

Archived Information

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Goal: To support the creation of a large number of high-quality charter schools and evaluate their effects.

Relationship of Program to Volume 1, Department-wide Objectives: The Public Charter Schools Program objectives support Objective 1.6 of the Department's Strategic Plan (greater public school choice will be available to all students and families). Public Charter Schools Program objectives seek to expand the number and variety of options available for families. The program also strives to improve the quality and accountability of those options, while working to increase positive impacts on the public school system. The program goal is to increase the numbers of charter schools and ensure that these schools have adequate flexibility, are held accountable for reaching high standards, and are open to all students.

FY 2000—\$145,000,000

FY 2001—\$175,000,000 (Requested budget)

OBJECTIVE 1: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LARGE NUMBER OF HIGH-QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOLS THAT ARE FREE FROM STATE OR LOCAL RULES THAT INHIBIT FLEXIBLE OPERATION, ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR ENABLING STUDENTS TO REACH CHALLENGING STATE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS, AND ARE OPEN TO ALL STUDENTS.

Indicator 1.1 State legislation: By 2000, 40 states will have charter school legislation.			
Targets and Performance Data		Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<i>Number of states with charter school legislation (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico)</i>		Status: Positive move toward 2000 target.	Source: State Educational Agencies SEA; state legislatures. <i>Frequency:</i> Quarterly. <i>Next Update:</i> Summer 2000. Validation Procedure: Data supplied by State Educational Agencies SEAs and state legislatures. Data validated by ED staff and corroborated by information from other sources. Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: There is variation in the definition of state charter school legislation, which leads to uneven implementation.
Year	Actual Performance	Performance Targets	
1994-95:	12		
1995-96:	19		
1996-97:	27		
1997-98:	31		
1998-99:	38	Continuous Improvement	
1999-00:		40	
2000-01:		42	
Indicator 1.2 Charter operations: By 2002, there will be at least 3,000 charter schools in operation around the Nation.			
Targets and Performance Data		Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<i>Number of charter schools in operation</i>		Status: Positive movement toward 2002 target.	Source: State legislatures, SEAs. <i>Frequency:</i> Annually. <i>Next Update:</i> Summer 2000. Validation Procedure: Data verified by the U.S. Dept. of Education data quality attestation process and ED Standards for Evaluating Program Performance Indicators.
Year	Actual Performance	Performance Targets	
1994-95:	100		
1995-96:	255		
1996-97:	428		
1997-98:	790		
1998-99:	1,100		
1999-00:	1,700	2,060	
2000-01:		2,667	
2001-02:		3,000	

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
				<p>Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: Differences in the definition of charter schools (i.e., some states count multiple sites as single charters, while others count them as multiple charters) cause variability in the counts State Educational Agencies SEAs. There is sometimes disagreement about numbers of charter schools in operation among the agencies that do the counting.</p>
Indicator 1.3 The percentage of charter schools reporting that the lack of start-up funds is a major obstacle to implementation will decrease.				
Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
<i>Percentage of first-year charter schools reporting start-up funding as a major obstacle to implementation</i>			<p>Status: Positive move toward 2001 target.</p> <p>Explanation: Between 1996 and 1999, fewer charter schools reported start-up funding as a major barrier to implementation. During that time span, funding to the Public Charter School Program has increased, suggesting a possible correlation. A specific numerical target was set in 2001 and not 2000, because we will not have data on this indicator in 2000.</p>	<p>Source: National Study of Charter Schools (2000); National Evaluation of the Public Charter School Program (2001, 2002). <i>Frequency:</i> Periodically. <i>Next Update:</i> Second-year report of the National Evaluation, December 2001.</p> <p>Validation Procedure: Internal review procedures of an experienced data collection agency.</p> <p>Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: Continuity problems as a result of data collection under multiple studies. In fact, the survey that is responsible for school-level data in 1999–2000, the Schools and Staffing Survey, will not be capturing this data. Therefore, there will be no data for this indicator until December 2001. After the National Evaluation is completed in 2002, it will be difficult to collect this data.</p>
Year	Actual Performance	Performance Targets		
1996:	59%			
1997:	55%			
1998:	51%			
1999:	39%	Continuing decrease		
2000:		Continuing decrease		
2001:		30%		

OBJECTIVE 2: IDENTIFY, EVALUATE, AND DISSEMINATE THE EFFECTS OF CHARTER SCHOOLS.

Indicator 2.1 Equity—impact of charters on educational opportunity: Nationally, students in charter schools will have similar demographic characteristics as students in all public schools.

