

Archived Information

Appendix A

Overview of the National Study's Research Design

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The National Study is a four-year project designed to address research questions in the following three areas:

- **Implementation.** What kinds of charter schools are developed in which states? In what ways are they similar to other public schools and in what ways are they different? What types of students attend charter schools, and how do they differ from students in other public schools? What factors influence charter school development and implementation? How do states differ in their approaches to charter schools, and how do charter legislation and policies affect charter schools in that state?
- **Impact on students.** Do charter schools have a positive impact on student learning? Under what conditions do charter schools improve or not improve student achievement and other aspects of student learning?
- **Effect on public education.** How do charter schools and charter legislation impact local and state education policy? Are charter schools developing models or reform strategies that can be used by other public schools to improve education for their students? Does the existence of charter schools pressure other schools to reform? What lessons can be learned from the successes and failures of charter schools?

In order to collect and analyze systematic data about these questions, the Study has five interlocking research components:

1. **Yearly telephone interviews with all operational charter schools.** The Study will maintain a database with information about all operational charter schools. During the first year, the Study called all charter schools that were in operation as of January 1996. In subsequent years, we will interview all new charter schools that become operational. (We define operational as providing instruction to students). Annually, the Study will conduct a follow-up telephone interview with all charter schools to update the national database. All charter sites are assured confidentiality for this information. The database, with information removed that might identify any particular charter schools, will be available on a World Wide Web site maintained by the Study.
2. **Repeated field visits to and data collection at a sample of charter schools and comparison sites.** In the first year, the Study chose an unbiased sample of 42 sites (cohort 1) within the five states that had charter schools which were in operation at least one year as of the 1995–96 school year. The total number of charter schools meeting this criteria was 93. Within the five states, the Study selected either all sites in the state or chose charter schools at random within the categories of grade levels served, school size, and whether the schools were newly created or pre-existing schools. This procedure will be followed to select a second cohort of at least 30 charter schools in additional states in which charter schools were operational for at least one year as of the 1996–97 school year. The Study may also add sites in one or more states that had a low number of charter schools meeting the criteria for cohort 1 but that have more schools fulfilling this selection requirement as of the 1996–97 school year. Depending on funding, the Study will select a third cohort of charter schools in 1997–98 in order to include states that have more recently adopted charter legislation. The Study will conduct fieldwork at each of the selected sites. In addition to charter school field sites, the Study will choose and collect data from public school comparison sites that have demographic and other conditions as closely matched as possible to charter schools in the cohort samples. The data collected at all sites include information on student assessment,

educational programs, organizational structure and climate, governance and finance, parental and community involvement and support, relations with district and/or charter sponsoring agencies, and factors affecting charter school development and implementation.

3. **Longitudinal assessment of student achievement in a sample of charter schools and comparison sites.** The Study is offering to provide achievement tests for all students at selected grade levels in the cohorts of charter school field sites and comparison sites discussed above. The tests are criterion referenced, developed by teachers, and geared to assess the students' skills, knowledge and problem-solving abilities in language arts and mathematics. They are called level tests because students take a short locator exam to place them at their appropriate academic level and then take a full test suitable to their level. In this approach, students are less likely to be bored and more likely to be challenged; consequently, the tests provide more in-depth information for each child and teachers can better diagnose the students' strengths and weaknesses. The testing will be done with the same pupils over a number of years, and thus provide longitudinal data about each student's progress. The Study trains teachers at Study field sites in test use and analysis of results. The first series of tests with cohort 1 schools is scheduled for winter and spring of the 1996–97 school year. To supplement the student achievement data from these tests, the Study will collect and analyze behavioral indicators and existing methods charter schools use to assess student learning.
4. **Content analysis of state charter policies and interviews with state officials .** Since charter legislation differs dramatically by state and states differ in their administration of charter schools, the Study has and will continue yearly to collect and interpret state charter school laws, administrative policies, and court rulings for all states with charter legislation. For a selected number of states, the Study will interview state level players—including knowledgeable officials and non-governmental influential actors who are pro, con or neutral in regards to charter schools. The purpose of these interviews is two-fold: (1) to identify state-level factors that affect local charter development and implementation, and (2) to broadly assess the possible positive or negative impacts of charter schools on statewide public education policy.
5. **Intensive fieldwork and data collection at selected charter sites in order to assess effect on public education.** Beginning in 1997 and following every year throughout the project's life, the Study will purposively select a subsample of the Study sites in several states to examine the impact of charter schools on local and regional school systems. At each site, the Study will interview district and regional school personnel, community members, and representative interest groups. Team members will also collect news stories and other artifacts that bear on what, if anything, can be discerned about the extent and ways in which charter schools impact public education. This data collection from the ground up will be combined with state level information gathered as discussed above. The field sites for these policy studies will only be in those states for which state-level interviews will be done.

