New Jersey Charter Schools In Operation From Policy To Practice

Frances Roberta Scudese

Seton Hall University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations

Part of the Educational Administration and Supervision Commons

Recommended Citation
Scudese, Frances Roberta, "New Jersey Charter Schools In Operation From Policy To Practice" (1999). Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs). 1297.
https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/1297
NEW JERSEY CHARTER SCHOOLS IN OPERATION FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

BY

FRANCES ROBERTA SCUDESE

Dissertation Committee

Mel J. Shay, Ed.D., Mentor
James Caulfield, Ed.D
Robert G. Petix, Ph.D
William E. De Feo, Ed.D.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education
Seton Hall University

1999
ABSTRACT

New Jersey Charter Schools In Operation From Policy To Practice

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the operation of charter schools in the state of New Jersey. Since the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 (P.L. 1995, Chapter 426) was considered a strong statute; it was the desire of the researcher to question the stakeholders as to their perceptions of the act and its application to the non-traditional public school movement.

This was a qualitative study whereby the data was gathered via three different sources: (a) policies from the State Department, (b) documents from the individual charter schools and (c) six open-ended questions designed by the researcher. A total of thirty participants from three schools were included. The participants included: (3) administrators/directors, (9) board of trustee members, (9) parents and (9) teachers. The schools represented grades from kindergarten to eight. Each school was located in a unique setting: the growing southern region, the large urban city and the northwest rural area.

The data gathered from the participants were analyzed and summarized by the researcher. The questions addressed the subject's perceptions as to feasibility of the act (policy) in everyday practice. The written documents from the State Department and the
individual charter schools supplied essential background information. Specific goals and objectives from each school were reported.

The findings included recommendations to improve the program in several areas. One prevailing recommendation was that a change in funding be implemented. Additional funding was important; however, where and how the money is allocated and dispersed is more significant.

This study had significant results in calling upon the policymakers to revisit the New Jersey Charter School Program Act. Additional factors for further study were noted that involved parental involvement, community participation and autonomy as they effect the charter school program.

Recommendations for future studies included in-depth analysis of the newly created charter schools in New Jersey. A comparison study between the original 13 charter schools to the newly founded is suggested. Finally, this study showed the importance of the stakeholders as part of the building block to a strong charter school program. Time, effort and dedication were equations for achieving success.
NEW JERSEY CHARTER SCHOOLS IN OPERATION FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

BY

FRANCES ROBERTA SCUDESE

Dissertation Committee

Mel J. Shay, Ed.D., Mentor
James Caulfield, Ed.D
Robert G. Petix, Ph.D
William E. De Feo, Ed.D.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education
Seton Hall University

1999
DEDICATION

To my husband, Joe

and

To my son, Peter
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the completion of my dissertation, there are many people that I would like to publicly thank at this time. Heartfelt thanks are sent to the three charter schools that participated in my study. They opened their doors to a total stranger and allowed me the ability to meet and interview administrators, parents, staff, and board of trustee members. You're doing a wonderful job in creating an atmosphere of educational innovation and excellence.

To my dissertation committee members, you have been my support and academic experts in this process. To Dr. Mel Shay, mentor, your time, patience, educational expertise and constant guidance were truly appreciated. You always had time to guide me down the right path. To Dr. James Caulfield, you have been my guru on charter schools in New Jersey. To Dr. William DeFeo, your input on my writing style was most appreciated and your continual support was deeply applauded. To Dr. Robert Petix, you gave me a wonderful background in educational innovations, continual encouragement, plus words of wisdom.

A special thanks is sent to Doreen Groves who patiently worked on my transcripts, my secretary, Claudia Mills who worked with me formatting my paper and my niece, Joanna Goodhartz, who assisted in perfecting the finished product.

Finally, I would like to offer my special thanks to my family and friends for their encouragement throughout this process. Special love and thanks are given to my son, Peter, who has been a constant support of me in this endeavor. Last and definitely, the best, to my husband Joe, you were always there for me throughout my academic endeavor. I share this degree with you.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. vii
LIST OF FIGURES .............................................................................................................. vi

Chapter I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 1

Statement of the Problem ................................................................................................. 2
Purpose of the Study........................................................................................................... 4
Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 4
Validity and Reliability ....................................................................................................... 6
Significance of Study ......................................................................................................... 7
Limitations of the Study ..................................................................................................... 7
Definition of Terms ........................................................................................................... 8

Chapter II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .............................................................. 11

Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 11
Historical Data of the Charter School Movement ............................................................. 11
Development of the Charter Schools in the United States ............................................... 15
Elements of the Charter School Program ...................................................................... 18
Charter School Models .................................................................................................... 22
Key Issues in Charter Schools ....................................................................................... 29

Political Concerns .......................................................................................................... 29
Accountability .................................................................................................................... 31
Autonomy ......................................................................................................................... 33
Funding/Resources .......................................................................................................... 34
Admission Requirements ................................................................................................. 36
Teacher Employment ....................................................................................................... 37
Summary .............................................................................................................................. 44
Appendix D. Demographic Form ................................................................. 136
Appendix E. Permission Letter from Subject ........................................... 138
Appendix F. Copy of Charter School Program Act ................................... 140
Appendix G. Copy of Charter Application Form ..................................... 150


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Subjects in Study</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Value Formation</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In his State of the Union speech in January 1998, President William Clinton spoke about the necessity of improving the quality of education in the United States. He expressed the concern that adults of the 21st century be qualified to meet the job challenges in our ever-changing world. Reports from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicated that U.S. students were underachieving. The mathematical assessment released in 1994 reported small gains at each grade level. Yet, the percentage of students who tested “below basic” remained high: 39% of fourth graders, 37% of eighth graders, and 36% of 12th graders. The 1994 reading assessment also yielded discouraging news: reading performance for fourth and eighth graders held steady but dropped significantly for 12th graders (Finn & Ravitch, 1996).

Political and educational leaders were looking for solutions to the questions, “Will Johnny be able to function in our 21st century?” and more importantly “Will the schools be able to give him the tools that he will need?”

Our federal government has attempted to formulate programs that support higher standards. Goals 2000 Act, which originated under the Clinton administration, was designed to promote standards that are national, competitive, and would raise the level of accountability (Reynolds, 1997). This act was based on reports and findings from state and local educational agencies. From the prior reports, which included the “A Nation at Risk” (1983) and the Goals 2000 Act in 1990, President Clinton signed into law this updated legislation on March 31, 1994. There were six major areas cited in the academic
achievements via supporting techniques to raise academic standards. One goal mentioned was the waiving of certain regulations to promote flexibility in implementing school improvements. In addition to this act, the National Governors Association and the National Council on Educational Standards and Testing concluded that tougher and better schooling would boost a sagging economy and renew the failing educational system that we call public education. But one may ask the question: "What is tougher and better schooling? And how do we achieve it?"

Statement of the Problem

Given the impetus for stronger and better standards in our schools, and the need to create better schools for the American child, advocates of school improvement have become more outspoken. The call to "restructure" the system was prevailing. Some claimed the system, as we knew it, was failing (Chubb & Moe, 1990). This system was established not to respond to parents' and students' demands, but rather to the demands of state legislatures, school boards, and a large professionalized educational bureaucracy (Smith & Meier, 1995). In New Jersey, the State Department of Education took control over the three largest school districts – Jersey City, Newark, and Paterson. This take over was completed for the primary purpose of improving the academic standards and achievement levels of the students. This process most often had the blessing of the parental organizations in the districts.

As a result of this restructuring movement in New Jersey, the option of school choice became a new "buzz" word. Within this movement there was the creation of non-traditional organizations called charter schools. Charter schools were public institutions funded by the state and operated under the guidelines of rules and regulations composed
by its board of trustees. These schools were held accountable for achieving educational results and in return received waivers that exempt them from many bureaucratic rules (Nathan, 1996). According to Bierlein (1996) there were many elements that made charter schools an appealing reform concept that equates standards to achievements. Advocates claimed that charter schools offered a viable means of integrating and expanding various reform strategies such as site-base management and teacher empowerment. A stronger accountability system was present in many charter school laws. The issues of safety and health, civil rights, testing, and assessment were strictly enforced. However, leeway was granted to the school if the board of trustees claimed the need for an exemption was necessary to the advancement of the school's educational goals and objectives (Richardson, 1995).

Since the pioneer days in 1991 when Minnesota became the first state to grant a charter, the movement has grown rapidly to include 29 states and 428 schools (Finn, Manno, Bierlein, Vanourek, 1997). On December 11, 1995, New Jersey joined the ranks of states to pass a law permitting charter schools. This law (Act) was passed and ratified as Assembly No 592 and Senate No 1796 under the guidance of Assemblymen Doria and Rocco and Senators Ewing, LaRossa, Inverso, and Kyrillos. This act was established to supplement Title 18 A of the New Jersey Statutes.

Critics of charter schools claimed that the ideal of an alternative, competitive, public school system operating side-by-side with the traditional public school system was radical and controversial. Charter schools were seen as a veiled attempt to subsidize an alternative public system of education. Robert Astrup, president of the Minnesota Education Association, suggested that a charter school may turn out to be little more than
an "elite academy" created with public funds (Astrup, 1992).

Important questions arose when discussing non-traditional schooling and, in particular, charter schools. Inquiries included the following: Did the existence of charter schools truly foster improvement in implementing the national educational standards? Are these schools viewed realistically as part of the restructuring process and are their goals for the 21st century achievable? Can the charter school be considered an innovation, which will be a successful competitor of the traditional public school?

Purpose of the Study

Given the expectation of a charter school to improve educational standards in our system, this paper determined whether the existence of charter schools in New Jersey could provide a positive alternative choice for instruction. The New Jersey Charter School Act is considered to be a "strong" policy, especially in the areas of accountability and autonomy. Thus an approved New Jersey Charter School should have exhibited positive achievements. This law has enabled educators, parents, and community members to organize and create a local non-traditional school. For this reason, a comparison of the New Jersey charter school law and implementation through newly existing charter schools was examined. It was necessary to analyze and perform an in-depth evaluation of such a school to discover if a parallel exists between the law (policy) and the charter school (practice).

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions regarding charter schools as they exist in New Jersey:

Question 1. Can New Jersey charter schools actually accomplish what they were
designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the Charter Law? (N.J. Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21). Explain.

Question 2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your charter school application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

Question 3. Based upon the perceptions of parents, staff, administration, and the board of trustees, how closely did the actual level of success attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the Department of Education. (N.J. Charter School Program Act - lines 5 to 54)? Explain.

Question 4. Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

Question 5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation etc., need to be sustained and which need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Explain and note that the elements referred to those constraints in the New Jersey charter statute, the charter application and the charter school guidelines.

Question 6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public school in your community?

Theoretical Rationale

Charter schools may have offered a viable means of integrating various reform ideas in order to create highly autonomous and accountable learning environments (Bierlein, Mulholland, 1994). Non-traditional schools also forced educators to question the wisdom of many conventional management and instructional practices. The overall goals of charter schools were not simply to develop a few new schools, but to create the dynamics
that will cause change within the institutions of public education. This study intended to analyze charter schools and answer the question, “If charter schools in New Jersey can be considered an effective alternative of choice for children, did the New Jersey Charter School Law actually enable the stakeholders to create and implement an effective charter institution?”

Validity and Reliability

Since the Charter School initiative began in 1991, the amount of research to validate the concept of charter schools as a feasible avenue of school choice has been limited. Given the varied structure of the charter laws in the United States measuring success can prove difficult. However, there have been numerous independent reports and editorial essays such as Joe Nathan’s Charter Schools: Creating Hope and Opportunity for American Education (1996) and Lori Mulholland’s numerous writing reflecting the development of the charter school initiative that the existence of non-traditional education attest to establishing standards which measure successful individual charter laws and schools. Research is now being developed on a daily basis and educators are reporting findings from several states including Massachusetts, Arizona, and California.

New Jersey began with thirteen start-up schools in September 1997 and, as of this writing, little educational research has been published relating to its charter schools. As with any new program, the first year may not provide definitive information. This study examined three schools that were in the second year of operation. The status of the goals and organization might have changed depending upon the prior year’s assessment by the state and by the charter school board of trustees. The reporting of both financial and
educational attainment had to have been reported by August 1, 1998 to the Department of Education in Trenton, New Jersey.

These schools had been selected because they represented charter schools from three different geographical areas and a wide range of age groupings. The schools selected were from the northern, central and southern counties including urban and rural districts. The grades encompassed kindergarten to eight. This selection appeared to be the most logical selection of the thirteen New Jersey charter schools.

Significance of Study

Since there has been little evidence presented about the effectiveness of Charter Schools in New Jersey, it was the aim of this study to determine whether such institutions were in fact a viable alternative system for learning in this state. It was hoped that with this study, two important goals were to be illustrated, (1) the charter schools in this state would create and (2) implement a better means of instruction than that which existed with the traditional model. It was the expectation that with a microanalysis of selective institutions, a Charter School model will emerge to illustrate the vision created by the New Jersey Charter School Program act. This study intended to pave the way for future educators who are interested in reform through establishment of a Charter School.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study. The charter schools in the state of New Jersey were the only institutions that were solicited for analysis. Of the thirteen approved charter schools, only three were selected for the study. Another consideration that must be mentioned was that the data collected had a limited history of only a year and a half in operation. Finally, since this study involved stakeholders (parents, teachers,
administrators and board of trustee members), the researcher was depending upon the honestly and knowledge of the subjects when responding to the survey questions.

Definition of Terms

Accountability. The means for creating techniques to judge a school by checks and balances. A charter school must abide by the rules and regulations of its mission statement. It must report any problems or issues to the Department of Education. The state may revoke or refuse to renew any charter school contract, if it fails to live up to the guidelines established by the charter.

Admission. The process by which students were admitted to an institution. In charter schools, admissions must be open to all students regardless of race, religion or gender. As in traditional public schools, charter schools cannot discriminate against a student in the areas of ability or aptitude.

Autonomy. The ability to make one’s own decisions. In regard to charter schools, autonomy reflects the ability to make one’s own decisions yet remain legally liable for those choices.

Charter Schools. This term refers to a non-traditional public school that offers an opportunity of choice to students and parents. These schools are financed with money from tax dollars and are held accountable for the achievement of students (Nathan, 1996). A school’s charter will be reviewed and renewed based upon guidelines established by the individual states. Usually the school has the authority to operate for a specific period – normally five years – and receives a renewal if the state sanctions the progress of the school. Similar to a private school, it is self-governing, free from most regulations, able to hire whomever, and attended only by youngsters whose parents select it.
In New Jersey, the State Department of Education defined a charter school as "...a public school which (1) has a charter granted by the Commissioner; (2) operates independently of a district board of education; and (3) is managed by a board of trustees deemed to be public agents authorized by the State Board of Education to supervise and control the school" (NJ Department of Education, 1998).

**Contract.** Agreements issued to the individual charter schools for a period of five years, but to be renewed on a yearly basis. Contracts were awarded after a completion and approval of an application. A panel from the Department of Education reviewed this form. The contracts contained methods of instruction, the goals and mission statements, admission policy, accountability reporting, assessment criteria, parental and community involvement, and financial overview. The state has the right to revoke any contract at any time if the school is not fulfilling the agreement.

**Core Curriculum Standards.** The State Department of New Jersey has established educational standards to which public schools (both traditional and non-traditional) must adhere when organizing and implementing a course of study. These standards encompassed seven (7) areas of content that included: visual and performing arts, comprehensive health and physical education, language arts/literacy, mathematics, science, social studies and world language (NJ Department of Education, 1995).

**Culture.** The established beliefs, values, traditions, goals, and school expectations determined the school's culture.

**Funding.** The distribution of money to districts by the state for operational expenses. Charter schools received their money either directly from the state or via the local school board. The amount of funding is regulated by the individual states. The
fiscal year begins on July 1st.

**Governance.** The managerial arrangement that empowers the school to operate is entitled “governance”. Depending upon the school’s charter, governance could be operational in different ways. Site-based management or cooperative decision making are two such methods of governance.

**Innovation.** Innovation is a new and specific change, which is thought to be more effective and efficient in implementing goals to a system.

**Site Based Management.** A team of parents, staff, administrators and students are responsible to a school’s operating activities on a daily basis.

**Organization of the Study**

This study was prepared in a five-chapter format. Chapter I included an introduction, a statement of the problem, the research questions, the limitations of the study, the definition of terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter II included the relevant literature in the field of charter schools, specific documentation for New Jersey charter schools, and an analysis of the policy of New Jersey’s charter school law. Chapter III presented the characteristics of the research design, which involved the case study methodology, the participants in the study, and the method of selecting a specific school for participation in the study. Chapter IV presented the research findings gained from the study. Chapter V discussed the implications of the research and recommendations for possible further study regarding the feasibility of charter schools in New Jersey.
Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter the presentation of literature will be a review of completed studies on the charter school movement. This information will be reported under the following subheadings: Historical Development of the Charter Movement; Development of Charter Schools in the United States; Elements of Charter School Programs; Models of Charter Schools; Key Issues of the Charter School Movement; New Jersey Charter School Law; Charter Schools in New Jersey; Charter School Research and Summary.

