code. (4-11-06) 02.

Charter school boards must ensure that they fully comply with the terms of the charter, with all applicable federal and state education standards, as well as all applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations, and policies.

The governing board of a public charter school must submit an annual report to the authorized chartering entity of the school, as required by Section 33-5206(7), Idaho Code. The report shall contain the audit of the fiscal and programmatic operations as required in Section 33-5205(3)(j), Idaho Code, a report on student progress based on the public charter school’s student educational standards identified in Section 33-5205(3)(b), Idaho Code, and a copy of the public charter school’s accreditation report, if applicable.

Fiscal audits are conducted annually by an independent certified public accountant. Fiscal audits review business practices and funding streams. Additionally, with regard to federal charter program funds, the State Department of Education oversees how funds are used within the scope of allowable expenditures and the plan for the grant. Several rules within Idaho code make provision for charter schools to create a fund balance if they are frugal with state funds. This is often the way they are able to save to enable them to consider a permanent facility.

According to Idaho Code, an authorized chartering entity may reasonably request that a public charter school provide additional information to ensure that the public charter school is meeting the terms of its charter. The governing board of the public charter school must ensure that they fully comply with the terms of the charter, with all applicable federal and state education standards, as well as all applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations, and policies.

The many layers of accountability built into the structure of public charter schools allow for close public scrutiny. Even though this can be challenging, charter leaders accept it as necessary and look forward to the day when all public schools are as accountable as public charter schools.

— 2010 Idaho Charter School Network Issue Brief
school is also responsible for promptly notifying its authorizer if it becomes aware that the public charter school is not operating in compliance with the terms and conditions of its charter. For instance, a charter may not have adequate enrollment to have a 9th grade but there is provision in the charter for such a program.

Charter School principals and staff must be accountable to their boards for operating a school with a balanced budget and meeting the educational goals stated in the charter. The elected board is an important link in the chain of accountability. Charter schools bring jobs and facilities to the community in which they are located. They offer a choice to parents and contribute to the life of the community. They are committed to being good neighbors. Teachers who elect to teach in a charter school generally forfeit the protection of the teachers' union in exchange for a pivotal role in the way their school operates. They are fully engaged in performance based job security.

Programmatic audits or accountability visits may be conducted by any number of outside agencies. The Idaho Charter School Network (ICSN) uses the Idaho Charter Accountability Plan to support charter schools in a self-study followed by a visit to validate the self-study findings. The ICSN programmatic audit review school operations in the areas of governance, education program, stakeholder satisfaction and continuous improvement. An outside group of education professionals conducts the two-day programmatic visit under the direction of the ICSN who then creates a written report of the audit. We strongly suggest that a representative of the authorizing entity participate fully in the programmatic audit. During the two-day visit, the auditors visit and observe in classrooms, meet with teachers, board members, students, administration and parents. These focus groups provide a great deal of insight into how the school is operating and how well they are fulfilling their charter.

The programmatic audit helps to illuminate the capacity of the school for strong governance, the leadership quality of the principal and the engagement of parents in the life of the school. All of these factors are difficult to assess without a comprehensive visit. The result of the programmatic visit is a comprehensive report of the findings and recommendations for continuous improvement.

Most charter schools engage in annual surveys of their stakeholders. These typically include parents but may also include students, teachers and community members. The board and
administration utilize the data gathered to make important operational and programmatic decisions. These are typically reviewed during a programmatic audit.

All charter schools participate in state academic testing of students in the form of ISAT and IRI testing. Charter schools participate in all Special Education, Title 1 and ELL monitoring either as an LEA or through their district. These results are reported for charter schools as they are for all public schools in Idaho. Additionally, charter schools may use curriculum or model specific evaluation strategies to insure student growth and academic achievement.

Related Resources Included on Disc

- Primer on Special Education in Charter Schools. 2007
- Idaho Open Meeting Law
The goal of all of public education is the preparation of individuals for a productive life and an educated citizenry. Educating each generation has profound implications for personal success and quality of life, for the sustainability of communities, families and businesses and for future generations. Strategies for a successful public education sector in any community involve full engagement among all parties offering education to students from pre-school through secondary education, college and adult education and early care and learning for our youngest citizens.