Targets and Performance Data				Assessment of Progress		Sources and Data Quality	
<i>Percentage of students, out of total student enrollment, for each demographic characteristic for both charter schools and all public schools in states with charter schools that year</i>				Status: <u>Percent Minority:</u> No 1999 data available. Unable to judge whether progress toward target is likely.		Source: National Study of Charter Schools (1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000); Schools and Staffing Survey (1999); Evaluation of the Public Charter Schools Program (2000, 2001, and 2002). <i>Frequency:</i> Periodically. <i>Next Update:</i> 2001.	
<i>Percent Minority</i>				<u>Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility:</u> No 1999 data available, but progress toward target is likely.		Validation Procedure: Internal review procedures of an experienced data collection agency.	
Year	Actual Performance		Performance Targets		<u>Students with Disabilities:</u> No 1999 data available, but progress toward target is likely.	Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: The number of charter schools, students in charters, and states with charter schools increase each year.	
	Charter	All Public*	Charter	All Public* (see limitations)			
1997:	48.2%	41.3%			<u>Explanation:</u> The target is to have the percentage of charter school students (with one of the three characteristics) similar to that of students in all public schools.	* Note: Because data collection for all public schools lags behind data collection for charter schools, comparison data for all public schools are for a school year 1 to 3 years prior to the year for charter schools. There is also wide variation between states in charter and all public schools, as well as variation and potential concentration of students in individual charter schools. The Department hopes to update this indicator to better reflect the complexities of this issue in the field, after the publication of a forthcoming study examining equity issues in charter schools.	
1998:	51.8%	41%					
1999:	No data available yet		Continuous closing of gap		<u>Percent Minority:</u> The percentage of minority students in charter schools has risen from 48 percent in 1997 to 52 percent in 1998; in all public schools, minority students have remained at about 41 percent. It is difficult to judge whether the target will be met, because the percentage of minority students in charter schools is variable and seems to be affected by the growth of charter schools within states.		
2000:			45%	41% (est'd.)			
2001:			Continuous closing of gap				
<i>Free or Reduced-price Lunch Eligibility</i>				<u>Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility:</u> In 1998, charter schools served a similar but slightly higher percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, as compared with all public schools (39 percent versus 37 percent).			
Year	Actual Performance		Performance Targets		<u>Students with Disabilities:</u> In both 1997 and 1998, charter schools enrolled a slightly lower proportion of students with disabilities than all public schools in the charter states (8 percent versus 11 percent).		
	Charter	All Public*	Charter	All Public*			
1997:	36.7%	37.6%					
1998:	38.7%	37.3%					
1999:	No data available yet		Continuous closing of gap				
2000:			37.3%	37.3% (est'd.)			
2001:			Continuous closing of gap				
<i>Students With Disabilities</i>							
Year	Actual Performance		Performance Targets				
	Charter	All Public*	Charter	All Public*			
1997:	8.3%	11.2%					
1998:	8.4%	11.3%					
1999:	No data available yet		Continuous closing of gap				
2000:			10%	11.3% (est'd.)			
2001:			Continuous closing of gap				

Indicator 2.2 Impact on student performance: Increasing numbers of charter schools will show improved student outcomes.				
Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
Year	Actual Performance	Performance Targets	Status: Unable to judge.	Source: National Study of Charter Schools (2000); National Evaluation of the Public Charter Schools Program (2001, 2002). Frequency: Periodically. Next Update: 2000.
1997	No data available		Explanation: The first national-level study on student achievement in charter schools will be released in spring 2000.	Validation Procedure: N/A. Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements: N/A (because there are no data).
1998	No data available			
1999:	No data available	No specific target set		
2000:		Continuing increase		
2001:		Continuing increase		

KEY STRATEGIES

Strategies Continued from 1999

- ❖ Providing support and technical assistance for state and regional information and outreach meetings.
- ❖ Supporting a charter school Web site, including interactive forums and a national registry of charter schools, to provide information on common issues.
- ❖ Providing information about model charters and chartering processes for chartering agencies through documents and meetings.
- ❖ In order to discuss lessons learned about equity, performance accountability, effective management, leadership and partnerships, and cross-fertilization to nonchartered schools, the program is convening national conferences for Federal charter school grantees and others.
- ❖ Supporting studies of issues associated with charter schools, such as serving students with disabilities, assessment and accountability, fairness and equity, and school finance.
- ❖ Collecting and disseminating information on charter school models that promote student achievement and innovation in the public school system and support the development of networks among charter schools.
- ❖ Meeting with universities, museums, organizations that educate disadvantaged children, and others with the capacity to help charter schools in order to encourage their support in sponsoring and providing technical assistance to charter schools and potential developers of charter schools.