Historical Data of the Charter School Movement

The charter school movement grew out of a belief that charter schools will be the answer to the revitalization of educational standards and core curricula in public education (Bierlein and Mulholland, 1994). Researchers Finn and Ravitch further state that by developing competition among existing public schools and with the support of local educators, parents, community members and other sponsors, new models of educational avenues and incentives to improve the system would be created. By and large, charter schools aim to serve the same populations of children as traditional public schools. In the early 1990's several states permitted the creation of charter schools on a limited basis. These schools were opened to the public and receive funds released by the state. Amsler (1992) summarizes that charter schools are schools of choice, which are autonomous and performance-based. Given the opportunity, educators would avail themselves of the chance to make substantial changes in the structure of existing
educational programs.

In its purest form, a charter school is an autonomous educational entity operating under a contract that has been negotiated between the organizers who manage the school and a sponsor who oversees the provisions of the charter (Bierlein & Mulholand, 1994). One of the best known early "charters" is the Magna Carta which was the first formal written contract to document an agreement between two parties for services to be rendered. In the 17th century, Henry Hudson signed the East India Charter for authorization to travel a new route for better and quicker travels to Asia. Parallel to these events, the present day charter schools offer the option of choice as an educational reform potentially better for children.

In England, there has been an initiative known as the grant-maintained schools. Establishing a self-governing form of education in 1988, they had been given authorization from the government under the title of Parliament's Education Reform Act of 1988 (Wohlstetter and Anderson, 1994). According to Wohlstetter and Anderson, there exist 693 schools in both England and Wales, which have chosen to become incorporated. Schools that have acquired grant-maintained status represent a wide range of grade levels, sizes, and academic types. The common theme that is spread throughout the schools is improving the quality of education by self-governing.

According to Wohlstetter, a school receives two "seed" grants as initial start-up funding which is paid upon the approval of the school. Naturally, the government requires the school to prepare a budget on how the money will be expended. An additional fund for capital repairs is also allotted under this policy. It is a flat rate plus a per pupil amount. The allocation of funding will double the capital funding for the next
three years according to Wohlstetter. The grant-maintained schools will receive double the amount that a state-funded school is given. A bursar’s position is established so that an employer can handle both the financial and some administrative matters related to funding.

Even though the grant-maintained schools are popular with parents, problems have been noted. The division of responsibility, the economies of scale and monitoring of grant schools have been mentioned. As the schools increased in numbers, the Department of Education could no longer maintain the personal relationship with the schools. Organizational concerns have presented notice to the government and two special funding agencies were created – Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) which serves England and the Schools Funding Council for Wales (SFCW). These agencies will give support and services to the expanded programs according to Wohlstetter and Anderson.

In Britain, charter school policies embody many of the attributes of systemic reform according to O'Day and Smith (1993). The dual reform strategy that combines state-initiated support with local flexibility allows the success of grant-maintained schools. The creation of centralized policies regarding the curriculum and student assessment are a key element according to Smith. Given the ability to design their own strategies for achieving instructional goals allows these schools room for innovation and creates success. As noted by Smith, the challenge lies in coordinating innovative strategies with systemic change.

In accordance with another historic and global development of charter schools, mention is made regarding the Russian Educational Act of 1992 as researched by Abby Weiss (1994). Surprisingly, this system closely resembles the outline of the United States
charter school concept. Weiss (1994) writes that the approvals to register are awarded for a school under certain conditions. The approval process is multilayered, beginning with registration to the local authorities of the intention of the founders. Appraisal by the state is scheduled and the charter is judged on the basis of building facilities, equipment and qualifications of the staff. An important issue of accountability mentioned is that 50% of the graduates must pass the program for a three year time period. Weiss comments on the similarities existing between the United States schools and Russian schools. The similarities include the concepts that the school conforms with the state and local standards with respect to building standards and norms; sanitary and hygienic norms; the protection of the health of students and staff and the educational qualifications of the teaching staff. Accreditation is necessary and occurs every five years; there are no limits to the number of schools. Finally, all costs associated with the approval process are borne by the founders.

By reviewing the literature from other countries, the United States should be able to emerge with information that is useful in creating an alternative system of education.

In the United States, according to Beirlein (1995), a charter school is defined as a public entity operating under a charter, or contract, that has been negotiated between the organizers who design and run the schools, and a sponsor who oversees the provisions of the charter. The charter describes items such as the school’s instructional plan or goals, specific educational achievements and how to attain them and the financial manner which the school will be organized.

Bierlein and Mulholand (1994) further write that once a charter school becomes an independent legal entity it has the right to hire and fire, sue and be sued, award
contracts for outside services and control its own finances. When the term of the contract expires (usually after five years), it may be renewed if the school demonstrated positive student results and has not violated any laws or mismanaged its budget and continues to attract students, parents and teachers to its school.

The U. S. General Accounting Office (GAO) in 1995 reinforced the idea that charter schools are offering a new model for public schools. The report suggests that charter schools address a variety of concerns in our educational system including unresponsive bureaucracies, limited choices among public schools, and a lack of accountability for student performance.

Thus, with the report from the GAO, charter schools in the United States are becoming increasingly popular in the area of restructuring and improving the educational platform for our country.

Development of the Charter Schools in the United States

Strong words on the state of our educational system were issued by President G. Bush on September 28, 1989 as quoted from the New York Times. He stated, “After two centuries, we are stagnant...no modern nation can long afford to allow so many of its sons and daughters to emerge into adulthood ignorant and unskilled. The status quo is a guarantee of mediocrity, social decay and national decline.” (Weinraub, 1989).

With the above quotation, the United States' educational system had been considered at a crossroads for innovation. Reformers carrying the banner of excellence have proposed alternatives to improve our educational system. American educational reform is filled with the search for silver bullets—quick, painless ways to cut through educational bureaucracies. Some think that charter schools are such a bullet. It is too
early to make a definitive reply, but the research is there to support the program as a possible viable alternative system for implementing sound educational standards.

The Goals 2000 approach was designed to promote the development of state and national standards (Finn and Ravitch 1996). The core of the program is to develop standards to raise the accountability within the educational system. In 1994, U.S. education was rated a grade of “C”. Thus the development of the Report Card by Finn and Ravitch was written. According to this document, states had hoped for additional revenues but were reluctant to develop a new program for educational standards and accountability. Striking a balance is a difficult process. Finn and Ravitch conclude that most people pay lip service to the development of content standards, but few are prepared to follow through by creating precise performance standards and high-quality tests which would make one accountable for promotion, graduation, college entry and/or employment.

From the Goals 2000 initiative, Finn and Ravitch speak about the two paradigms that have emerged in the United States. One branch of change would foster the idea of systemic reform that is under the auspices of the government. This governmental control would be a top-down approach that would establish standards not only for student learning, but also for teacher training, assessment, textbooks, school resources and “best practices”.

The second paradigm would decentralize control and welcome entrepreneurial management and grass-roots initiatives within a framework of publicly defined standards and accountability. In this paradigm, education may be delivered through charter schools (Finn & Ravitch, 1996).
According to Joe Nathan (1996), charter schools are public institutions that deliver a public education using public dollars but are organized by individuals or groups not school boards. A contract is written and accepted by the state and a charter school is born. In the charter application, the educational plan, mission statement, and goals are identified by the sponsor. The school would be granted autonomy in exchange for strict accountability to the approved application.

In the U.S. Department of Education’s First Year Report, 1997 on Charter Schools describes a four year research effort (September 1995-September 1999). The report provides descriptive information about how many and what kind of charter schools are operational.

Minnesota became the first state to enact charter legislation in 1991. As of January 1997 there are 428 charter schools operational. The specific terms of states’ charter legislation vary widely and reflect considerable differences in how the states view the charter school concept.

The U.S. Department of Education (1997) analyzed and grouped various sections of each state’s charter law. According to the survey, the following facts have been registered:

- 16 of the 29 charter states limit the number of charter schools; 9 states have no limits
- 12 states the local school board is the only authority that can grant a charter; the remaining states apply through a local agency
- all but 4 permit the creation of new schools from scratch; all states have the provisions for the conversion of public schools to charter and only 6 states
allow the conversion of private schools to charter.

- in 15 states charter schools may act as their own employer; the remaining states require that teachers continue as employees of the local district.
- 13 states charter schools are to be accountable to the collective bargaining arrangements while the remaining exclude this arrangements or address collective bargaining as part of their charter unit.

It can be concluded from the U.S. Department of Education's (1997) report that the charter schools, as they exist in 1998 include the following findings: most have a small enrollment which would be less than 200 students; about 60% of the schools were created because of the educational opportunity; most charter schools have a racial composition similar to the statewide average or have a higher proportion of students of color; on the average, a lower proportion of students with disabilities and limited English are serviced; an equal proportion of low income students are enrolled and most charter schools are eligible for Title I funding but do not apply (24-25).

Elements of the Charter School Program

The attention that charter schools have initially received focused upon the following characteristics which included options for choice, decentralization, autonomy, growth of staff professionalism and market driven system as stated by Dianda and Corwin (1994). Researchers continue to explain these particular attributes in the following manner:

Enhance educational choice options – charter schools offer teachers a chance to work in a more innovative, autonomous environment that utilizes new teaching methods. They offer parent and student a choice of learning environments not usually available
within a traditional public school. Levin (1989) suggests three reasons for school choice options which include: families have the right to choose the type of education their children receive; families should be able to choose the school which best fits the educational needs of their child; and choice among schools will lead to greater competition. In addition Raywid adds that the fundamental theories of school choice are: no one best school for everyone; the need for diversity in school structure to accommodate all students' needs; and students will accomplish more in an environment that they have freely chosen (1988).

True decentralization – as an autonomous, legal entity, a charter school is free to make one's own administrative and instructional decisions. States that created full autonomy allow the charter school to receive the funding directly from the state, just as if charter school was a school district of one. Teachers and staff become employees of the state, not the district, and assist in setting salary structures and employment policies.

Autonomy exchanged for accountability – After a charter school proposal gains approval from a local school board or state, the school is free to manage its own affairs. Though the school is subject to the same inspections imposed on school districts, it is not held to all the same rules and regulations. In New Jersey, the charter schools are freed from the rigid regulations imposed on the traditional schools except for accountability, testing, child safety and health issues and civil rights laws.

Given the call of “What are our children learning?” not “What are we spending?” focuses on the basic foundation of charter schools (Bierlein, 1995). As noted in the article by Manno, Finn, Bierlein and Vanourek “How Charter Schools Are Different’ (1998), standards, testing and consequences are central to the accountability factor in
charter schools. Thus, with mixing the accountability element with standards and consequences make a formula for a possible alternative educational system. At this stage of the program, it is too soon to tell.

Professional opportunities for teachers – It has been noted that with the creation of charter school, teachers become more directly involved in all phases of school operations from curriculum planning to management (Finn & Ravitch, 1996).

Thus given the high degree of teacher involvement, and setting school policies, a professional conception of teaching requires certain workplace conditions to exist. According to O'Day & Smith (1993), there exists a general consensus about the goals of the school and collective responsibility for them. A collegial learning environment is fostered when teachers actively collaborate to develop professional skills that center on student learning (Sizer, 1992 & Meirer, 1992). Finally with sufficient resources, teachers can to experiment and adapt instructional innovation when given the opportunity (Meirer, 1992).

Teachers who collaborated on school goals and issues, and participated in governance, experienced a greater professional satisfaction according to Rosenholtz (1989). At the Excel Academy in Grand Rapids, the joint efforts between the principal and teachers produced the school’s curriculum, mission statement, and hours of operations. Performance counts to such a high degree that teachers could be dismissed for not meeting schools’ standards (Nathan, 1998).

A better market driven educational system exists – Since enrollment in charter schools is voluntary, the school must be designed to attract educational consumers. This introduces competition into the market place. If a charter school fails to produce high
student outcome, the end result will be a revocation of the charter.

Parent and community involvement – Charter schools have found creative ways to involve parents and community members in the school system. Parents as instructors, support members, community helpers and social service laymen have contributed to the general positive atmosphere of the school. At the Colin Powell Academy in Detroit, parents are required to contribute a minimum of ten hours of “sweat equity” per year. Lunch programs and after school activities are run by these parental groups (Manno, Finn, Bierlein & Vanourek, 1998).

The Federal government has also acted on behalf of fostering the existence of charter schools. As stated in the report from the General Accounting Office in 1995 there were two major pieces of Federal legislation passed which affected the existence of charter schools. The Improving American Schools Act, which reauthorized and amended the ESEA of 1995, includes a new Federal grant program to support the design and implementation of charter schools. The Improving American School Act specifies the conversion of a school to charter status as a possible corrective action that a district can require of a school that has been identified for school improvement. The Goals 2000 Educate America Act allows states to use Federal funds provided under the Act to promote charter schools (Gerstner & Semeral, 1994).

Again the GAO reported in 1995 that a charter school would be eligible to receive Title I funds directly from its state educational agency and be held legally responsible for this program. As a charter school is considered part of a traditional district, it would be eligible for these funds just as any other school in the district (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1995).
A few states provide funding for start-up costs or capital equipment (Medler, 1996). New Mexico, for example, provides $5000 for the initial operating year, while Arizona designated one million dollars for charter schools (Gerstner & Semeral 1994). Some schools depend on and receive generous donations from corporations and private citizens such as donations of furniture, copiers, telephone systems, computers, and other equipment and material. Leasing of a building is usually obtained for a very low rate offered only to non-profit organizations.

All expansive (strong) charter laws, according to Willis, 1995, contain the following:

1. sponsorship granted to agencies other than local school boards
2. no limitation regarding who can initiate a charter school
3. exemption of charter schools from state and local laws except in the case of health and safety rules
4. legal autonomy to be given to the individual charter schools
5. instruction staff can be non-certified
6. no maximum as to the number of approved charter schools in a state

Thus through various combinations of diverse elements described above, the charter school concept is building and winning support in the United States.

Charter School Models

There has been much creative activity in establishing the goals and mission statements of the charter schools in the United States. According to Mulholland, (1996) the experience of these charter schools provides some early indicators about how and why some schools are working. Joe Nathan (1998) discusses that one such element is a
strong leader coupled with high expectations and clear standards make for a successful beginning phase. Another facet of charter schools according to Finn, Manno, & Bierlein (1996) is a sense of accountability for student learning compacted with improved achievement must be shared by the staff, parent, students and community in a charter school. Merriam (1998) writes about a strong sense of autonomy from the district’s and state’s viewpoint. These rules and regulations which enable the governing body to have a free reign for hiring employment and establishing a budget that can be managed are essential elements of a successful non-traditional school. Below are several examples of charter schools in the United States, which are considered exemplary models:

Fenton Avenue Charter School

Fenton is located in Los Angeles and serve approximately 1,200 students from grades pre-kindergarten to sixth grade. It is using a year round, multi-track child centered program. The budget is $6.5 million and is controlled by the 20-member committee. It is most noteworthy for its near complete autonomy status. According to Eric Premack, director of the Charter Schools Project at the California State University, “Fenton Avenue Charter shows that real site based management in the hands of people who know what they’re doing is a very powerful and positive tool” (Seal, 1997).

Curriculum implementation is supported through the usage of a computer network, which was obtained by grant funding and leasing arrangements. Several computers are located in each classroom in this school. According to Yvette King-Berg, curriculum adviser, the only reason that this network was able to become a reality was due to the control that the charter school has over its accounting and financial aspects.
The Minnesota New Country School

Established in 1994-95 school year, this school operates under the contractual approval of both local and state board of education approval for grades 6 – 12. This school was established by three technologically innovative schoolteachers from Henderson, Minnesota. The school received start up grants from the Community Learning Centers, a New American Schools project and the Center for School Change. The core for the foundation of this all-year school is the extensive parent involvement, teacher/student accountability, and community as a place to learn and technology as a tool for learning. New Country services a cross section of approximately 90 students from grades 6 – 12. Each student has a personal learning plan which becomes a combination of post high school plan, a portfolio of learning activities and assessment of criteria. The major goal is the use and understanding of technology. The New Country School is considered the first truly “computer-infused” high school in Minnesota, and provides every student with work-place technical learning experiences.

In addition to certified staff, parents and the community are major forces in the school. The school considers itself an institution of partnerships with parents, business, service organizations and other educational agencies. The ultimate goal demands that every child and staff member become an important part of this learning community (Sautter, 1993).