To achieve these goals, district leadership and charter school leadership are encouraged to:

- Create a positive working relationship among all education entities, district personnel, charter personnel and families is key to the success of all students.
- Share expertise and resources that will support all types of programs in ways that are fiscally responsible and make the best use of community resources.
- Clearly articulate goals and mission to communicate an understanding among all stakeholders.
- Commit to transparency to insure all stakeholders that resources are used wisely and that organizations are accountable for outcomes.
- Commit to open communication so that parents can make the best, informed decisions for their children.
- Collaborate with universities to insure that the formation of new educators speaks to the needs of our communities and the changing economy. Conversely, communication will also insure that students leaving the K-12 system are ready to participate fully in higher education.
- Develop knowledge of state and federal resources that support best practices and innovations in education.
- Participate in the governance of all schools on behalf of the citizenry, insuring fiscal and academic accountability.
- Participate in the state organizations supporting principals and superintendents, school boards and teachers.
- Embrace the diversity of families and students in all communities and commit to the success of all students and to providing the individual support that each one needs to succeed.

As mentioned previously, strong authorizers are key to the success of charter schools. Many charter schools have succeeded and continue to provide outstanding education to students in spite of a tenuous or conflicted relationship. How much more opportunity for excellent and diverse education communities might there be if these strategies were embraced. We encourage both districts and charters to consider the opportunities.
When any school underperforms, its does a disservice to students and families, to the future of those students, and to the public on whose behalf they operate a school. Charter schools, like any public schools, are responsible for student performance. It is plausible, however, that an innovation even if well implemented, may not produce the anticipated outcomes. Some take longer and some may just not improve the outcomes. All charter students participate in any mandatory state assessments appropriate to their grade. All stakeholders can access data related to Adequate Yearly Progress for any public school on the State Department website. In addition to state goals for student performance, many charter schools set academic goals that identify additional tests or subject areas and/or surpass the state goal for performance in math, reading and science.

Charter schools are responsible to demonstrate compliance with their charter and Idaho code. The authorized chartering entity of a public charter school shall be responsible for ensuring that the public charter school operates in accordance with all of the terms and conditions of the charter as reflected in the final approved petition filed with the Board. The board of trustees for the charter school governs on behalf of the public who trusts them to use resources wisely and in accordance with law.

The authorized chartering entity also shall be responsible for ensuring that the public charter school program approved by the authorized chartering entity meets the terms of the charter, complies with the general education laws of the state, unless specifically directed otherwise in Title 33, Chapter 52, Idaho Code, and operates in accordance with the state educational standards of thoroughness as defined in Section 33-1612, Idaho
If an authorized chartering entity has reason to believe that a public charter school has committed any defect identified in Subsections 33-5209(2)(a) through (e), Idaho Code, then the authorized chartering entity shall provide the public charter school with prompt written notice of such defect, and shall provide the public charter school a reasonable opportunity to cure such defect. (4-11-06) 03. Sample letters of defect issued by the Public Charter School Commission are included in the resources. Notices of defect can be avoided when chartering entities and charter schools maintain effective communication and accountability. Minor infractions of the charter can be remedied quickly prior to these steps being necessary. When infractions cannot be quickly remedied, the authorizing entity is obligated to provide such a notice. Additionally, a corrective action plan should be swiftly developed to insure that the defect is corrected.

Under Idaho code, the public charter school must provide the authorized chartering entity with a corrective action plan describing the public charter school's plan to cure the defect. The corrective action plan shall describe in detail the terms and conditions by which the public charter school will cure the defect at issue, including a reasonable time frame for completion. The public charter school shall send a copy of the corrective action plan to the Board. (4-11-06) 04. The District can be instrumental in advising and supporting the charter in developing and implementing an effective corrective action plan.