New or Strengthened Strategies

- ❖ In order to fuel more cooperation among charter schools and other public schools, the program is initiating dissemination grant opportunities for states and schools.
- ❖ Initiating a comprehensive needs assessment to direct future national activities—including focus groups with charter schools, charter developers, and charter authorizing agencies—in addition to convening federally funded researchers and demonstration projects.
- ❖ To increase accountability, the program is supporting networking and sharing of practices among chartering entities, recognizing that they influence the quality, accountability and equity in the charter school movement through their decisions.
- ❖ Publishing regulations regarding Federal formula funds that charter schools are eligible to receive.
- ❖ In order to see how to better administer grants, the Planning and Evaluation Service is conducting a program evaluation.
- ❖ To improve the way that states administer charter school programs, the program is supporting a series of regional workshops hosted by State Educational Agencies.
- ❖ In order to learn more about equity in charter schools, the program will sponsor a study on this issue.

HOW THIS PROGRAM COORDINATES WITH OTHER FEDERAL ACTIVITIES

- ❖ To ensure that all Federal agencies reflect the Department's support for charter schools, the Public Charter Schools Program incorporates other agencies into the national charter school conferences and other events. Agencies represented include the Department of Justice, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Department of Agriculture.
- ❖ To ensure charter schools comply with civil rights obligations, the Public Charter Schools Program has collaborated with the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, as well as the Department of Education's Office of General Council and Office for Civil Rights to draft guidance addressing civil rights issues.
- ❖ To ensure that charter schools receiving Federal funds operate as nonprofit organizations, and that nonprofit charter schools are not unduly burdened, the Public Charter Schools Program has worked with the Internal Revenue Service to streamline the examination of charter school applications by the Internal Revenue Service.
- ❖ To ensure that eligible charter schools can participate in school nutrition programs, the Public Charter Schools Program has worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide guidance and staff support.

CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING PROGRAM GOAL

- ❖ Variations in state charter school laws and in procedures and oversight processes make it difficult to ensure quality in educational programs and complicate efforts to increase the quantity of charter schools.
- ❖ Some authorizing agencies fail to implement charter school oversight and accountability initiatives in ways that match program goals (e.g., they may not have adequate rigor in the review process, or may not ensure later accountability for performance).
- ❖ Public Charter Schools Program funds constitute a small proportion of total funding for charter schools.
- ❖ Other obstacles, in addition to the lack of start-up funds, hamper expansion and success in charters (e.g., lack of facilities, inadequate planning time, and organizational and governance challenges).

INDICATOR CHANGES

From FY 1999 Annual Plan (two years old)

Adjusted

- ❖ Indicator 1.6 on educational approaches was adjusted to reflect student outcomes more generally (new Indicator 2.2).

Dropped—None.

From FY 2000 Annual Plan (last year's)

Adjusted

- ❖ Indicators 1.3 and 1.4 replaced by new Indicator 1.3: The former Indicators 1.3 and 1.4 were created to take into account the changes to the Public Charter Schools Program under the Charter School Expansion Act of 1998. The old indicators were intended to reflect the flexibility and accountability that the amendments to the act were designed to support. Technical aspects of the grant competition made these indicators meaningless, as all participating states were required to comply with the areas measured. The revised Indicator 1.3 reduces the complexity of the indicators, captures the primary objective of the program, and can be accurately gauged.
- ❖ Objective 2 adjusted: Last year's Objective 2 read: "Evaluate the effects of charter schools, including identifying the most effective strategies to improve quality and innovation in the public school system." It now reads: "Identify, evaluate, and disseminate the effects of charter schools." The new language better reflects the 1998 reauthorized school legislation.
- ❖ Indicators 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 have been adjusted: These indicators are basically the same in substance but have been reworded and strengthened. Instead of indicators that state, "Studies will show," the new indicators focus on the performance of charter schools. While the purpose of the Public Charter Schools Program is not to impact charter school outcomes per se, the program does need to identify, evaluate, and disseminate the effects of charter schools (Objective 2).

Dropped

- ❖ Indicator 2.3 dropped: To truly determine the impact of charter schools on the public school system, one would need to get data from traditional public schools. The Public Charter Schools Program is dropping this indicator until future data sources can better inform an indicator like this one.

New

- ❖ Indicator 1.3 is new this year. It replaces last year's Indicators 1.3 and 1.4.