Magnet School of the Deaf

In Jefferson County, Colorado, a charter school exists which serves children from early childhood through 12th grade. The Magnet School emphasizes access to communication, academics and English literacy.
Parents, the deaf community and educational staff who saw a need for such services developed this school. It provides child centered education that is developed through trained staff and parents. A family educational program is also included in the charter's mission.

Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School

As part of a desegregation plan in 1989, the Lowell public school district was to provide an alternative high school program for the purpose of remedial and academic instruction for young adults. The creation of this academy enables the staff to create a safe and supportive school for students who might have fallen through the cracks. Staff members are all part time faculty members from the community college and from the nearby University of Massachusetts.

The school is located on a floor of the community college in Lowell Massachusetts. The school offers a college preparatory program to high school drop outs half of whom represent ethnic minorities, and one third of whom do not speak English as their first language. This school has a flexible schedule, which operates from 11:00 A.M. to 8:00P.M. with dinner provided to all students and staff.

It is the hope that each student will have a high school diploma and demonstrate both academic and workplace readiness. The mission statement emphasizes an awareness of the person's sense of community service. As of 1996, of the seventeen graduates, sixteen were to attend college. According the director, Karen Saberi, "too much of what students are asked to do in school is disconnected from real life. Our students want an answer to the question 'why should I learn this?'" (Clinchy, 1994).
City on a Hill Charter School

Located within a YMCA in downtown Boston, Massachusetts, the City on a Hill Charter School serves approximately 65 students in grades 9 - 10. It is an urban school, which fosters high expectations with a diverse curriculum and a developing sense of the classics, especially Shakespeare, incorporating the use of technology, and introducing an emphasis on public speaking. In addition, the students are expected to participate in community activities. All students must attend a weekly school town meeting and become town criers. Students are expected to perform public service on a routine base along with the daily homework assignments.

The school operates from 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. with study halls on Saturday. Most students participate in a summer internship or academic program. This past academic year (1996-97), the school posted a near perfect attendance for their 65 children.

The inspiration for this school are two Boston teachers who were frustrated by the low academic standards and the system that created these standards.

New Century (NCS) Charter School of Wisconsin

The first elementary and first parent initiated charter school in Wisconsin's history was granted its charter in 1996-97. It is located in a historic building adjacent to an elementary school. The children enrolled are in grades kindergarten to fifth. The curriculum includes the basic standards that are implemented in the traditional public system with an emphasis on real hands on learning opportunities through technology. The students are given the responsibility to become active learners and approach the curriculum in an integrated and thematic manner. With careful preparation the teachers
establish central themes that are interwoven throughout the entire school. The children are scheduled in a multi age classroom and have the same teacher for two years. This looping process, created by Jim Grant, allows the teacher to work as a team and understand the needs and learning styles of each individual. This process creates an excellent manner to foster learning standards at a higher level. Parents feel more comfortable with the knowledge that their child knows the expectation and style of a teacher. A strong emphasis on math and science is achieved by hands on activities, projects, and laboratory time. Both areas are integrated throughout the curriculum. In the 1996-97 school year, a local television station helped and established a weather station for the school.

A Site Council governs the operation of the school. With the help of parents, community members and staff, this council provides support to the school on a daily basis.

A summary of the key factors in the above successful charter schools would include the following elements:

1) The mission and purpose should be consistent with the state’s core values. In the application, the statement of the need for a charter school would be detailed and documented.

2) The goals and objectives would describe the expectation for the students’ performances and how they intend to achieve them by listing standards, grading criteria and awarding credit.

3) The admission policy would be a specific plan outlining how students will be selected including detailed process to accommodate any required racial
balance. Plans to include diversity and academically low-achiever and/or special needs children would be outlined.

4) The community support and accountability does enhance a charter school program by bringing diverse and supportive members of the community into the system. Many charter school laws require that community members be an active part of the establishment and governing process of a school.

5) The issue of teacher employment has become a most sensitive matter. From the research of the most recent charter schools, staff employment has been guided by specific employment practices which include a description of staff qualifications and compensation, recruitment procedures and plans for resolving employment-related issues and the tenure process. By having a solid plan for teacher employment, the results have been a higher number of teachers who elect to leave the traditional school to be a teacher in a charter school program.

6) The educational program, pupil achievement and/or standards, and curriculum implementation are the crux for a successful charter school. By creating a detailed goals and mission statement, the charter school will allow the parents and students in the community to have a clear and focused plan on the existence of such a non-traditional public school and if they wish the choice to enroll their children in the school.

In the end, the above charter schools illustrate a spirit of innovation and empowerment for educators (Nathan, 1996).
Key Issues in Charter Schools

Controversy abounds in the discussion of key issues surrounding charter schools. Since charter schools are legal entities, which are allowed certain freedoms from rules and regulations that govern the traditional school, there has been much bantering about the issues that surround the charter schools existence.

With the assumption that the above statement is true, the following key issues will be discussed: political concerns, accountability, autonomy, funding/resources, admission requirements, and teacher employment.

Political Concerns

The publication of A Nation at Risk in 1983 stirs a political consensus of both Republicans and Democrats: U.S. schools are failing (Wagner, 1998). By and large American public schools are achieving more than 25 years ago. Yet, public schools do not meet the needs of all. The idea that schools could be improved was another reason used for creating charter schools. However, the creation of a non-traditional system is not the utopia that it might be considered. The states that have passed charter school laws are categorized as having passed either a “strong or weak” law. This concept reflects upon the “political football” that is created by state legislators as to what exactly should be included in the law to make a school successful. (Bierlein & Mulholland, 1994). According to Ted Kolderie, a senior associate at the Center for Policy Studies, the following elements must be present for a strong law: an additional public authority to sponsor a school; a variety of both private and public volunteers to organize and operate the school; the charter school becomes a legal and separate entity from the local district; the school fosters common public school ideals – non-sectarian in operations, tuition free,
non-selective in admission and non-discriminatory in practices and accountable to the public; accountability is held as the primary issue; the charter school is a school of choice; funding is automatically given as per the enrollment of students and teachers have the option to work as employees and yet retain certain leave protection from their original district (Mulholland, 1996).

In support of creating a "strong" law, Mark Buechler from Indiana Education Policy Center suggests that since we know that all (charter school) laws are not created equal, there should be established twelve criteria for determining whether a charter school law is expansive (strong) or restrictive (weak). The criteria includes the number of schools, variety of both sponsors and operators, types of schools created, appeals process, evidence of support (parental and community), availability of blanket waiver from laws and regulations, exemption from collective bargaining, legal autonomy, 100% of funding process, financial autonomy and provisions for start-up funding (Buechler, 1996). The incorporation of the above criteria would enable the non-traditional school (charter school) to become an established entity within the local school district.

By and large, charter schools aim to serve the same population of children as traditional schools (Medler, 1996). The public is very suspicious of a school, which is established independently from the local governing school board. Immediately concerns are raised as to what population is served and is the state allowing “selective” or “private” schools to be in existence while utilizing public funds. A survey’s findings from the article Promise and Progress state that a third of the charter school population is designed to serve the gifted and talented; however, the remaining charter schools reported that their enrollment is composed of at-risk population (Medler, 1996).
Legislation authorizing charter schools varies from state to state. The legislation differs in the following areas: number of schools allowed to become a charter, agencies that approve charters who may apply for charter status, amount of autonomy from local district given to the school and degree of deregulation allowed (Education Commission of the States, 1995).

Each charter school law is different and only a few come close to supporting the creation of a truly “pure” charter school. The passing of stronger charter school legislation is an essential issue for the success of the concept. Opposition is present on a constant basis. Research has shown that the struggle is still an uphill battle (Gerstner and Semeral, 1994).

Accountability

Probably the most challenging and complex issue in the existence of charter schools is in the area of accountability.

According to Manno, Finn, Bierlein and Vanourek (1997), accountability branches into both the macro and micro realm. Macro refers to the state agencies or private groups that appraise the accomplishments of the programs and micro reflects the individual schools that undertake and evaluate their own results as listed in their charter. As stated by Mulcahy (1995), it is essential to understand if there exist a distinction between the ends of education and the means used to achieve them. The ends are the standards by which we hold students accountable, and the means include the way we organize our schools to achieve these ends.

The bottom line in any educational system is accountability as it reflects how the student achieves. States are establishing standards and developing tests to measure these
standards. The main area of contention is that without good, hard data on school performance, accountability cannot be actually measured and reported. Some states have experimented in implementing initial reporting. For example in Massachusetts, data has been collected from six of the eight-charter schools where students have been tested. Academic gains were greater than is typically found in regular public schools (Manno, Finn etc, 1997). Other states are struggling to develop their own assessment. Arizona and New Jersey have statewide standardized testing which will be used as a benchmark for comparison.

A charter school's accountability goes beyond academic achievement. It is tied to the school's special goals, mission statement, philosophy and program. These goals may involve attendance, discipline, mastery of a particular subject or language, character development, artistic skills, the rehabilitation of youth with a particular problems and other areas. Once a school identifies its goals (mission statement) it has established a benchmark for achievement. As Colorado superintendent of schools stated "We look at a lot of factors besides test scores". (Hudson Institute, 1994). On Boston's City on a Hill Charter School, the special goals are part of the curriculum. The school required comprehensive civic exams and participation in open forums. In the Benjamin Franklin Charter School, the program integrates the Core Knowledge with extensive daily parent involvement. Parents are used as teacher's aides, mentors and role models. Homework activities involve parental participation. It is noted that turning in data for accountability purposes is not the same as maximizing the school's own understanding of its strengths and weakness. A charter school's accountability obligations are entirely dependent upon the report to its constituents and taxpayers. Every state has its criteria and deadline for
reporting. Generally, appraising the school’s progress is reported on an annual basis to the state officials.

**Autonomy**

Once a charter school’s application is granted, it becomes an independent legal entity with the ability to hire and dismiss, sue and be sued, award contracts for outside services, and control its own finances. This is autonomy.

Some of the major factors, as mentioned by Mulholland (1996) for maintaining and expanding autonomy are as follow:

1. The freedom from state codes and regulations are beneficial to the daily operation of the charter school.

2. Schools that pushed for and obtained legal autonomy were less likely than more dependent charter schools to report good relationships with their sponsors and/or the teacher’s union.

3. A major reason to start a charter school was the freedom initially given from specific state or district regulations and union contracts.

4. The ability to create and implement specific curriculum is a major reason for existence. Charter schools goal of innovations were found not only in instruction but also in parent involvement, budgeting, accountability, governance and management.

Many educators argue that the restrictions and regulations imposed upon schools make it impossible for them to create truly innovative programs. Charter schools address this problem directly by means of a unique trade-off between autonomy and accountability. After a charter school proposal gains approval, the school is free to
manage its own affairs though the school is subject to the same audits and inspections imposed by school districts and the state. The overall educational focus is on outcomes not inputs.

Funding/Resources

The area of school finance is a complicated department and the financial issues surrounding charter schools are no different. According to the report *A Study of Charter Schools: First Year Report*, the major barrier in establishing a charter school is funding (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Of the 225 charter schools who participated in this survey, the percentage of schools reporting that the lack of start-up funds were difficult or very difficult was 59% only to be followed by lack of planning time (42%) and inadequate operating funds (37%). These barriers are considered interrelated. A 1995 survey of 110 charter schools identified start up funding as the biggest problem facing charter schools (Nathan, 1996).

Funding arrangements can vary in the extent to which the funding amounts are negotiable and how funds flow to the schools. In some states, the amount of state or local funding is subject to negotiation with the school districts that approve the charters. While in others, funding is subject to negotiation when the charter school is approved by the school district, but not when they are approved by the state. In states in which funding is not subject to negotiation, funds flow from the state directly to the charter school.

According to GOA, charter school pose new challenges for federal programs in allocating funds, and providing services. Since school districts are considered LEAS (Local Educational Agency) for the purpose of federal program administrations, they receive allocated federal funds. It is important to consider that since some charter
schools are considered legally independent, they may not be considered to be a LEA, and thus do not qualify for these federal moneys. Programs such as Title I and Special Education may be lost revenue for a charter school depending upon the school’s legal status.

The basic idea for funding is that the students bring the average funds per pupil with them from their previous district for the charter school to use. Thus when the student moves from the traditional public school to the charter school the money follows. The old school district loses those dollars. Thus charter schools are not really a major financial burden except for the loss of revenue for the local district.

Depending upon the charter law, funding is allotted in a variety of ways. In Minnesota, charter schools are generally eligible to receive their portion of state monies, but cannot receive any local levy funding or any state funding that requires a local levy match. In California, the operational funding is available by taking the total amount of local and state formula-driven funding available to the school district in which the charter school is located and dividing that by the charter school’s weighted average daily student attendance. While Colorado, Georgia, and Wisconsin require that charter school funds first flow to the district and then a portion of that amount passes on to the charter school.

Issues that continue to siphon funding from charter school include a wide range of services. In California, Minnesota, and Massachusetts, charter schools are not eligible to receive any portion of the bond funding commonly used by school districts for major capital construction, acquisitions and repairs. In Georgia, Missouri, New Mexico and Wisconsin, a charter school remains part of the school district; therefore, capital expenses are handled in a manner similar to other district schools (Boettiger, 1997).
The special education area often is a cause for additional spending due to special accommodations that must be met for the child’s individual educational plan (IEP). In Colorado, charter schools will count any special education pupil served in their student count and therefore directly receive any corresponding local, state and federal funding. California charter schools receive at least the district portion of special education funds. In Minnesota, the charter school counts special education students in their formula and receives the corresponding funding.

It appears that the financial issues surrounding charter schools seem to be taking place mostly between school districts and individual charter schools. Unless this issue is resolved, the possibility of success of a charter school would be operating on thin ice (Boettiger, 1997).

Resources appear to be limited in regards to funding. Support is often found in the traditional area of higher education or by private corporations. In Michigan, the majorities of charter schools are sponsored by state universities and are guided by the board of trustees from that institution.

There have been several benefactors that have begun supporting the charter movement. These families include the Walton, heirs of Wal-Mart and Huizenga family, a wealthy manufacturer (Toch, 1998). Some of the donations have been recorded up to $350,000 over the past two years.

Admission Requirements

Charter schools are intended to provide an open enrollment option to all students and parents. Concerns have arisen over adequate safeguards against elective and potentially discriminatory admission criteria and “white flight” (Medler, 1996).
Given that charter schools may offer a special type of educational program, a question arises as to whether special types of admission requirements can be established. In some states, charter schools may limit admission to pupils within an age group or grade level and/or pupils who have a specific calling for the school's teaching methods, learning philosophy or subject offerings. However, these charter schools may not limit admission on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude or athletic ability. It is also noted that in many states, preference is given to students who live near a charter school.

Furthermore it has been noted that students attending charter schools are diverse 63% of the nearly 8,400 students in a survey are minority group members with an equal number of boys and girls (Finn, Bruno, Manno, Bierlein, 1996). Eighty-one percent had been enrolled in public schools immediately before coming to the charter schools, 8 percent from private schools, 2 percent from home schooled and 4 percent had dropped out of school. According to U.S. Department of Education, charter schools have, in most states, a racial composition similar to statewide averages or have a higher proportion of student of color. It is noted that the pattern of racial concentration at a school may be a result of the school's location. Also, charter schools enroll roughly the same proportion of low-income students, on average, as the traditional schools (Manno, Finn, Bierlein & Vanourek, 1997). This is also true as to a lower enrollment of students with disabilities and limited-English abilities in any one-charter school.

**Teacher Employment**

One of the most politically charged and interesting issues of a charter school program is the provision for teacher employment. For instance, waivers from teacher
certification requirements are a standard request from charter schools, yet charter schools are having no difficulty in finding qualified certified teachers (Bierlein, 1996).

Teacher employment is affected by the relationship established by the state's charter school governing laws. Since the laws vary from state to state, teacher employment must be carefully reviewed.

Charter schools should resemble existing schools with teachers employed by the board of the organization that owns the school. The teachers would then have the rights available to organize and to bargain collectively. Since the school would be a discrete entity, the teachers would be considered outside the district contract.

In some instances, a school could be formed by teachers who would then make themselves the members of the nonprofit partnership. They might remain in the union, but the union could not bargain for them since the teachers were not considered employees, there would be no bargaining. This might appeal to some teachers.

It might be too early to make any conclusions regarding teacher employment in the charter school system. Some experiences recorded may lead to interesting concerns. According the Amsler (1992), the initial development can be met with resentment from other faculty and administration who may feel abandoned or rejected. If a school wishes to convert to charter status, faculty can become sharply divided over the plan. Salaries and time commitments are major stumbling blocks.