Over the last 12 years, since the inception of public charter schools in Idaho, only one charter failed to cure defects and had their charter revoked. Several charter schools have voluntarily surrendered their charter when financial hardships caused them to cease operation. If a public charter school fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the corrective action plan and to remedy the defect at issue within a reasonable time, then the authorized chartering entity may provide notice to the public charter school of its intent to revoke the charter, as permitted by Section 33-5209(3), Idaho Code, and in accordance with Section 303 of these rules. (4-11-06). The notice of defect is a formal communication sighting the reason for the notice along with the timeline for correction. While no school enjoys receiving such a notice, it is incumbent upon the authorizer to take these steps if necessary to insure quality.
When school begins in the fall of 2011 there will be 45 charter schools in Idaho. Here is a brief description of the types of schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTIC</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CHARTERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total schools</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick &amp; Mortar</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Charters</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

Grades
- K-3 schools: 1
- K-6 schools: 5
- K-8 schools: 7
- K-12 schools: 13
- 6-8 schools: 3
- 6-12 schools: 4
- 9-12: 7
- High Schools: 11

Geographic Region
- Regions 1 & 2: 5
- Regions 3: 20
- Region 4: 5
- Region 5: 2
- Region 6: 6

Model
- Harbor Method: 9
- Expeditionary Learning: 3
- Classical/Core Knowledge: 5
- Montessori: 1
- Arts Integration: 4
- Professional Technical: 4
- Drop Out Recovery: 3
- Special Education Focus: 3
- International Baccalaureate: 2
- Technology; STEM: 6

There are many models of education, many learning theories and many types of charter schools. Most are predicated upon a particular model or method of instruction or a philosophy that guides their choices of curriculum, the facility that will support their vision and the types of staff who are best suited to carry out that mission.

Methods or Models of Education: A method or model is a group of ideas that describes an approach to
learning that is employed by a school. There are a number of different approaches among those employed in Idaho Charter Schools. Here are the simplified explanations:

- **Expeditionary Learning**: Expeditionary Learning is a curriculum designed to promote critical thinking, skills and habits, academic achievement, and personal development through the use of in-depth investigations that engage students in community, projects, and service. An expedition brings experts into the classroom, takes students into the field, and engages students in real world learning experiences. Anser Charter School and Pocatello Community Charter Schools are Expeditionary Learning Schools.

- **Harbor Method School**: The Harbor School Method is a way of teaching, a way of learning and a way of schooling. It is an integrated model designed to educate children to be capable graduates ready to contribute to a democratic society. The instructional strategies are not necessarily unique and innovative. What is unique and innovative is the way in which these elements have been brought together to form a way of being as a school. The philosophy of a Harbor School is grounded in the belief that when there is low threat and content is highly challenging, accelerated learning takes place. Compass and Liberty Charter Schools are Harbor Schools.

- **Core Knowledge**: The idea behind Core Knowledge is simple and powerful; knowledge builds on knowledge. for the sake of academic excellence, greater fairness, and higher literacy. Core Knowledge provides a core curriculum that is coherent, cumulative, and content-specific in order to help children establish strong foundations of knowledge, grade by grade. White Pine Charter and Xavier Charter are Core Knowledge Schools.

- **Classical Education**: Classical education depends on a three-part process of training the mind. The early years of school are spent in absorbing facts, systematically laying the foundations for advanced study. In the middle grades, students learn to think through arguments. In the high school years, they learn to express themselves. This classical pattern is called the *trivium*. A classical education is more than simply a pattern of learning, though. Classical education is language-focused; learning is accomplished through words, written and spoken, rather than through images (pictures, videos, and television). Xavier and North Valley Charter Schools are Classical Education schools in Idaho.

- **Montessori**: The Montessori method is an approach to educating children based on the research and experiences of Italian physician and educator Maria Montessori (1870–1952). It arose essentially from Dr. Montessori's discovery of what she referred to as "the child's true normal nature" in 1907. Applying this method involves the teacher in viewing the child as having an inner natural guidance for his or her own perfect self-directed development. The role of the teacher (sometimes called director, directress, or guide) is therefore to watch over
the environment to remove any obstacles that would interfere with this natural development. The teacher's role of observation sometimes includes experimental interactions with children, commonly referred to as "lessons," to resolve misbehavior or to show how to use the various self-teaching materials that are provided in the environment for the children's free use. Monticello Montessori is a Montessori Charter in Idaho.

- **International Baccalaureate**: The International Baccalaureate® (IB) is motivated by a mission to create a better world through education. Typified by a reputation for quality, for high standards and for pedagogical leadership. IB promotes intercultural understanding and respect, not as an alternative to a sense of cultural and national identity, but as an essential part of life in the 21st century. International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. Sage International and North Star Charter are IB schools.