Appendix B

State Legislative Overview

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This Appendix summarizes major features of state charter school legislation. The summary is presented in the form of Exhibit B–1, an overview table intended for comparison purposes. It does not contain detailed provisions of state laws. Rather, it represents a brief summary of key features of those laws. The summary, by necessity, does not capture nuances and details of each state’s legislation. During 1997, we will publish a separate comprehensive report on state legislation. The table lists key charter legislation features for 25 states, and the District of Columbia, based on analysis of state and federal legislation as of August 1996 and includes the following eight distinguishing elements:

1. **Charter-approving agencies and sponsors.** Lists who in the state has authority to participate in granting charters. Charter-granting agencies are often referred to as “sponsors” and typically have some degree of responsibility to monitor the charter schools’ progress.
2. **Appeal of charter denial.** Addresses whether charter developers may appeal the denial of a charter application by a charter-granting agency to another body. In some cases the appeal agency may be able to grant the charter directly or order the agency that denied the charter to grant or reconsider the charter application. In other states, the appeal agency may only recommend that the charter be granted and has no authority to grant the charter or order that the charter be approved.
3. **Cap on number of charters allowed in state and by district .** Indicates whether the state caps the number of charters that may be granted statewide and/or by district or geographic region. Many states have caps on the total number of charter schools that may be approved in the state; some also have caps on the total number, or percentage, of K–12 students in the state or district who may attend charter schools. Others cap the number of charters that may be granted during a given year, but may or may not cap the total number that may be granted.
4. **Automatic waiver of most state education laws and regulations .** Indicates whether the charter law exempts charter schools from a substantial proportion of laws and regulations that normally apply to public schools and school districts. In some states the charter school law automatically grants charter schools a waiver of most state and local education codes and regulations. In other states there is no such waiver and the application for a charter school must specify what statutes or regulations are requested for waiver while still other states do not provide for waivers. Charter laws often specify that state health, safety, and non-discrimination laws cannot be waived.
5. **Charter schools may employ and/or bargain with staff independently.** Indicates whether charter schools have the ability to employ and/or bargain with staff independent of existing contractual and employment arrangements. In some states charter school staff are employed by the school as an independent entity; elsewhere they remain or become employees of the district. Many state charter laws exempt charter schools from existing collective bargaining laws or specify that the charter school may or must bargain with employees independent of existing bargaining agreements. Others require that charter school staff be subject to existing bargaining agreements.
6. **Charter schools may be independent legal entity .** Indicates whether the charter school may or must be constituted as a legal entity independent of the local school district.
7. **Basic operational funding generally comparable with other schools.** Addresses whether charter schools receive general-purpose and categorical operational funds comparable with similarly-situated public schools. This item excludes capital funds which rarely are provided to

charter schools. Due to the complexity and varied nature of state education funding formulas, this item may also exclude district-specific and one-time funding sources.

8. **School operates under limited-term, performance-based contract.** Indicates whether the law requires charter schools to operate under a limited-time and revocable performance-based contract that includes specified student achievement goals, standards or outcomes.

Notes for Appendices

1. Appeal allowed only if local board 1) did not comply with procedural requirements in considering proposal or 2) made errors in applying legal requirements for charter approval; if either of these occurs, state board could require local board to reconsider charter proposal.
2. Charter schools do not have bonding authority and do not receive excess local levy aid.
3. Hereafter, all data on charter schools refers to data collected from the telephone survey. School size data was available for 223 schools, out of 225 respondents. Data on all public schools was obtained from: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Survey, 1993–94. Of the 22,252 public schools in the 10 charter states, school size data were not available for 588 schools (2.6%).
4. Of the 22,252 public schools in the 10 charter states, school level data were not available for 588 schools (2.6%). Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Survey, 1993–94.
5. Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Survey, 1993–94.
6. Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Survey, 1993–94.
7. Of the 225 charter schools that responded to the survey, 206 responded to this question in ways that could be coded.
8. Of the 225 charter schools that responded to the survey, 206 responded to this question in ways that could be coded.
9. The numbers shown in Exhibit D–3 are factor scores. (See Exhibits 24 and 25). The factor scores are normal standardized data which have no intrinsic substantive meaning. The statistical test for the ANOVA uses the F ratio which is obtained by dividing the between group mean square by the within group mean square. The significance level is obtained by comparing the calculated F value to the F distribution. The last column refers to the significance level for one degree of freedom.

Appendix C

Supplemental Exhibits for Chapter III

Appendix D

Supplemental Exhibits for Chapter IV