One of the most difficult issues regarding teacher employment is job security. Once again depending upon the individual laws, teachers' tenure and rights do vary. However, in spite of these uncertainties, teachers have been willing to involve themselves in these schools. Bierlein (1995) states that many teachers are willing to work harder in
in these schools. Bierlein (1995) states that many teachers are willing to work harder in exchange for the greater autonomy provided by a charter school, and at times, they do accept less pay. In July, 1996, Finn, Bruno, Bierlein stated that the staff turnover does not seem greater than in similar “start-up” organizations and charter schools are amply supplied with qualified candidates for the teaching position. It is noted that some charter schools do encounter staffing problems due to the particular goal of the school that might require certain training (i.e. foreign language, dealing with at-risk population).

New Jersey Charter School Program Act

The New Jersey School Program Act was signed by Governor Christine Todd Whitman of January 11, 1996. This law is cited and commonly known as the “Charter School Program Act of 1995” (P.L. 1995. Chapter 426) (Appendix F). It supplements Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes. After months of legislative debate, this statute was passed in the 206th legislative session. It became effective immediately with the expected implementation of the first charter schools to be ready to open for 1996-97 school year.

With this New Jersey law, a system of public schools would operate independently of a local board of education under a charter granted by the Commissioner of Education. This particular law “can assist in promoting comprehensive educational reform by providing a mechanism for the implementation of a variety of educational approaches which may not be available in the traditional public school classroom.” (P.L. 1995.c426 (2)). It lists general procedures and requirements that are meant to “encourage and facilitate the development of a charter school.” The statute permits the establishment of up to 135 charter schools during the next 48 months with a minimum of three charter schools allotted per county. It also defines a sunset review of the charter school program.
Some of the initial concerns in New Jersey focused on issues of equity, as seen in the areas of governance, management structure, finance, and educational achievement and assessment. The legislators endorsed charter schools because of the possibility to have very different schools within the principles of public education. Charter schools are seen as an alternative for the disenfranchised, which stops short of the voucher system. Some New Jersey legislators felt that winning passage of the Charter School bill was a compromise after realizing that the more controversial voucher program would not win support (Carter, 1996).

In recent years, the New Jersey state school finance system has been brought under increased public attention. The quest for perfection has resulted in a variety of adjustments and restrictions designed to address special problems. The New Jersey charter school is limited by the amount of financial aid, which follows the student. The law states that the local district must directly pay for each student enrolled in the charter school up to 90% of the local levy budget for that student. The law does not state when the charter school will receive its funding. New Jersey provides no start-up funds but allows charter schools to solicit and accept any gifts or grants for school purposes. New Jersey charter schools will not have true fiscal autonomy because the law requires it to allocate some of its monies for certain purposes. For example, it has to adhere to the contractual agreement of the district’s bargaining unit if the school is converted.

This law outlines the essential factors in establishing a successful program. It is considered by researchers (Mulholland, 1996) to be a very strong and well planned law. The various clauses defining what that a school must possess are clearly spelled out. The annual assessment of the goals and financial reports on August 1 of every year is very
annual assessment of the goals and financial reports on August 1 of every year is very important. In the end, the Commissioner of Education will have the ultimate power to renew or disband a charter school.

Charter Schools in New Jersey

Similar to the 13 original colonies, the initial year (1997-98) of charter schools was composed of 13 schools. These schools are: North Star Academy, Newark; Robert Treat Academy, Newark; Soaring Heights, Jersey City; Gateway Charter School, Jersey City; Learning Community, Jersey City; Jersey City Community Charter, Jersey City; Trenton Community Charter, Trenton, Samuel Proctor Academy, West Trenton; Princeton Charter, Princeton; Sussex County Charter School for Technology, Sparta; Elysian Charter, Hoboken; LEAP Academy, Camden; and Galloway Kindergarten Charter, Smithville.

The New Jersey charter schools have been approved and have been operational since September 1997. Each school had submitted a charter application and received approval from the Commissioner of Education, Leo Klagholz. An unofficial survey of these schools found that the class size is small with an average of 15 students to one teacher and tends to offer the students a particular educational philosophy or mission statement. Parents and community members are involved in planning and operational activities. Each school is governed by a board of trustees and meets regularly during the year.

The individual goals of each charter school are varied in direction. Depending upon the population and age level that is served, the organizers of the school have developed programs which cover the following ideas: strong parental involvement, active
learning environment, application of life skills, problem solving, communication, increase critical thinking process, applying rigorous academic expectations based on the New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards, implement a caring and structured setting, foster a passion for democracy, a commitment to public service, to build a small community of learners, to develop the importance of tolerance, and the need of friendship and other secondary goals.

Throughout this start-up year, these 13 schools were granted charters and became operational. Only one school, Golden Gates, was forced to close. It appeared that some schools might have had less of a financial struggle via grants that they had received. Support was available from both the Department of Education and the Charter School Resource Center spearheaded by Sarah Tantillo from New Brunswick. Next year the plan has been approved to open a total of 39 charter schools in the state.

Charter School Research

Although there appears to be an infinite number of articles relating to the concept of charter schools from very distinguished educational leaders, there exists a very little data based on research. As of this writing, there are some fifteen doctoral studies in print which topics range from investigating start-up process to analysis and comparison of charter schools intre and intra state. In conjunction with this documented research, there are two (2) current and comprehensive documents that address the existence of charter schools.

The first document is sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education under the collaborative efforts of various researchers from RPP International of Emeryville California and the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CARBI)
1995 to September 1999. The contents addressed three main issues: implementation, impact on students, and effect of public education.

The report is based upon information received from 225 charter schools who responded via a telephone survey that formed the foundation for the report. Forty-two charter schools allowed an in-depth study with on-site visitation from the committee. The report categorized the schools in grade level, school size and either newly created or converted schools.

The report summarizes the following issues regarding charter schools:

1. Depending upon the state's written law, the operation and development of a charter school is strongly correlated. If a state frees developers from most regulations the member of charter schools increases. The key questions that were asked in each state: How many charters? Who grants the charter? Who may start a charter? And who sets personnel policies?

2. In response to the issue of diversity, the report states the following: most charter schools are small and newly created (as opposed to a converted school). The racial composition is similar to statewide averages and has a lower proportion of students with disabilities. Most charter schools are eligible for Title I funding but are not aware of the procedures.

3. The charter school concept is based on the realization for educational change allowing creative freedom (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

It is the intention of the RPP International to revisit the charter schools in order to collect more intensive data. The study will gather information to begin a longitudinal assessment of student achievements in the charter school system.
assessment of student achievements in the charter school system.

The second current study has just been published by Professor Pearl Kane from Teachers College, Columbia University (Kane, 1998). This study addresses the first year that charter schools were operational in New Jersey. Over two hundred people were interviewed with sixty-five hours of site-observations. All thirteen-charter schools participated in this study and nine local school districts also agreed to give feedback to the researchers. Professor Kane with nine assistants sought answers to four questions. These questions dealt with the difference between traditional vs. non-traditional public schools; attitudes, opinions within these schools; issues and concerns emerging from an initial start-up year; and recommendations for future charter programs.

The outcome of the report correlates positively to the national study conducted by RPP International. Issues and concerns cited related to funding, facilities, special education, accountability and assessment. Recommendations for additional studies are strongly suggested. This report is a stepping stone and a foundation for additional research according to Kane.

Summary

In the 20th century, school choice has become part of the American consumer dream. The opportunities that make choice successful must be carefully planned
One of the most frequently discussed programs for change is charter schools. This concept emphasizes to building and encouraging new approaches to teaching and learning and a greater sense of community.

Early in the 1970’s Ray Buddle developed an outline to a book entitled Education by Charter: Key to a New Model of School District. He met with little success. In the
Restructuring School Districts. At this time Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers in New York City gave an initial blessing to this concept. This was a turning point in the development of the charter school concept. The state of Minnesota initiated the first school and is credited for the development of the nationwide movement.

It is estimated that by the year 2003, there will be probably more than 30 states with special charter school legislation (Budde, 1996). There may be up to 5,000 schools with an enrollment of 1.5 million students (Budde, 1996). The charter concept is simple but powerful: sound school choice can be provided to families under the umbrella of public education without micromanagement by government bureaucracies (Manno, Finn, Bierlein, Vanourek, 1997). In laymen’s terms charter schools are independent, run by board of trustees, accountable to the state, subject to health, safety and nondiscrimination requirements and paid for by tax dollars.

Charter schools are considered innovations designed to implement systemic change. Neither the support of strong charter school laws (in some states), nor the lack of a big foundation or grants for backing has prevented this movement from succeeding. Now in its eighth year, the support system is growing. President Clinton has made references to the success of charter schools in his 1999 State of the Union speech. The Center for Reinventing Public Education gives support to those states interested in enacting laws or starting schools. It is noteworthy to read that the Michigan Partnership for New Education became the support group for that state’s charter school program and make funds available up to $500,000 per school for start-up costs (Mulholland, 1996).

In the end, everyone wants to know if the charter schools are making a difference.
Charter schools should no longer be considered as competition to the traditional public school. Systems might better view them as options from which a student and parent may choose. If districts change their thinking additional assistance could be provided.

Finally, charter schools need the dedication of the founders and staff in order to be successful. A large investment of both time and energy are required for the operation of a charter school. As Ynomne Chan, principal of Vaughn Next Learning Charter School states, “The charter takes the handcuffs off the principal, the teacher and the parents – the people who know the kids the best. In return, we are held responsible for how kids do” (Chan, 1997).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction


This study was undertaken to document and investigate new frontiers in the educational community. According to D. Miller (1991) in his Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement, "researchers seek to create knowledge that can be used to solve pressing social and organizational problems" (p 6). The charter school design has created some philosophical differences in the educational community such that this theory of systemic change has divided educators. Presently, there exist several issues regarding the creation of charter schools and the very need to sponsor an independent system by our policy makers in the state government.

The main goal of this chapter was to describe the techniques that were employed in data gathering for this study. The manuscript reported on the stakeholders’ perceptions vs. the reality of the charter law as seen by the people who had a vested interest in the school’s operation. Comparison between the school’s goals, the charter law, and the reality of completion of these goals are recounted. Since the purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the stakeholders’ perceptions, evaluative research techniques were the method utilized. The study included teachers, directors, board of trustees, and parents who are stakeholders in the New Jersey charter school movement. The
researcher’s goal was to identify, describe, and analyze the subjects’ perception of the
goals of a charter school and compare the responses to the established standards outlined
in the law. The researcher believed that since the time the law was enacted and the
submission of applications and the actual start-up year of operation, there would be value
in assessing the status of charter schools in contrast to the intent of N. J. Charter School
Law.

The conceptual framework for this project was found in Miller’s Handbook of
research design in a group process is social and is influenced by both the number of
organizational demands e.g., charter laws as well as research growth through contract
with the issue, school’s goals. By reporting and interpreting stakeholders’ beliefs and
opinions, analysis of perceptions, norms, values, and goals could be stated and deducted.
These findings were used to formulate Chapter V which included conclusions and
recommendations.

This study collected data on three charter schools in the state of New Jersey. The
reporting focused on the initial year of a sample of those charter schools that were
approved by the New Jersey Education Department in Trenton, New Jersey.

The following question was the foundation for this manuscript: if the New Jersey
Charter School law is considered an expansive (strong) law (refer to page 23) as
documented by Lori Mulholland of the Morrison Institute for Public Policy (1996), is
this in fact a correct perception as actually experienced by stakeholders in specific
operating charter schools?

By selecting six (6) questions that related to the stated goals of the charter school
legislation, the researcher compared the perception of the stakeholders to the articles in the law. These questions had been constructed by the researcher to give the subjects a wide scope to describe the participant’s perception of the charter school. The main theme in each question deducted from the writer’s prior investigation of charter schools in the nation. The primary sources were Education Commission of the States (1995) *A Study of Charter Schools* and Teacher College, Columbia University (1997) *New Jersey Charter Schools: The First Year 1997-1998* under the supervision of Professor Pearl Rock Kane.

The subjects were responding to their personal understanding and perceptions of charter schools in New Jersey as they personally experienced them. It is believed that by investigating and analyzing three charter schools which opened in 1997-98, valid conclusions could be reported as to a correlation of the law (policy) to operation (practice).

The questions for this study were:

1. Can New Jersey charter schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the Charter Law? (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21)

2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your charter school application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration, and the board of trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the Department of Education? (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 5 to 54)
5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation, etc need to be sustained and which needed to be modified for a charter school success? Explain. Please note that the elements referred to here are those contained in the N.J. Charter statute, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

6. What influence would you hope the Charter Schools would have on the public school in your community?

Research Design

The specific design of this project was patterned after Edward Suchman's process, found in his book *Evaluative Research, Principles and Practice in Public Service and Social Action Programs* (1967). Researchers have utilized and applied this method to discover and study goal-directed activities that are based on value formation. Miller (1991) has modeled this procedure in his handbook and supports this evaluative research as an “attempt to reduce or eliminate a social problem involves a theory, a program…” (p.86). Suchman’s diagram illustrated and reaffirmed Miller’s belief in evaluation research as a valid process for the researcher.

The following diagram (see Figure 1) presents the basis for this particular study, as found in Miller’s design book.

This process began with the formation of values and continues in a clockwise circular motion encompassing the six (6) steps for evaluation. As utilized in this study, the value formation (Step I) was assessing the merits of charter schools as school choice in New Jersey. The next step had the researcher initially establish specific goals (Step II)
Value Formation (Step 1)

Assessing the Effect
Of this Goal Operation
(Program Evaluation)(Step VI)

Goal Setting (Objectives)(Step II)

Putting Goal Activity
Into Operation
(Program Operation)(Step V)

Goal Measuring (Criteria) (Step III)

Identifying Goal Activity
(Program Planning)(Step IV)

Figure #1

Miller, page 86.
that will be measured. This cluster analyzed specific goals and missions statements of charter schools in this study. The goal measuring (Step III) was accomplished by the reporting of each charter school’s goals that were found in his/her approved application. In addition, stakeholders commented on the program by means of the six open-ended questions. Program planning (Step IV) was the reporting of the school’s operational activities. As the researcher recorded and reported the background of each school, correlation were made as to the programs that are described in the charter application to the everyday operational (Step V) process. The final step was assessing (Step VI) the various goals in conjunction with the perceptions of the subjects and the analysis of the achievements recorded. The researcher was able to assess whether the precepts established for the program (Charter Act) correlated to the actual existence of the program have been met (Charter School in New Jersey). The final product was a return to the initial step (Step I) of value formation. Here one decided if the value was valid or not (Chapter IV) and recommendations could be suggested (Chapter V).

Questions for the Participants in the Study

Six open-ended questions guided the study. The questions addressed specific areas in the charter law that policy makers claim to reflect a strong/expansive charter law (Mulholland, 1996). With these questions, the researcher attempted to determine whether the existence of a charter school law does support the operational goals. As Miller (1991) states, “Open-end questions are appropriate and powerful under conditions that require probing of attitude and reaction formations and ascertaining information that is interlocked in a social system” (p159). The questions are listed below with an explanation that would correlate the research

Question 1: Can New Jersey charter schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the Charter Law? Explain. Reference to NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21 of as reflected the philosophy of New Jersey policymakers. To quote "charter schools offer the potential to improve pupil learning; increase for students and parents the education choices available when selecting a learning environment; encourage the use of different and innovative learning methods...etc." See Appendix F.

Question 2: Do the goals and expected achievements that are stated in your charter school application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? At this point, individual school’s goals and mission statements have been provided to the subjects so that they may make references for their answers that will reflect question #2.

Question 3: Based upon the perception of parents, staff, administration, or board of trustees, how closely does the actual level of success attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the Department of Education? (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 5 to 54) Explain. Once again the subjects referred to the individual school’s goals and objectives and commented upon their perception of success as they know and understand it.

Question 4: Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement? Here the researcher was requesting individual perceptions depending upon their positions in the school to personally state their views of the achievements and the progress of the students as they saw it.
Question 5: asks the subjects to comment upon school change, if needed. This question was “Which charter elements, e.g. autonomy, funding, community participation etc., need to be sustained and which need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Please note that the elements referred to here are those contained in the N.J. Charter statute, the charter application and the charter guidelines. At this junction, the researcher sought to find any common links among the schools and the groups of participants throughout the study.

Question 6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public school in your community? This question sought an opinion from the stakeholders as to what changes could be suggested to the public schools in their community.

Description of Sites for the Study

This study involved three (3) charter schools in New Jersey. All thirteen-charter schools currently operating in the state of New Jersey were contacted by a personal phone contact. An outline for the study was described at that time. The schools that have accepted the researcher’s invitation were identified only as School A, School B, and School C. This method of identification allowed confidentially to the participating schools. The schools have expressed a wish that they not be identified since this was a second year in existence and some initial difficulties did exist. The researcher intended to honor this request. Once the schools gave a verbal commitment, written confirmation was received. A sample letter of introduction that was sent to each school can be found in Appendix B.