- **Arts-based**: Arts-based curriculum is not merely the occasional visiting artist or a once-a-week visit to the resident art specialist. Arts-based curriculum IS a collaborative joining of the strengths of classroom teacher and art specialist in an on-going merging of the curriculum with art forms, within every subject, every day. Arts-based curriculum is learning through the integration of the visual and performing arts into every phase of instruction. All of the core academic subjects of Math, Science, Social Studies, Reading, and Writing are taught through integration with the arts. Idaho Arts and Garden City Community are Arts-based charters.

- **Professional Technical Education**: Professional technical schools blend general academics with trade or industry specific training at rigorous levels. Students in the high school years typically have to pass industry standard tests to demonstrate mastery in mechanics, graphic arts, medical technology, computer networking or other applications and various other trades. Meridian Technical Academy and ARTEC are examples of Professional Technical Charter Schools.

Visiting a charter school can be an eye-opening experience. Seeing the variety of facilities that are being used as schools, seeing diverse curriculum choices being implemented and the commitment to small learning communities are all impressive. The map provides an overview of the location of charter schools in Idaho. A list of all Idaho charter school contact information is also included in the resources.
# Idaho Charter Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Physical Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy at Roosevelt Center</td>
<td>240 East Maple, Pocatello, ID</td>
<td>208-232-1447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another Choice Virtual Charter School</td>
<td>958 W Corporate Lane, Nampa, ID 83651</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anser charter</td>
<td>202 E. 42nd Street, Garden City, ID 83714</td>
<td>208-426-9840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTEC</td>
<td>College of Southern Idaho</td>
<td>208-734-7762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackfoot Charter Community</td>
<td>2801 Hunters Loop</td>
<td>208-782-0744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compass Charter</td>
<td>2511 W. Cherry Lane, Meridian, ID 83642</td>
<td>208-855-2802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coeur d'Alene Charter</td>
<td>4904 E Duncan Drive, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815</td>
<td>208-676-1667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falcon Ridge Public Charter School</td>
<td>278 S Ten Mile Road, Kuna, ID 83634</td>
<td>208-922-9228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden City Community School</td>
<td>9165 Chinden, #101</td>
<td>(208) 377-0011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho Arts Charter</td>
<td>1220 5th St N, Nampa, ID</td>
<td>208-463-4324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho Distance Ed Academy</td>
<td>606 South Ave, Deary, ID 83823</td>
<td>208-877-1513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>17 North 550 West, Blackfoot, ID 83221</td>
<td>(208) 785-7827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho Virtual Academy</td>
<td>1965 S. Eagle Road, Suite 190</td>
<td>208-322-3559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire Connections Academy</td>
<td>600 N. Steelhead Way, Suite 164</td>
<td>208-322-4002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iSucceed Virtual High School</td>
<td>6148 N Discovery Lane, Boise, ID 83713</td>
<td>800-211-1687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaplan Academy of Idaho</td>
<td>1151 Fairview, Suite 103, Boise, ID 83704</td>
<td>208-608-6338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kootenai Bridge Academy</td>
<td>606 River Ave, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814</td>
<td>208-930-4515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty Charter School</td>
<td>1063 E Lewis Lane, Nampa, ID 83651</td>
<td>208-466-7052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridian Medical Charter</td>
<td>1789 E. Leighfield Drive, Meridian, ID 83646</td>
<td>208-855-4075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridian Technical Charter</td>
<td>3800 North Locust Grove</td>
<td>208 288-2928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monticello Montessori Charter School</td>
<td>4707 Sweetwater Way, Ammon, ID 83406</td>
<td>208-520-2492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow Charter School</td>
<td>1723 E F. Street, Moscow, ID</td>
<td>208-883-3195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Star Charter School</td>
<td>839 N. Linder Eagle, ID 83616</td>
<td>208-939-9600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Valley Academy</td>
<td>202 14th Ave. East, Gooding, ID</td>
<td>208-934-4567</td>
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<tr>
<td>OWL Charter Academy</td>
<td>312 12th Avenue Road, Nampa, ID 83686</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Palouse Prairie School of EL</td>
<td>1500 Levick St, Moscow ID 83843</td>
<td>208-882-3684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payette River Technical Academy</td>
<td>139 S Commercial, Emmett, ID 83617</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocatello Community Charter School</td>
<td>995 S Arthur, Pocatello, ID 83204</td>
<td>208-478-2522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard McKenna</td>
<td>675 South Haskett Street, Mountain Home, ID</td>
<td>208.580.2449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling Hills</td>
<td>8900 N Horseshoe Bend Road, Boise, ID 83714</td>
<td>208-939-5400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sage International</td>
<td>457 Park Center Blvd, Boise, ID 83706</td>
<td>208-447-8057</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandpoint Charter</td>
<td>614 S Madison Sandpoint ID 83864</td>
<td>208-255-7771</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taylor's Crossing Charter</td>
<td>1445 S Wood River Drive</td>
<td>208-552-0397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Jefferson Charter</td>
<td>1209 Adam Smith Avenue</td>
<td>455-8772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Carmen</td>
<td>12 Ethel's Way, Carmen, ID</td>
<td>208 756 4590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory Charter</td>
<td>1081 E. Lewis Lane</td>
<td>208-442-9400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision Charter School</td>
<td>20185 Lolo Ave Caldwell, Idaho 83605</td>
<td>208-455-9220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pine Charter</td>
<td>2959 John Adams Parkway, Idaho Falls, ID</td>
<td>208-522-4432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wings Charter Middle School</td>
<td>771 N. College Road, Twin Falls, ID 83301</td>
<td>208 734-2902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xavier Charter</td>
<td>North College Road, Twin Falls, ID 83301</td>
<td>208-933-9287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The State of Idaho Department of Education has many experts available to assist authorizers with questions related to their duties. Within the department, any number of divisions work with all schools, charter and non-charter alike. These would include Assessment, Teacher Certification, Coordinated School Health, Safe & Drug Free Schools, Division of Finance, Child Nutrition and Student Transportation, Student Achievement and School Accountability, Special Education and Title I Programs, Human Resources and Information Technology and others. Several programs have unique services for charter schools but are available to support charter/authorizer relations. Content, Innovation and Choice is the division that creatively assists Idaho school districts and charter schools in finding resourceful ways to serve students. The Office of School Choice is coordinated by Michelle Clement Taylor. Questions regarding initiating a charter, sufficiency reviews and charter program grants can be addressed with Michelle. Becky Martin is assigned specifically to charter schools to address Special Education related concerns.

Nationally, there are a number of organizations dedicated to quality charter development and quality authorizing. Some of these resources have been referenced throughout this volume and their web sites are listed below.

National Association of Charter School Authorizers
www.qualitycharters.org

National Alliance of Public Charter Schools
www.publiccharters.org

National Resource Center on Charter Schools

State Department of Education- Office of School Choice
www.sde.idaho.gov/schoolchoice

Idaho Commission of Public Charter Schools
www.chartercommission.id.gov/

Idaho Charter School Network
www.idahocharterschoolnetwork.com

Idaho School Boards Association
www.idbsa.org
Charter Schools in Idaho

- Academy at Roosevelt Center K-10
- Anser Charter School K-8
- ARTEC Regional Charter School 9-12
- Blackfoot Charter Community Learning Center K-6
- Coeur d’Alene Charter Academy 6-12
- Compass Public Charter School K-12
- Falcon Ridge Public Charter School K-8
- Garden City Community School K-8
- Idaho Arts Charter School K-12
- Idaho Distance Education Academy K-12
- Idaho Science & Technology Charter School 6-8
- Idaho Virtual Academy K-12
- Inspire Academics K-12
- iScorred Virtual High School 9-12
- Kaplan Academy of Idaho 6-12
- Kootenai Bridge Academy 11-12
- Liberty Charter School K-12
- Meridian Medical Arts Charter High School 9-12
- Meridian Technical Charter High School 9-12
- Monticello Montessori School K-3
- Moscow Charter School K-6
- North Star Charter School K-12
- North Valley Academy K-12
- OWL Charter Academy K-5
- Palouse Prairie School of Expeditionary Learning K-6
- Payette River Technical Academy 7-12
- Pocatello Community Charter School  K-8
- Richard McKenna Charter High School 9-12
- Rolling Hills Public Charter School K-8
- Sage International School of Boise K-8
- Sandpoint Charter School 6-12
- Taylor’s Crossing Public Charter School K-12
- Thomas Jefferson Charter School K-12
- Upper Carnegie Public Charter School  K-6
- Victory Charter School K-12
- Vision Charter School K-12
- White Pine Charter School K-12
- Wings Charter Middle School 6-8
- Xavier Charter School K-12