Each school had a unique and quite different charter school goal and mission statement. These differences will be described in detail in Chapter IV.
Procedures

Background information on each school site was documented. This information, to be recorded from public documents, for example from the school report card, the charter school’s application, was broadly defined by Merriam (1988) as “refers to a wide range of written and physical materials” (p109). Public records, according to Webb (1981), were considered ongoing, continuing accounts of a society. These documents included documents that described the general makeup of the community, the size of the district, the surrounding traditional public schools and, most important, a profile of each charter school in the study. This profile was comprised the goals and mission statement, enrollment of the school, grade level, description of facilities, history of startup, faculty overview, director’s and board of trustees’ backgrounds. By summarizing the background of the three schools and involving subjects directly committed to the goals of the school, the intention was to document the effectiveness of a non-traditional public school.

Interviews were conducted on site and involved three teachers, one administrator/director, three parents, and three board of trustees from each of the three schools. A total of thirty (30) participants were included in the study. According to Lofland (1971), the researcher “legitimately sacrifices breadth for depth” when utilizing an intensive study with a range of 18 to 50 interviews. Thus, this sampling was considered to be sufficient and within range for a valid group. The purpose of this sampling, according to Patton (1990), was aimed to reduce suspicion about why certain subjects were selected for the study and it would be considered a purposeful random sample. However, due to this small sample in the study, the issue of confidentiality was a concern. The researcher has verbalized and written about these concerns regarding
confidentiality to each school. In each letter requesting permission for the study, it was clearly stated that “one’s participation is strictly confidential and voluntary”. The results of this research were shared with the participating charter schools.

This process began after approval had been granted from Seton Hall’s Institutional Review Board.

Initial meetings with administrators were scheduled. At that time, the general outline for the study was given. A copy of the researcher’s proposal was submitted to all participating administrators. At separate faculty and board of trustee meetings, the researcher gave an overall view of the study, described the format of the survey, and planned for scheduling of the group sessions. Subjects involved in the study were volunteers that will include teachers, parents, and board of trustees. Letters for permission to participate in the study were signed before any formal interviews were scheduled (Appendix E). Due to the limited sampling available in each school, the researcher relied upon the administrator to assist in this process. As Patton (1990) wrote, participants were selected with the cooperation of a key informant, such as program staff, who can help identify what is typical of the stakeholders. The individual sessions at each site were scheduled. Prior to any scheduled session, all subjects were given copies of the charter school law (Appendix F), the individual school’s charter application and the six open-ended questions (Appendix C). At the time of the session, each participant was asked to complete a short demographic form (Appendix D), and then the six open-ended questions were answered. Each subject was given ample time to respond to all questions. The sessions lasted approximately 30 minutes. Miller (1991) noted that it is very important that sessions be kept within a 45-minute time span (p105). It was intended that
these sessions achieve an in-depth inquiry of the charter law as perceived by the subjects. Prior to the session, all letters of invitation to the study and permission forms were completed by November 1998. At the end of each session, the researcher recorded the comments by the subjects from both handwritten notes and tape recordings. Information received from these sessions was the foundation for all reports and recommendations of this study.

Qualitative research was intended to explore important social phenomena by immersing the investigator in a situation. According to Robert Slavin (1992), it was also intended to be descriptive. With this in mind, the researcher employed multiple methods for inquiry. Included in this study was analysis of the New Jersey charter school law, background information of each site, and interview questions from the subjects.

Presentation of Data/Data Analysis

It was the intention of this researcher to plan and organize the data collecting and reporting in the following manner:

1. A brief narrative explained the key items of the New Jersey Charter School law (Appendix F) were given to the participants in the study.

2. A complete copy of the charter application form can be found in Appendix G.

3. A comprehensive description of each charter school was done. It was accomplished by both written and personal interviews of the director by the researcher. Reporting of background information was obtained from the state report card and school profiles from the participating charter schools.

4. After individual scheduled sessions were arranged at each school, the formal recording was done. At that time each subject completed a short demographic form
that was later used describe the background of the subjects (Appendix D). Each session was taped. The questions were available in both English and Spanish (Appendix C). A bilingual assistant accompanied the researcher to assist with the questions on an "as needed basis."

5. Continual reviewing, cross-referencing, and editing the chapters would be an ongoing process throughout the data gathering stage.

6. Finally, it is anticipated that the researcher had sufficient data to record, report, and offer recommendations.

Controlling for Bias and Error

Safeguards were employed to secure credibility for this study and to report unbiased findings. They included the following:

1. All correspondence, letters of introduction, permission forms, and questionnaires were sent to charter schools prior to the data-gathering visit.

2. The researcher who was the author of this study performed all questions, interviews, and site visitations.

3. There is no affiliation of the researcher to any charter schools or any organization sponsored by charter school concept.

4. Following the interviews and recording of written transcriptions, a typist was hired to transcript all tapes.

5. With the incorporation of observation, interview sessions, and analysis of charter school documents, the technique of triangulation, which is a validity check, was implemented. According to David Lancy (1993), this method of documentation (triangulation) was the "researcher's most effective defense against the charge of
being subjective by buttressing what one has observed with material that reinforces observations from other sources” (p.20).

It is important to note that Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four qualities that would accurately reflect and validate the use of this qualitative paradigm. The first was credibility in which in-depth research included the setting and general make-up of the charter schools. The second characteristic was transferability in which the investigator demonstrated the applicability of one set of findings to another. This was accomplished by utilizing the same format and questions at all schools. The third element was dependability where the researcher attempted to have a fixed and stable environment for data gathering established in each school. The final feature was confirmability, which captured the traditional concept of objectivity. Here, the ability to formulate valid conclusions from the study was completed. Thus, it was extremely important to this researcher to conduct an unbiased research on charter schools in New Jersey. Validity, as Eisner & Peshkin (1990) mention, pertained to the accurate description or interpretation of an action, which was closely aligned to the truth. The truth correlated to matters of correspondence. The elements used, according to Merriam (1998), was that substance gives soundness to the project with demonstrating the usefulness of an unbiased work.

Summary

In designing any study it was necessary to understand that there was no perfect research format (Patton, 1990). Patton wrote that applied evaluation researchers worked on human problems. Since the source of questions was in the problems and concerns experienced by people, he concluded that the main purpose of evaluation research was to
generate potential solutions to societal problems.

Reporting, analyzing, and recommending were the three important functions in this study. How to substantiate and control the writings so that information was recorded in an unmitigated and completed process was completed.

Since New Jersey charter schools began in 1997, there has been much reporting by both pro and con from educational theorists. There has been little or no documentation by any independent researcher with the exception of the most recent study by Teachers’ College from Columbia University (Kane, 1997). With the researcher’s study, it was hoped that it might shed some light might be shed on the law as it exists and the effects of the law on the stakeholders in the Charter Schools of New Jersey.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the findings of the study based upon an analysis of the data collected from three charter schools in New Jersey. The focus of this study was to analyze three charter schools in New Jersey and evaluate if the New Jersey Charter School Program Act was effective and "strong" act as written. This analysis was validated by the use of documents, policies and transcriptions from stakeholders. A summary of the data collected was reflected in the perceptions by the subjects to the six open-ended questions. Each subject was asked identical questions and their responses were transcribed from tape. These questions were designed to produce answers that would allow the researcher the ability to formulate recommendations regarding the charter school program in New Jersey. The researcher related these findings to Miller's concept of value formation and a comparison of the subjects' beliefs to the reality of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act.

For the purpose of anonymity, the schools will be identified as School A, B and C. In each school, one administrator/director, three teachers, three parents and three Board of Trustees were interviewed (see Table 4.1). A total of thirty subjects were included in this study. Each interview took approximately 20 minutes. Phone interviews (three parents and one administrator) were shorter (approximately 15 minutes). Included in this chapter was an overview of each school's goals, objectives and general organization. With data received from a combination of subjective input from the stakeholders, charter documents from the schools and the data from Department of Education, this researcher
### Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Years in Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1A</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2A</td>
<td>Board of Trustee</td>
<td>BA + 2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3A</td>
<td>Board of Trustee</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4A</td>
<td>Board of Trustee</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>5A</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6A</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>7A</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8A</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>BA + 3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>9A</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>10A</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1B</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2B</td>
<td>Board of Trustee</td>
<td>MA + 9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3B</td>
<td>Board of Trustee</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4B</td>
<td>Board of Trustee</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5B</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>JD</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6B</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>7B</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>8B</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>9B</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>10B</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1C</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2C</td>
<td>Board of Trustee</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3C</td>
<td>Board of Trustee</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4C</td>
<td>Board of Trustee</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5C</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>92 credits</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>6C</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>7C</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>BA + credits</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>8C</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>9C</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>BA + 15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>10C</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A – Not Applicable
intended to support her method of conclusion by triangulation, to the question: does the New Jersey Charter School Program Act (policy) become an effective bases in the daily operational experiences (practice) of the participants.

The chapter was divided in the following subheadings: (a) overview of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act, (b) overview of Charter School A, (c) overview of Charter School B, (d) overview of Charter School C, (e) an analysis and selection of transcriptions from subjects commenting upon the research questions 1 to 6 from Schools A, B, and C., and (f) summary of data. For a more detailed reading of the subjects’ responses, please refer to Appendix A. The presentation of the subjects will be grouped according to his/her position in the school. All administrators will be presented in one section, the board of trustees in another; the parents in a third grouping and the staff will be last.

Using the participants’ understanding of their school and their personal statements, these stakeholders answered the following questions:

1. Can New Jersey Charter Schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law? (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21). Explain.

2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration and the Board of Trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the department of education? (NJ Charter School Program Act - line 5 to 54). Explain.
4. Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation, etc. need to be sustained and which need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Explain. Please note that the elements referred to those constraints in the N.J. Charter Statue, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public school in your community?

Overview of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act

Governor Christie Todd Whitman signed the New Jersey Charter School Program Act in January 1996. (Appendix F) This act is also known as N.J.S.A. 18A:36A. A booklet was sent to interested parties, which would assist them in answering some questions and containing the application for approval. The application (Appendix G) is divided into two sections: (1) implementation plan and (2) financial plan. These sections were further subdivided into subsections of eighteen (implementation) and three (financial). The guidelines, overview, instructions and application summary which are quite extensive can be found in document entitled 1997 Charter School Application (1996) under the guidance of the Commissioner of Education. Technical assistance was offered by the state department via workshops scheduled for three sessions throughout the year. Deadline for application for opening a charter school in 1997-98 was August of 1996. Announcements of approval were made in January 1997. Once a charter was granted, the first year may be designated as a planning stage or established as one for teaching students. This charter was awarded as a three-year program that would be reviewed annually.

From the original pool of applicants, only thirteen charters were approved in the
initial year of operation (NJ Commissioner of Education 1996). Support from the state department was accomplished from the Office of Innovative Programs. These original charters had to depend upon this skeleton crew of staff to answer questions regarding the program and the Act.

This research involved three of the original thirteen chartered schools in New Jersey. Each of these schools was unique in their goals and mission statements, which will be described in the following pages.

Overview of Charter School A

School A, located in a large rural district in southern New Jersey, was granted its charter with the approval of the State Department with the intent to offer the community a full day kindergarten program. The area of focus concentrated on creating an individual plan for each student in order to maximize student development. School A believed that kindergarten is the building block for learning and developed the acronym APPLES which was Active learning, Parental involvement, Positive attitude, Life skills, Educational basics, Success for all.

Besides offering a full day program both pre and post school programs were available to the parents for a nominal cost. Class sizes were limited to seventeen students and a maximum enrollment of one hundred children in the first year, which would be increased in the second. The present enrollment for the school year (1998-99) was 220. There are seventeen staff members with additional support and volunteer staff members. The school is located on two sites within walking distances of each other.

The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content would be primarily addressed in areas of both communication arts and math. The objectives stated that eight-five percent of all students will achieve level of mastery in these disciplines. Performance would be
measured in multiple ways by development skills checklist created by the school, comments on the report card, teacher assessment and standardize testing (California Achievement Test). Timelines were established that included assessing students prior to enrollment, a monthly checklist, report cards in December with a developing skills checklist administered by the master teacher/director. This process was repeated this process in June. If eighty-five percent of a teacher's class did not meet these goals, the teacher would forgo an increase in salary for the upcoming year. (This is a written goal included in the application).

Parental involvement was encouraged and fostered through different methods. Planned activities, which included meetings and seminars were scheduled on a monthly basis. Workshops focused on both academic and non-academic themes. Some of these themes were: journal writing, learning development, student assessment and social adjustment issues. Parents were encouraged to join the parent teacher association and to volunteer for activities in the classes. A monthly newsletter was printed and sent to the parents and to the community, which included all the important events with photos of the students and their classrooms.

The subjects for this study from School A were willing participants in the study. The interviews took place on one day and were held in a main conference room at the school. The participants freely expressed their viewpoints to this researcher. The director of the program scheduled the interviews. These sessions were completed in an eight-hour span. The identification and educational experiences of each subject can be found in Table 4.1.

Overview of Charter School B

School B was located in a large urban district and was founded by a group of teachers. The school rented space from a private institution and has been located at this site for two years.
This school had an initial enrollment of eight-one students and in 1998-99 has approximately one hundred and two students. It has expanded to include fifth grade in 1998-99 while the prior year the school enrolled students in only kindergarten to fourth grade. There are 7 staff members plus five specialists with additional help from volunteer support staff. Some of the staff members have had prior experiences in the traditional public schools in this city. Others staff members came to School B from private sector. The student ratio was approximately one staff member to sixteen students.

The primary emphasis of the school was to exceed the standard traditional education by modeling a true community of learners. Positive communication among students and parents must be developed and nurtured for constructive relationship to develop between the school and the home.

The crux of this school's goals and mission statement was to develop better communication between staff and students. By achieving such a goal, it would follow that academic excellence would be attained. School B intended to establish an environment in which teachers were able to create, to develop and to maintain positive relationships with the students and their families. The staff would be trained by a facilitator and meet twice weekly to develop better communication skills. These skills would assist them to implement the curriculum in a more effective manner.

Auxiliary goals that support the main goal involved specific educational and academic objectives. Emphasis was stated in developing the learner's ability to make informed judgments via implementation of core subjects. Related objectives that would be achieved included: formulate questions and hypotheses, organize and evaluate information, identify patterns, plan experiments, conduct systemic observations and
evaluate the effectiveness of various solutions. In addition, the use of technology would also be cultivated and mastered. Some objectives in this area mentioned were: understanding how technology systems function, develop databases, use of technology and other tools to solve problems and collect data, and use of the library media as a source for information.

Self-management skills and career readiness were mentioned in a second goal, which contain thirteen objectives. These objectives complement all the learning that occurs in School B. The school nurtures the positive feeling that all children can learn and can achieve what they want from life.

In order to achieve excellence, the school offered the children free tutoring twice weekly. These sessions were scheduled on Wednesday after school and on Saturday mornings. All staff member participate in this project and are scheduled on rotating bases.

Parental involvement was important to supporting the goals established by School B. There were scheduled monthly parental communication training groups. These groups meet with the staff to discuss matters concerning the school and the children. Parental involvement was encouraged for classroom activities and other school events. Communication with the parents was made via phone calls and conferences. In the future plans, the school intended to develop an adult education program to boost local community involvement.

The interviews were recorded in a private room in the school. All subjects were willing participants. The school’s public relations director arranged for these interviews. All interviews were conducted within an eight-hour span.
Overview of Charter School C

School C was located in the northwest corner of New Jersey. It is considered a rural area with a growing population. Charter School C entered into a partnership with a regional technical school. Because of this agreement, the school benefited from shared services, which included: personnel, physical space and technological resources. The building for the charter school was recently remodeled during the summer and was completed by September.

School C was opened to students in grades seven and eight who were interested in an educational environment which was enhanced through the integrated use of technology (according to their mission statement).

The students are bused from several different districts. This school has enrolled ninety-seven students in 1998-99. Last year the enrollment was fifty children. Small classes were established with a ratio of one to nineteen. There were seven full time teachers with additional staff that was shared time from a technical school.

Specific goals from this school aimed to prepare the student for high academic achievement. This was intended to be accomplished in several way which included: small class size, a variety of group learning activities (in 1998-99, there is an integrated humanities course), participation in developing problem solving techniques and critical thinking skills, acquiring information through the internet and media services available. Each child’s schedule would include a supplement course that addressed the GEPA test.

The application of technology was a major factor in establishing this charter school. The students were able to have a hands-on approach to the computer through various avenues. Every student in Charter School C was given a laptop computer for their
home use. Each computer was networked to the school with a homework hotline. This service was provided since the first year of operation. Other programs included were daily classroom application of computer processing, incorporating laboratory science, utilizing programs relating to engineering and the CADD system and developing concepts in commercial art. The curriculum was accelerated listing algebra in grade seven and geometry in grade eight. The implementation of block scheduling allowed the students to spend extended time each class period for additional research and permitted the staff to team teach. Block scheduling was arranged to include between forty to sixty minute of class instruction.

School C has a strong parental involvement, but at times due to the drawing of students from a regional area, it was difficult to have parents in school on daily bases. However, to insure parental input in the school, a parent must sit on the board of trustees as per charter school application.

School C’s subjects spoke to the researcher in a small, private room on campus. The director arranged the interviews for the day. All interviews were conducted within a six-hour span.

Summary and Analysis of Interviews

The standardized open-ended interview questions were intended to focus on the administrators’ knowledge and perception of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act as it relates to their school. The researcher presented the most salient comments from the interviews reflecting this concept. However, in order for the reader to receive a true picture of the charter schools and the subjects’ perceptions, the researcher felt it necessary to include abbreviated transcriptions in this research. These transcripts were
Questions #1. Can New Jersey Charter Schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21)? Explain.

The administrators interviewed stated that the various incentives listed in the act were present and/or to be implemented in their charter schools. These reforms included a wide spectrum of activities that included, but not limited to, parental choice for the community, innovative learning methods and creating a learning environment that is both creative and challenging to all students. As administrator 1B stated ...it will depend upon the support it (charter schools) receives from the community, from the legislators...”

The board of trustees were more pragmatic in their approach to this question. They responded positively yet discussed the issues of organization and operations of the charter school. Six out of the nine board members specifically mentioned that because of the smaller size of the classes, the charter school should be more successful than the traditional school. Discussion regarding the operational planning, which was linked to creating a school, was a concern of two members (2A and 3C), while a single board member believed that the program is “....working out all of the glitches” (4A).

For this question the parents related personal experiences why they selected the particular charter school. Some of the comments referred to their perceptions from their own educational background or that of another child that attended a traditional public school. All parents were in agreement that the charter school act and the elements that the lawmakers wished to be incorporated in such a school, do exist in their child’s program. As parent 7B stated: “Yes, ...in terms of having a more selective learning
environment, in terms of encouraging the use of different and innovative learning methods because of the class sizes are smaller. The school is smaller. The administration itself is smaller. The fact that each teacher is allowed to operate somewhat independently allows her to change her methodology as may be needed in a particular class…”

The teachers interviewed responded more in the area of cultivating and developing a learning environment that is both challenging and nurturing to the child. Depending upon the teachers’ experiences, the perception of charter school can be different. It appeared that the staff in all schools were comfortable with innovative practices established by the schools and enjoyed the freedom to work at such a school. Examples that support this statement were subjects who described “…working with the whole child…don’t focus on any one specific kind of learning modality…” (9B) and “…charter schools as something similar to an experimental school…” (9C). Two of the nine teachers did state that the professional growth was very much present in their situation (subjects 9B and 10C).

Question #2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

The administrators believed that goals established in their original application are still realistic. Yet, depending upon the specific goals, the manner which they can be achieved can be frustrating. Drawing from a more diverse population can reflect negatively on test scores as subject #1C “…last year’s population tended to be more of the same ability level….this year…we’re a greater cross section of the community…”

The lack of time for the director/administrator appeared to be a concern from this
group. As administrator 1A stated that "...not as visible as I like to be (due to the administrative paper work).....recommendation to the Board to have a business administrator next year..."

The board of trustees indicated that the goals and achievements were realistic in their second year of operation. Comments were made as to the experiences of start-up projects and reflections as to a comparison from last year to this school year. All nine board members were in agreement as to meeting the goals established and continued during this academic year. Responses specifically stated certain goals as being implemented easier than others, for example ".... training that they're doing with the students and parents ....is helpful..." (2B), "....smaller class size, and ...curriculum work to integrate academics and technology..."(4B).

With this question, the comments from the parents reflected a personal view as to the influence that the goals and objectives had on their children. The parents interviewed from all three schools had a clear idea of what were the goals for their child's school were and were able to discuss them with passion. Eight out of the nine parents (the one parent skipped this question because this was her first year at the school) agreed that their children were being challenged at their schools and were very happy to be there.

The teachers appeared to be the most satisfied with their working environment as it was reflected in the responses. The smaller class sizes, the individual programs, the creative avenue that can be accomplished were mentioned. The teachers, with one exception by teacher 10B, believed that all the goals could be attained regarding the performance of her children and its reflection upon a teacher's raise. Every teacher discussed in their responses the children and how the students would be meeting the goals
of the school. As teacher 9B mentioned "...our first school year was definitely a learning year...." 

Question # 3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration and the board of trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application approved as by the department of education? (NJ Charter School Program Act - Line 5 to 54) Explain.

The administrators responded to this question in agreeing that for their initial year (1997-98), they did quite well in either meeting or exceeding their expectations. Caution was cast because it was difficult to meet all the goals and objectives in such a short time. Positive statements included were: "...exceeded expectations in the area of parental involvement...parents came forth in ways that we didn't anticipate" (1A) or "...overall expectations and achievements, I think, are there" (1B) and "...in terms of the CTBS scores, we're in that 1.5 to 1.8 region per child as an aggregate or as a collective upswing..."(1C).

The board of trustees were a bit more philosophical when addressing this question. The realization of the job that the director/administrator and staff must accomplish was on their mind. The concern that the state department would be too rigid came out in this group. The high standards that both the state department and the expectation in the individual charters were noted. As board member 2A stated: "As a Board member, I like to go back to that problem with being unduly concerned with nuts and bolts issues that took us away from concentrating on some of our higher level goals and wishes. For us to spend a lot of our time with our budget and complying with school lunch program guidelines and the temperature of the food and all the various things that are necessary
for a supply list, we need real time left over to brainstorm and really get into the meaty part of what we want to do as far as student achievement...."

The common response that the parents expressed was that since the class size was small (in all three schools) and with an active teacher involvement with their children, the schools were successful. They appear to be happy campers.

Such positive comments from the nine parents included the following: "... I've been thoroughly happy with the program and my son being in the school" (6A), "...my son is learning disabled ...he's becoming very self assured" (5C), "everyone I've seen has given 150% to meet the goals..." (7A), and "...my son has learned a lot since he's been here" (5A).

The teachers became very specific in answering question # 3. Some referred to the percentage of mastery level achieved and standardized scores, while others concentrated their remarks on curriculum matters such as the Spanish program implemented. Specific remarks were: "...we're expecting this year that scores will go up because we have worked with them for a year ..."(9B), "...we've doubled in size this year...I think everyone would agree overall we're doing fairly well" (8C) and "...their writing from the beginning of the year has improved beyond belief, but we have lot of really motivated students..."(9C).

Question # 4. Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

The administrators had different approaches to answering this question. While one is concerned with funding and facilities, a second subject discussed the geographical issue of receiving students from numerous sending districts (1C), while the third director
took a more philosophical view referring to the common goals that the school's staff is dedicated to achieve.

The board of trustees generally indicated that they believed that their students were achieving success in the charter schools. Some were honest and stated that they were not familiar with the test results from standardize tests; however, mention was made regarding to specific programs in the schools. Constraints mentioned appeared to center around funding issues. The lack of 100% funding appeared to influence some of the programs that the board wished to implement. Four out of the eight board members (one member skipped this question) responded that financial issues were a major concern. As board member 2 C stated "...I think the constraints that could prevent things from happening really is simply fiscal constraints..."

The parents gave diverse answers regarding this question. Issues that appeared from the transcription were community involvement, funding, and parental participation. It is to be noted that some parents mentioned no constraints and were very positive in their responses to students meeting and/or exceeding the intention of the school. It is to be noted that some of these responses were similar to the responses in question #2. Some phrases that the parents mentioned included: "achieving a lot" (7A), "...teachers are always here...demonstrated ..the level of commitment..." (5B), "...charter schools gives them (children) better education" (6B), "...very good academics mixed in with the technology portion which enhances the academics" (5C), and "...what a charter school offers is hard to pass up" (7C).

The teachers focused on several important areas of both achievements and constraints. Curriculum materials, innovative teaching methods, and the program itself
make the individual schools successful and allowed the staff to become better teachers and facilitators. Specifically noted were full day kindergarten program, new curriculum books especially in math and the development of a tutoring program.

In the area of needs, as perceived by the teachers, there were several concerns. Additional support staff for students especially special education children, some lack of materials supplied by the school, insufficient computers, the different "hats" the staff might wear, and the pooling of students from different districts were mentioned.

A common thread mentioned in each group of subjects was funding and the means of funding. Although it never discouraged the schools from moving forward, it appeared to be a heavy cloud above each school's head. As one board member summed it up "...If there are any constraints against students achieving all that they could be or should be it would be again money, not having the resources to get materials they need." (4B).

Question # 5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation, etc. need to be sustained and which need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Explain. Please note that the elements referred to those constraints in the N.J. Charter Statue, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

The directors/administrators (3 of 3) agreed that funding, and community involvement need to be increased for continued success. In regards to funding as administrator 1C stated "...funding is a primary issue,"... while administrator 1B added "...funding obviously needs to be sustained and certainly increased." However, when administrator 1A looked at funding, the statement reflected a basic concept that "...charter schools aren't given any start up money. It's hard to begin a business without money..." All three administrators believed that community support is vital to the program
but they were realistic to say that... yet we can’t be dependent upon any one segment.” (1B).

Autonomy was very much desired and is present in the daily operations of these schools according to the directors. There appeared to be some skepticism as to how much autonomy the schools were receiving when one statement was recorded “…autonomy is there but is not as great as was promised. The amount of freedom that is allowed by the current legislation is minimal…” (1C).

Funding was a primary issue when the board of trustees from all the schools responded to this question. The needs of each school were different, but the essential element of money (or lack of it) was a repeated concern. They stated this idea in so many different ways; however, the same thought was prevalent. Repeated phrases mentioned in their responses included: “...in the manner some districts send their payments along in a timely manner” (2A), (3A) clearly stated...”there is no room for error, no room for help, no room for enough money for start up costs, just not enough money…” and as 4B might be predicting “…the amount of funds that our school is expected to operate on are inadequate and in my opinion, it sets the charter schools up for failure...” The funding needed some modification.

The board members also expounded upon the element of autonomy being an important product of the charter school system. Yet, the schools, they believed, could not achieve full autonomy because they are driven by the insufficient funds. An interesting comment by administrator 4B “…the issue of autonomy is kind of interesting because we certainly want the ability to be in charge of our own curriculum...but the charter schools are little and we need help from the other schools or lunch programs or busing, the
business of running the school..."

Involvement with either community or parental input was mentioned by 5 of the 9 board of trustees in question # 5. The feelings extend from very strong involvement to just mentioning the positive atmosphere that community and parents create. As 4C mentioned "...we are continually encouraged (parents) to participate and speak up and let them know what our thoughts are..."

The majority of the parents view the need to increase parental involvement as a key success of the charter school. They appreciate the dedication of the staff; yet, they realize that additional help is needed. A parental subject from each school spoke about the need to increase this element (7A, 6B and 6C).

The teachers with question #5 were split between funding and community participation. They believed that both areas were important for the survival and support of the schools.

Five of the nine teachers mentioned that funding was critical to the school’s success. As 10A spoke "...everything we do falls back on the funding, every place we go, every activity we do..." Teacher 9B reflected that "...funding is a big thing we would have had the computers last year if we had more money..." One teacher perceived the manner which funding is given as a need to change, when her comments were "the funding has to be changed. As it stands now, putting the sending districts in the middle man position is only going to perpetuate the idea that charter schools are bad..." 9C

Question # 6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public school in your community?

The administrators believed that the charter schools should be innovators and good
examples to the traditional public schools. They expressed ideas of hope and vision for a future generation of children. Quotes from this group included: “...we need some kind of variety...let’s make educating exciting ..”(1A), while 1B stated “...one of the major hopes in starting School B was that...we would serve as a model for other educators...” and administrator 3C hoped his school “...to aim for shared creativity...”

A sense of cooperation was the chief message expressed by the board of trustees. Each board member indicated a specific quest that one wished to spread to the traditional school. Board member 2A hoped that the public school “...seem to now recognize that they are not a monopoly ...and how to give parents more choices and listen to the needs of parents more...” Three board members (3B, 4B and 3C) expressed the hope of working together as board member 3B responded “…I hope we (charter schools) would could work together...” Several times the words that refer to the ability to create a better education system were mentioned. One board member expressed her idea this way “…I hope that it forces them (public school) to be a little more forthcoming in their reason they do what they do....” 2A

The parents expressed a mixed message as to what and/or how they would like the charter school to influence the traditional public school. The feelings of enlightenment and sharing ideas were expressed. Other specific concepts included smaller class sizes, better communication between teacher and parents and developing self-confidence in their children. Every parent expressed ideas, which they personalized depending upon their child’s charter school. As parent (5C) mentioned “…I would hope that the charter school could influence the regular schools to the point where maybe they can expect more out of their students...”
The teachers expressed such ideas as creating competition with the traditional school, more community involvement, smaller class sizes and a better communication system between both systems. Two (10B and 8C) of the nine teachers mentioned a smaller classroom setting for the children, while seven of the nine mentioned community building with the traditional public schools (8A, 9A, 10A, 8B, 9B, 9Cand 10C). As teacher 9C spoke "...the mandate of charter school is to increase communication between all those groups, so the next logical step is to say, okay let's together build something..."  

Summary of Data

As a summary when comparing the four group's responses to seek similarities and/or differences in their remarks, the researcher could state the following based upon the transcriptions, policy from the state department and documents from the individual schools:

Question #1: Can New Jersey Charter Schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21)? Explain.

All subjects responded to this question in a manner that correlated to the role that they played in the school. The administrators spoke about reform, parental choice and innovative instruction; the board of trustees discussed the nuts and bolts of running a school; the parents gave personal remarks as the school influence their child and the teachers spoke about learning environments.

Question #2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

This question had the most agreement throughout the different groups. Basically
all subjects stated that in one manner or another the charter schools goals in their second year continued to be realistic.

Question #3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration and the board of trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the department of education? (NJ Charter School Program Act - Line 5 to 54) Explain

This question probably produced the most diverse responses from the research. Depending upon the subject's role in the school, the response correlated to the position. The administrators were pragmatic and, at time a bit hard on themselves when discussing both the general goals and specific ones. The board of trustee members mentioned the core standards and expectations, while the parents appeared to be the most excited about the learning occurring in the schools. The teachers submitted answers that dealt with the daily operations of the school, for example curriculum implementations.

Question # 4. Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

As mentioned before the responses from the subjects varied from group to group and within the group. However, one element that was prevalent and mentioned in all groups was the issue of funding and how the funding worked. It appeared that all subjects were worried regarding the state's policy on issuing payment to the charter schools.

Question # 5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation, etc. need to be sustained and which need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Explain. Please note that the elements referred to those constraints in
the N.J. Charter Statue, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

As redundant as it may appear, the stakeholders gave a common answer to question
# 5. Funding. Yes, there were other elements mentioned that were important to all the
groups such as community and parental involvement and autonomy. However, the
common perception of the subjects was the funding issue. All other elements appeared to
have the roots in funding.

Question # 6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the
public school in your community?

This question produced answers that were varied from each group but were very
idealistic at the same time. The idea that competition and cooperation needed to be foster
came out in several responses. The subjects appeared to want to extend their hand to the
traditional public school and offer a sign of peace. The perception, in general, from the
subjects was that the traditional public schools perceive the charter school as the enemy.
CHAPTER V

THE SUMMARY, THE CONCLUSION AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes the following: (a) a summary of the investigation, (b) conclusions derived from the analysis of the data, and (c) the recommendations for future study.

Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the charter school act in New Jersey and compare the act with the actual implementation in approved charter schools. Since the act is considered a strong one (Mulholland, 1996), it was the researcher's intentions to discover if this was true. The method for investigation was to collect data from three charter schools and analyzed the results. The data included a copy of the charter school act, documents from each school, and an in-depth qualitative reporting and transcriptions from stakeholders in each school. Using a qualitative inquiry approach, the thirty participants were interviewed and asked a series of questions which included opinion/value, feelings and personal experience information (Patton, 1990). The questions focused on collecting the perceptions and attitudes of the participants regarding their school and their perception of the charter school act. The subjects in the study included three administrators, nine board of trustee members, nine parents and nine teachers.

The data collection was based upon Edward Suchman's (1967) process of value formation. It was the researcher's intention to correlate this pattern of value formation to the actual charter schools as they exist in New Jersey.
The study sought to answer the following six research questions:

1. Can New Jersey Charter Schools actually accomplish what they were
designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law
(NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21)? Explain.

2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your application
continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation?
Explain.

3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration and the board
of trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your
school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by
the department of education? (NJ Charter School Program Act - Line 5 to
54) Explain

4. Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended?
Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community
participation, etc, need to be modified for a charter school to be successful?
Explain. Please note that the elements referred to those constraints in the N.J.
Charter Act, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public
school in your community?