Opening in 2011
- North Idaho STEM Academy
- Legacy Charter School
- Village Charter School
- Heritage Academy Charter School
- Heritage Community Charter School

**Idaho Charter Stats at a Glance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stat</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Schools in 2010</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Students</td>
<td>15,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market share of all students in Idaho</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Students on Wait Lists</td>
<td>7,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools making AYP</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools who increase enrollment in 2010</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I School-wide or Targeted</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission Authorized Charters</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Authorized Charters</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New schools 2009-2010</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools approved to open 2010-2011</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Idaho charter schools represent a growing number of educational choices for parents and students as well as the expression of educational innovation and change. Charter leaders are all committed to student growth and achievement with a great deal of accountability. This report provides an overview of the state of the charter movement in Idaho.

Charter schools are mission-driven, self-governed public schools. Charter school academic designs or models are as diverse as the students they enroll. In Idaho you are as likely to find a charter school focused on science and technology as you are to find one focused on fine arts. (Figure 1) Nine schools implement the Harbor Method and 8 are virtual school. Others create programs well suited to at-risk students. Several Idaho charter high schools focus on high-end professional technical education and college preparation. Charter schools generally have one instructional model but may have more than one emphasis.

![Chart](chart.png)

**Figure 1**

Facilities

Traditional public schools typically receive financial support through local property taxes. Public charter schools in only 13 states and the District of Columbia receive some manner of state facilities aid ranging from permission to utilize a vacant school district facility in Alaska to a per-pupil facilities allotment based on a five year average of the available capital funds in the District of Columbia. Charter schools in Idaho receive no facility funding, yet offer dynamic programs in buildings that are both traditional and unconventional. While many charter schools in Idaho have constructed unique and environmentally friendly buildings without the aid of local tax dollars, others continue to provide instruction in portable classrooms or repurposed commercial buildings.

![Facilities Image](facilities.png)

- Lease
- Own

- Repurpose Commercial
- School
- Portables

Lease

Own

52
Are Charter Schools Growing?
The Charter School Act of 1998 enabled the first charter schools to be authorized in Idaho. A cap inserted into legislation in 2004 restricts the development of new schools to 6 per year, and not more than one per district per year. The graph below illustrates the growth of charters from 1998 until 2010. Over the course of the last 12 years, 45 schools have opened and 5 schools have closed. All but one of those closed did so voluntarily. In 2011 five additional schools will open bringing the total number to 45 in Idaho.

Are charter schools diverse?
Charter schools in Idaho are enrolling increasingly diverse student bodies. As the number of schools and students increases, the trend has been an increase in both ethnic and economic diversity of charters as well as an increase in the percent of students with special education needs enrolling. Currently, students who identify themselves as Black, Asian and Native American are represented about 1/2 as often in charter as in non-charter public schools. (See table below) Only 4% of the charter enrollment as compared with 15% of the non-charter school enrollment is identified as Hispanic. This may indicate that charter schools can do a better job reaching out to Latino families and helping them understand the charter opportunities available to them. Charter schools are clearly not only for privileged students. Among 29 schools reporting, 42% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, a low income indicator, with a range of 2% to 75% of student bodies qualifying. Among Title 1 charter schools, 4 are school-wide and 18 provide targeted services. (2010 SDE Consolidated Plan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Total Idaho Public Schools</th>
<th>Idaho Charter Schools</th>
<th>All Idaho Public Schools</th>
<th>Idaho Charter Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Idaho Charter School Network, Inc. PO Box 1166, Boise, ID 83701 208.906.1420
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Related Resources
Included on Disc

- Directory of Idaho Charter Schools
- 2010 Idaho Charter School Dashboard

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