A general purpose for pursuing this study was outlined in Chapter I. The need to
improve educational standards as established by the Department of Education of New
Jersey was presented. Since the need was present and with the creation of charter schools
in the state, this researcher felt the need to investigate if a correlation exists between the act as created by the lawmakers and the practicality of the act in the existing charter schools. Also in Chapter I, the reader would find limitations because of a small pool of data collected because of the limited number of schools included in this study.

Chapter II presented a comprehensive review of the history of the charter school movement in education. This chapter incorporated all aspects of charter schools from a historical point of view to the most recent research from various states.

Chapter III described the research design listed the open-ended questions and a general plan of approaching the data collection. The primary method for reporting this data was the in-depth transcriptions from the subjects.

Chapter IV presented the final collection of the data. Selections of subject’s responses were included in this chapter. The data was segregated among the stakeholder’s position in the school. All conclusions were based upon these results.

Chapter V contains the summary, the conclusions and the recommendations related to this study.

Conclusions

The major emphases of this study focused on the open-ended questions that were presented to the administrators, board of trustee members, parents and teachers. These questions were based upon the key elements that are found in the Charter School Program Act. The intention of this study was that by soliciting responses from the stakeholders, the researcher intended to establish some correlation of the policy (act) to practice (actual experiences).

Since 1991 the charter movement has grown rapidly: by fall approximately 700
charters were operating in 29 states. Charter school enrolled only about .5 percent of public school students in the 17 states where charter schools were operating in the 1996-97 school year. (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Charter school enrollment varies from less than one-tenth of one percent of the state's public school enrollment in Florida, Illinois and Louisiana to more than two percent of the state's enrollment in Arizona.

In New Jersey, the Charter School Program Act was passed in 1996 and the first charter schools were open in September 1997. It was these schools that this study investigated, in particular, three of these schools. The outcomes that were summarized in Chapter IV were aligned to past studies that were completed in California, Canada, the U.S. Department of Education and Columbia University survey of New Jersey charter schools as of June, 1998. These studies reported similar results from subjects when using the same research instruments — open-ended questions, policies from department of education and documents from individual charter schools.

From the National Study sponsored by U.S. Department of Education, 1998 some of the common threads that were in agreement to this study were the following: (1) parents with students in charter schools were dissatisfied with their experience in the traditional public school, (2) the charter experience tends to focus on one or a combination of goals that attract students such as a quality academic program with high standard, a supportive environment often based on small school size, and a flexible approach to educational program. As with the findings from the national study, the charter schools in this study were newly created schools, which were smaller than pre-existing public schools.

In 1994 Alberta, Canada became the first province to enact charter school
legislation. A recent publication included a two-year report of the effectiveness of these schools. The research design was modeled after the U.S. Department’s National Survey of Charter Schools. As with the present data given by this researcher, the charter schools in Alberta had similarities in many areas. The class sizes were small, most schools were housed in leased facilities and enrollment figures were increasing. Parents reported in that study that their satisfaction with the charter schools appeared to be based on high academic satisfaction. Specifically mention were the skills taught, the academic standard, the quality of the teaching, class sizes and the individual attention given by the teacher (U.S. National Study of Charter Schools, 1998). As with the present study, the parents expressed these similar feelings. The charter school teachers in this Canadian study also were aligned with the researcher’s findings. The teachers in both systems were most attractive to charter schools by the educational philosophy, the opportunity to work in an environment for innovation, the opportunity to create a new school, the small class sizes and the ability for school planning and decision-making.

The third study published in California and included 17 charter schools from 10 districts. The issues under review for that study included autonomy, accountability, choice for parents, models of innovation and infusing competition. (Wells et. all. 1998) From this study, there were similarities and some distinct differences. The funding is funneled through local districts just like New Jersey and thus makes charter schools in both states dependable upon the local district for releasing of funds. However, unlike New Jersey, in California there existed grants and programs to assist new schools with start-up funding. These programs were entitled Charter School Revolving Loan Program, the Charter School Grant Program and an existence of a consortia which would assist
newly approved charter schools. A total funding of all three programs amounted to $4,500,000 according to report from the California Department of Education. (1997) It appeared that through this avenue of start-up grants, loans and consortia, the stakeholders in these schools in California would not have the same major concern that this study reported.

With the Wells study in California the elements that were as similar to the present study, were both stakeholders were asked what do you hope to accomplish, the responses correlated that they (charter school) wanted to implement a better means of innovative learning and the desire for more flexibility with funds. Unfortunately, an additional common thread between the East and West coast charter schools was a relationship between the charter schools with the traditional schools – they were nonexistent.

The Columbia survey published by Professor Kane in June 1998, 12 of the 13 New Jersey charter schools participated. When a comparison of this paper is made to the Columbia study, there were changes in the stakeholders’ perceptions. The present study discovered that the goals and objectives were perceived to be attainable and the subjects felt comfortable with them. The prior study did not address this issue. In addition, the stakeholders specifically in the present study believed and expressed themselves in a positive manner when discussing issues of organization and daily routines regarding the running the schools. Since the schools were operating in their second year, many of the subjects were comfortable in their environment and were reevaluating their position with the students, parents, community members, and sending district. The major element that was found in both studies was the problem of funding. There appeared to be no change as to the perception of the stakeholders in both studies. Funding was and is a major
It appeared that common threads exist among charter schools in various states. The stakeholders do share many mutual hopes and frustrations. The movement needs time to grow.

Implications for the Study

The importance of conducting this research was to analyze the charter school movement in New Jersey as it is perceived by the stakeholders. The format in composing the questions was made to elicit responses that might lead the researcher to conclude if the concept of charter schooling can be an effective means to achieve alternative educational opportunities in New Jersey as perceived by the stakeholders (parents, board of trustees, teachers and administrators/directors). Because the act is considered strong, the policymakers expected that the approved charter schools would and should be successful. The specific goals and objectives stated in the act offered educators, parents and community people the ability to form a school for innovative programs. This concept was created due to the national calling of better education for our children.

The New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 was written with strict guidelines and the approved schools are monitored under a special department in Trenton that oversees their operational and organizational existence. The three schools that participated in the study were part of the original thirteen charter schools. They were selected for the study because they represent three diverse schools, which would give the researcher a broad fund of data. The common element for all the schools was that the rules and regulations established by the state department were universal.

With the data collected and analyzed, the researcher intended to record the
application of value formation as modeled in Miller's research (1991). Miller outlined a value formation process in a six circular stage process to assess if a particular goal-attaining activity was worthwhile. Would the value of the charter school concept be achievable in New Jersey charter schools?

The process of value formation is uniformly established by the existence of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act. Since the act established strict guidelines and an uniformed process of application, the charter schools included in this research were equally granted approval and given funding according to their enrollment. Each school wrote specific goals and objectives and submitted criteria for meeting these goals. At this point, depending upon how the school was established and by whom, there may exist some differences that would effect program operation and ultimately assessing the effect of the original goal. At this point, which is step V in Miller's (1991) process (refer to Chapter III, figure #1, page 52), there might be a difference felt among the individual charter schools as to the value of creating a non traditional public school. The main difference, it appeared, was in the start-up process and the domino effect this would have on the school and all other experiences. From the research in this study, it can be concluded that the initial year which involved locating and establishing a building that passed safety and health codes was a major issue for two of the three schools. However, this issue did not prevent any of the schools in this study to become inoperative. The stakeholders might have adjusted some of their deadlines in order to achieve the goals and objectives stated in their charter.

In addition, Miller affirmed that once a program is operational (Step V) and the assessing the effect of the goals (Step VI), a value formation could be formed. This study
discussed each process of Miller’s model as applied to values in each of the three schools. It can be concluded that all three schools were achieving and continuing to work on the original values and goals established in their school’s charter. Thus this study was able to prove that the three charter schools in this study (A, B, and C) were working on improving the educational system.

It can be concluded that some minor recommendations for changes in the Charter School Program Act could be suggested; however, the major issue was the creation of a better avenue for releasing the funds and equality with the funding.

The researcher can conclude some important facts from this study. The charter school movement is a viable option to parents and educators. It is an alternative avenue for an innovative program to exist and for school choice. This program sends a clear message to the traditional institutions that one needs to address the educational desires of the children and parents in the community. The question to ask is, “Are we addressing our students’ needs so that they will be successful?” This is the drive of the charter school movement – the option for school choice and school success.

Recommendations for Future Study

The following recommendations for future study are suggested:

1. It is recommended that additional studies of New Jersey charter schools be investigated. Since this study included three of the original charter schools, the additional ten should be researched as to the perceptions of the act as perceived by stakeholders.

2. It is recommended that a study be completed with the newly sanctioned charter schools (20), to view their opinions as to practical operational experiences they
had in their start-up year. A comparison between the original schools to the newly created ones would be beneficial.

3. It is recommended to study the resources that might be available to the New Jersey Charter Schools, so funding may not be the major problem of charter schools.

4. It is recommended to research the topic of funding by analyzing an in-depth allocation of monies in a charter school. A comparison among these charter schools could be done to discover the best means of spending the appropriated funds.

5. It is recommended to examine the newly created charter schools (1998-99) to compare programs with the original charter schools regarding to the educational programs and the effect it has on community involvement.

6. It is recommended that a return to these three original charter schools in order to research the accountability issue regarding student achievement. A comparison of the baseline testing from the initial year (1997) to the present.

7. It is recommended to revisit the original charter schools to investigate the rate of teacher, and administrator/director turnover since the schools became operational. This study would help to understand if the charter school program was allowing professional opportunities to flourish and nurture the teacher to work in an atmosphere of educational creativity and empowerment.

8. It is recommended to research the options and present policies to create partnerships and strong alliances with the traditional public schools in a community in the district.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Excerpts of Transcriptions from Subjects
Transcription From Administrators

Question #1. Can New Jersey Charter Schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law? (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21). Explain.

Administrator #1A: Parent choice has definitely been accomplished. The community wants the full day program. Improve pupil learning: it's a very innovative program. Anyone who is attracted to the charter school as a parent, teacher, as an administrator, they're here because they are progressive educators. Make the school the unit for education improvement: our first year was a successful year. Our students had CAT tests in April and they outscored the local school district. As a result of that the local school district sat up, we were noticed, called to meet with them, and asked what is it we're doing.

Administrator #1B: I certainly believe that charter schools can do a marvelous job of changing educational program. It will be dependent upon the support it receives from the community, from the legislators and how well it's able to help the community and legislators that other educators understand the value of the charter school.

Administrator #1C: In terms of can it actually work or if the basic achievements that were outlined here could be accomplished, I think it depends on a lot of things. The school community and set up itself, its relationship to the other districts, somewhat the funding issue, and one thing that sometimes the teachers have trouble with is the higher end outcomes or product results in dealing with a heterogeneous population. The student role and the parental role is important. If you involve them in the process and keep them aware of what you are doing and how it impacts upon them, they become a far greater part of the process as opposed to a spectator....The innovative programs, if you're willing to go out and try something different and not let it be a stagnant piece but you're innovative idea may have been okay on paper in black and white, when you actually get living bodies attempting to do it, both on the student and teacher end, there has to be some flexibility with them there... The professional opportunities, I don't think there's any greater opportunity for a teacher to start from scratch, to be there at the inception of the program and to help shape it and mold it and learn how to deal with parents and community members and students right out there on the front. They're a little closer to the edge and a little less isolated than traditional teachers and they have to learn how to deal with that. That's a great opportunity for them.

Question #2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your
application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

Administrator #1A: The full day kindergarten program is definitely something we believe in. We cannot accomplish in a half day what needs to be accomplished for kindergarten. Limiting class size to 17 is desired, that should not change. Individualized instruction for each child: each child has an individual learning plan. The way our program is designed, each teacher has the opportunity to address individual needs. The developing skills checklist, we found that students had mastered prior to June. We had about 55% of the students who mastered in December, and we had about 80% mastery in February. Last year we found the topics that were designed for parent training seminars, after you have 3 workshops, you've had enough. So this year the topics were broadened. I can give you those: child sexuality, childhood illnesses and this year we modified that calendar to include those. The individual learning plan is ongoing. The master teacher, today I was doing lunch duty, and it reminds people that this is why we're here, we're all in this together regardless of what the duties are, and I think that brings staff and parents closer. I'm not as visible as I'd like to be. I made the recommendation to the Board to have a business administrator next year because when I look at my duties we need a business administrator in order to free me up to do the classroom modeling and staff development.

Administrator #1B: I think that our goals remain most realistic, and I think the reason for that is certainly largely due to the fact that our school was started by X city teachers, so we had a very practical point of view when we were developing our goals....

Administrator #1C: In terms of the realistic aspect of our goals and objectives in the second year of operation, I think for the most part, our primary goals related to higher student achievement we've been on target with. This year, when we looked at standardized test scores, we could see a little drop from last year. Last year's population tended to be more of the same ability level. This year I feel they are a more accurate reflection of the ability levels that the other schools are dealing with. We're a greater cross section of the community....

Question #3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration and the Board of Trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the department of education? (NJ Charter School Program Act - line 5 to 54). Explain.

Administrator #1A: We definitely exceeded expectations in the area of parental
involvement. Parents came forth in ways that we didn’t anticipate. As far as the facilities, parents were here painting. The community support was another area that surprised us with regard to donations and sponsors.

**Administrator #1B:** But the overall expectations and achievements I think are there. I think some of them we have gotten to more quickly than we expected, some we’re not as far along as we had expected. But overall, I think the people who started the school are very proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish and hope that we can continue to get support and that the support will increase so we really get the opportunity to continue on and to achieve whatever we originally started to do and even more.

**Administrator #1C:** I think last year when we wrote this we predicted when we looked at expectations of increasing grade levels on standardized test scores and we had to go with those just because that’s the primary piece that everybody is going to look at first. We’ll try to make the correlation between one district and another. We projected an increase of 1.5 to grade point equivalencies on each individual test that they took and standardized testing and EWT scores that were on or above the state level before that testing year. In terms of the CTBS scores, for the most part we were in that 1.5 to 1.8 region per child as an aggregate or as a collective upswing...

**Question #4.** Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

**Administrator #1A:** Constraints are always facilities. We are limited in what we can actually do by budget and budget naturally effects our facility. The facility drives the program.

**Administrator #1B:** I feel most comfortable in telling you that we are improving student achievement and I think whenever like minded people are able to come together in education and our school was started by like minded people, people with a lot of experience in urban education and a particular point of view about how classrooms should be, when you’re able to bring those people together, with all of their experience and talent and allow them to focus on helping children, when you’re able to help them learn how to bring the community together to add to that to support that, I think the potential is great, and I think the results that we have seen are great. ....

**Administrator #1C:** I think some of the constraints are in preparation of districts they are coming from are beginning to notice some market differences and we’re drawing from 14 different districts and predict which ones work at preparing their students for EWTs or CTBS and not necessarily teaching to the test but stressing those skills through their curriculum, and others who it is not a priority and are
very much in a very traditional presentation mode... Another part of that is family commitment. The families whose parents are involved with us on a regular basis whether it be PTO or even just stopping in to say hello or regularly meet with the teachers and the results are far greater than those who have what we call a forgotten parent, who had children and then somewhere along the line didn’t realize what a time commitment it was going to be...

Question #5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation, etc. need to be sustained and which need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Explain. Please note that the elements referred to those constraints in the N.J. Charter Statute, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

Administrator #1A: Funding definitely needs to be looked at. Charter schools aren’t given any start up money. It’s hard to begin a business without money. The fact that the funding comes from a local school district was a constraint. With regard to autonomy, I sometimes feel that the innovative within traditional parameters. We are still required to do a number of things like traditional school districts are required to do. Those things definitely take up a lot of our time that could be used creatively. Community participation definitely has helped us tremendously.

Administrator #1B: I do think the funding obviously needs to be sustained and certainly increased. I would like to see us get the same kind of funding as the district gets. The autonomy is basic to it... The community involvement is wonderful and yet we can’t be dependent upon any one segment of the group. Yet, we certainly need community involvement... I mean that the charter school movement has to be given enough time to get itself strong and to be a clear functioning educational process before it should be judged.....

Administrator #1C: In terms of modifications or sustaining things in the way that they are, autonomy is there but is not as great as was promised. The amount of freedom that is allowed by the current legislation is minimal. I think that helps us in the means of accountability in comparison to deal with programs in our districts. It’s sort of a double edged. We don’t have as much freedom to do what you please. When you try things, be a little experimental, but at the same time you are going to have your results or your output compared to the traditional. By having it very tightly controlled, that gives you that up front accountability. Funding is a primary issue and it’s one that we have taken steps to bring to the department of education that the other 38 have as well. If we could find direct funding through the state department to the charters, then I think local districts will be much more open to discussions in terms of sharing ideas, collaborating on programs, going after grants together, working as true partners. But right now we’re asking them to do a lot of
paperwork for us and hold the money for a little bit and push it over and that's an uncomfortable relationship.

Question #6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public school in your community?

Administrator #1A: The school districts weren't ready for the growth in this town. I feel that they became somewhat stale. I know that the entire county sat up and took notice of what was going here (in our charter school).... Schools do not always need to look like schools. We need, as educators, to be aware to have variety in our district. ....We need some kind of variety here because there are a number of people coming in. I would like to see that as a result, let's do something, let's make education exciting.

Administrator #1B: One of major hopes in starting School B was that...we would serve as a model for other educators, hopefully X educators, to do likewise. To say to the district, let's break this big white elephant down into manageable parts and just the way the School B people had an idea and made it a reality, well we can do that too. And that there would be many charter schools reflective of the sensible educational approaches of lots of people, and that the district would not be a place where people feel that they don't count, or that there would be a brand new structure and people would feel as if they counted. Both parents and children and staff, until all groups feel important, schools will be missing an important piece.

Administrator 1C: I think we're trying to aim for shared creativity where everyone has input to what occurs here and hopefully as those ideas are put to the test and implemented, others will begin to look at them and roll them over into their programs...

Transcriptions From Board of Trustees

Comments from board members are transcribed below:

Question #1. Can New Jersey Charter Schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law? (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21). Explain.

Board of Trustee #2A: I believe the framework is there for them to be able to do this. In actual practice, I think you have a very deep learning curve for Board of Trustees and the people running the school as far as nuts and bolts part of getting the school by. Especially in the first year we are much more in tune with the nuts
and bolts types of issues and you wish that you could actually focus on the whole purpose of the start of the charter schools, it becomes difficult to do that. In the second and subsequent years you might hopefully be able to get more involved in what you had intended. The fact that there is a choice for parents is a crucial element. In the form of accountability for schools, it says the school will show that they are accomplishing all they are set out to do. Layered on top of that is other accountability that the charter schools must adhere to which is identical to public schools are accountable for. In effect, the charter schools, are many more times accountable than public schools.

Board of Trustee #3A: Yes, absolutely the charter schools can accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law, if there is cooperation from the local school district, cooperation from to Department of Education, and cooperation from the parents as related to really getting involved with their children.

Board of Trustee #4A: For the most part, if the state continues to work along with the charter school in working out all of the glitches, then it will continue to be a good thing.

Board of Trustee #2B: I think that they can achieve it because here where we’re dealing with such a small number of students and a small faculty that I think you can catch a lot of things and you can be a little more risky....

Board of Trustee #3B: From what I have seen in School B, I believe the concept works for them. The small classes are a definite plus. There are a lot of things going on as far as innovations on Saturday mornings last year and I saw the difference in the children. I think the parent are a little more involved, and I think the relationship there, that the reason they put their children here of this involvement......

Board of Trustee #4B: ...As far as improving overall pupil learning, absolutely. I have been in other inner city classrooms and I've been in School B, and our school looks like a prep school. The kids are all working and getting a lot of attention. I attribute that the smaller class size and the teachers working together as a team and having a sense of ownership instead of feeling like this is just a job. It goes beyond that for them because they feel ownership and empowerment. Encouraging the use of different and innovative learning methods, absolutely. The charter schools are the perfect forum to allow teachers the freedom to experiment with things they feel are important....

Board of Trustee #2C: The short answer is yes... Also because the school is small, everything is flexible, time is flexible, planning is flexible, students can have their whole day changed without a great deal of difficulty. They’re not trying to work around a master schedule, and an entire day can be spent on a project and teachers can initiate a lot of projects and programs and they do that.
Board of Trustee #3C: I think yes. The only problem that I see is a possible fiscal problem. The way charter schools started was we were only getting a percentage, 90% of the district's funding for the student. The other thing I think is a problem fiscally is that there's no contingency in there for special ed. I think we can attain the curriculum the students need to achieve at a faster and higher pace than in a public schools because of the time and independence that the charter school has... When you look at our school specifically, I think as we know the curriculum with the technical end of the school as it's designed, these kids are just going to fly in future years. Each kid is equipped with a PC to take home which I find incredible. We are putting great emphasis on the curriculum...

Board of Trustee #4C: Yes I believe they can accomplish that. I believe the student ratio and the size of the classrooms there's more personalness between the teacher and student as well as the teacher and parent...

Question #2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

Board of Trustee #2A: When we applied for our charter, the instructions were to set yourself some goals that you would achieve and how to achieve them...Some of our goals are more philosophically oriented. The goals that are specific are easy to measure, they're easy to know whether you're on target. The ones that are less specific seems to be you need to spend more time thinking about the strategies in order to meet those goals even before you write the goal. ...Now we need to revisit that goal to find out if seminars need to be changed and what they are offering to the parents. .....our general goal is that we want the parents to learn about learning. Well, maybe the way we're doing it by parent seminars is not the way that some parents can be reached. You have to think very carefully about how you write your goals. As a warning to other people in NJ, some goals that are very specific, there is no problem. But, as far as how you accomplish your goal, it's better to leave that more open ended.

Board of Trustee #3A: Yes, the goals can be achieved as stated in the application. They are realistic and we're hoping that we'll be able to continue through the next couple of years with the next charter as well. I think it can be accomplished and are being accomplished.

Board of Trustee #4A: Our goals and achievements were realistic and continue to be in our second year of operation due to the level of commitment of the staff, director and parental assistance. Our students have had a wonderful adjustment to
the first grade in their home district. Our test scores for last year were better than the home district. Thus we are meeting with success.

Board of Trustee #3B: I think that they are realistic and I think there is a core of what you really have to do...I think that all the training that they're doing with the students and parents and among the teachers and all of those different levels is helpful and I think that if they continue to work on it that I think its realistic and they will have a more pleasant or at least a more open atmosphere...

Board of Trustee #3B: I think as far as the children are concerned, the goals are realistic. I think the facility is a problem because it's not big enough to do all the technology things they like to do. Money is also a problem because there is not any money to buy all these new computers and all the equipment that goes with them...

Board of Trustee #4B: ...Our first goal was develop a pattern of applying, analyzing and synthesizing information to make judgements. Many opportunities for students to do that here. Smaller class size allows for that. In our second year of operation I see in that area we are getting stronger as teachers becoming more of a team. The second academic goal was the use of information, technology and other tools. And right now that is the goal that is most difficult to attain for us because of money. We can't get our hands on the kind of technology that we need without major fund raising efforts. We have to go to enormous extents to get resources for our students...Our non academic educational goals and objectives deal with the communication aspect of the school. The school is based on communication training and I certainly see that the techniques that the teachers are using are very effective.

Board of Trustee #2C: ...There's been curriculum work to integrate academics and technology, but even more important, the technology teachers have a much better intuitive feel for the whole idea of bringing technology into academics...

Board of Trustee #3C ...I will tell you the experience the kids are having, the integration of technology and with small classrooms, and with the freedom to pursue curriculum beyond what I think the public schools are doing, knowing that the emphasis is on some of these goals, no doubt they will attain the goals...

Board of Trustee #4C: Yes, I believe they have accomplished their goals. My children are able to use a computer, they've shown me how to do things that I know if they hadn't attended that school, they wouldn't know how to get their way around on a computer...

Question #3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration and the Board of Trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your
school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the department of education? (NJ Charter School Program Act - line 5 to 54). Explain.

Board of Trustee #2A: As a Board member, I like to go back to that problem with being unduly concerned with nuts and bolts issues that took us away from concentrating on some of our higher level goals and wishes. For us to spend a lot of our time with our budget and complying with school lunch program guidelines and the temperature of the food and all the various things that are necessary for a supply list, we need real time left over to brainstorm and really get into the meaty part of what we want to do as far as student achievement....

Board of Trustee #3A: I think it’s the means to an end. How do you get to the end and the means that we are trying and the means and restrictions that the Department of Education has put upon us, has made it difficult to achieve our goals, purely because of financial reasons.

Board of Trustee #4A: Based upon my perception as a board of trustee, our school does meet the expectation that were stated on our application. Primary this was accomplished through parental involvement and teacher support.

Board of Trustee #2B: ...I know that it’s going to have to be a baseline if they compare and that you need to test for two years and compare the scores and then see what we can do from there on... I think that this year they’re actually going to have to take last year’s scores and compare them and seeing where they’re going.

Board of Trustee #3B: I think we’re talking about test scores which is always a big thing in the city and statewide too... But I think we’re still looking at the same children that came through the X (non-charter) schools. It’s going to take a little more than a year or two to change these kids... I mean that the environment they come from, the kids are not always willing to come in and start learning in the public school system here...

Board of Trustee #4B;...What I see I can’t imagine the state having any higher expectations for an educational institution. These kids are working, their time on task is tremendous, and it’s a great place to learn... Maybe I’m just very proud of this school, but I really think if the state would come in at any moment, at any given time, they’d be totally satisfied.

Board of Trustee #2C: Because we are renting a facility that meets all state code, because we have a staff to share in addition to teachers who are hired specifically to teach in the charter school, I think it has been easier for us to meet the state expectations and less expensive and we haven’t had to cut corners and been able to attract very fine teachers. I think that since the people running it are the people who founded it, the principal of the charter school actually wrote the original document with input from a lot of other people, I think that has made it possible
for us to keep the goals in focus...

**Board of Trustee #3C:** There were definitely signs saying that the system was working. What’s encouraging to me about that is I think that the first year the normal learning that we had to go through, that’s a very positive sign, because I think we just dented where we wanted to go. I think as I was mentioning to you, the consultants were working on a curriculum, I think we’re just going to take off in the third year. The second year will be good, third year will be outstanding.

**Board of Trustee #4C:** I’m new as far as being on the board so to be familiar with the bylaws and such, I’m not as familiar as I probably should be at this time. But, from a parental point of view, they have I believe accomplished that.

**Question #4.** Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

**Board of Trustee #2A:** I guess I have a problem with improving student achievement, I know that is one of the goals the state wants us to show. For us as a kindergarten school, we have the children only one year. Improving is hard so you compare one against the other. You compare them when they enter and then when they leave...I would like to know are our charter students benefiting more from our program than the equivalent children in public school....

**Board of Trustee #3A:** As far as I can tell from the test scores from last year, our test scores did very well (sic).... I can see my own child and how much he has learned and achieved in a short period of time, from drawing inside the line to sorting, and counting and enjoying learning and in an environment conducive to learning. It definitely works...

**Board of Trustee #4A:** We are able to meet the students’ needs and their achievement in the expectations that we put upon the teachers to transfer to the students has been met. However, there are a lot of activities and manipulative activities that would coincide with the curriculum that we could participate in, however, because the government is still kind of fluffy about the charter school concept, we are not able to just leap in and do things.

**Board of Trustee #2B:** Skip this question.

**Board of Trustee #3B:** I think the children are achieving. There’s a tremendous amount of caring here. Which is true of a lot of teachers, but there’s caring here cause they want the program to succeed, and also because there are people that really want to help the kids... The constraints to me are facilities. They are not big enough. The facilities goes back to finances.... We don’t get 100% finances. People believe that the public schools are going to suffer from this. ....they’re
doing better because they’re keeping the 10% of kids that aren’t there. It’s a plus for them.

Board of Trustee #4B: ...I have come into the classrooms periodically over time, and I have seen major changes in just the management of the children. Every time I come in the school looks better... When I listen to the teachers talk about certain students they’re working with and they indicate the progress that they’ve made, it seems to me that the students are growing as we hoped they would. If there are any constraints against students achieving all that they could be or should be it would be again money, not having the resources to get materials they need.

Board of Trustee #2C: When the school was planned and the curriculum developed, I don’t think it ever occurred to the people who were doing it that it would appeal to the parents of special needs students, and our population reflects that interest. Actually, what might have looked like a difficult situation, has turned out to be a good one. It’s a good mix of students and if anything, this is a very caring student body...

Board of Trustee #3C: I think the progress is there. I think the constraints that could prevent things from happening really is simply fiscal constraints. I say that because I think it’s only money..

Board of Trustee #4C: This is probably a little far fetched, but I think the constraints would be the children coming from different towns in the community, which can’t be helped being a county wide school, they’re from all over...

Question #5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation, etc. need to be sustained and which need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Explain. Please note that the elements referred to those constraints in the N.J. Charter Statue, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

Board of Trustee #2A: For a charter school to be successful, they need community support... A charter school is on their own as far as getting community participation... Funding is a critical issue that definitely in need of some modification. We have found that some of our districts send their payments along in a timely manner, others are either for whatever reason, they do not send their payments. In the 1997/98 school year, there were payments that we never did get. It’s lost money...I know that in other states, the state portion of money comes directly from the state to the charter school, and that would be a wonderful in NJ’s law..... Again, as probably others have said, we have autonomy, we answer only to the state. However, we do answer to local authorities, not local school districts, but local authority as far as facilities go...A lot of our problems have been
complying with local codes... No one wants a facility that is not safe for a child, but to go back to the local planning board numerous times and be told a different set of information every time is not necessary to safely educate the children. One planning board will tell you to do this and the next town or next month another situation you’ll be told something different. There’s supposed to be uniform construction code, but it’s not always that way.

**Board of Trustee #3A:** I believe the funding guidelines is the thing that really needs to be modified in the charter. There is no room for error, no room for help, no room for enough money for start up costs, just not enough money...

**Board of Trustee #4A:** Mainly funding... the charter is granted, we’re ready to have enrollment, and we’re ready to put a deposit down, we find out then that we’re not getting the money for another five months. Or there needs to be some type of pot where there is an initial start up fund for the charter schools.

**Board of Trustee #2B:** I think autonomy is important because I think the whole idea behind the charter school was to take a unique idea and to see what could be done. If too many outside influences come in, then you’re not exactly autonomous anymore... Funding is a major issue because of cost. I know we’re struggling with that right now. The finance committee looking into different ways to raise money for what they need. Definitely that needs to continue. Community participation can almost go hand in hand with funding because if you get the members of the community to come in a see what you’re all about and what you’re doing, you never know who is coming in...

**Board of Trustee #3B:** I think the autonomy is great...Funding is a real stickler with me. We just had meetings on trying to get a new building and get funding. There are still a lot of people out there afraid of charter schools. They may dig into their pockets for some other “charity” or something else, they won’t do it for this because they’re afraid of them. Parents who live in the community are involved, but as far as the immediate community here or even in X city, I haven’t seen much of it...

**Board of Trustee #4B:** Two things that come to mind, the issue of autonomy is kind of interesting because we certainly want the ability to be in charge of our own curriculum and make our own decisions as we see they benefit our student population...But the charter schools are little and we need help from the other schools or lunch program or busing, the business of running the school. Not the art of teaching, but the mechanics of keeping the school running in the technical arena. In that area we could use modification. Funding absolutely... The amount of funds that our school is expected to operate on are inadequate and in my opinion, it sets the charter schools up for failure...

**Board of Trustee #2C:** All of the major charter elements, the need for funding, the need to have a great deal of autonomy and very active community participation,
especially parents, needs to be sustained...

Board of Trustee #3C: The one that definitely has to be sustained is parent participation. I think that’s so important. We’re now looking at bylaw changes to our current bylaws to assure us that we will always have a parent of the student actively in our school on our board... The one that has to be sustained or modified rather, is funding. Since somewhere in the latter part of our first year informed me we could be in financial difficulty... If the mix of students changed and we received students from districts who were paying us less per student, that could affect us financially... They (State) have created animosity between the sending schools and charter schools simply because they won’t direct the funding directly to us. Any time someone has to write a check to its competitor, it’s not going to make them very happy. That has to change...

Board of Trustee #4C: ...I feel there has been ample advertisements for community involvement as far as the charter school and letting people aware that it exists. They’ve had all kinds of promotional and open houses and things to let the people know they’re there, which have all been positive. As far as parent involvement, we are continually encouraged to participate and speak up and let them know what our thoughts are. I really feel that all of it should continue as it has been done in the past.

Question #6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public school in your community?

Board of Trustee #2A: One of the influences that I hope we have that I think we have seen is that the public schools seem to now recognize that if they are, in fact, not a monopoly, what services that people want that they are not providing. And I would hope that they would then be led to think about these things and think about how to give parents more choices and listen to the needs of parents more...I hope that it forces them to be a little more forthcoming in their reason they do what they do and if the only reason they do something is because that’s the way it’s done, is not necessarily a good enough reason...

Board of Trustee #3A: Of course, whenever there’s multiple educational institutions in a community, can create partnership and also can create competition. I think a little competition is excellent... It’s what is inside the school that counts, and that is where charter schools will prove time and again that they will exceed for all students, not just the smart ones...

Board of Trustee #4A: ...I would hope that the public educational system would start being accountable for the teaching... We’re making a difference, we’re making people pay attention, and that’s a good thing.
Board of Trustee #2B: I think this particular charter school with the communication focus could be a model for other public schools. I think that, well I’ve tried even with the communication training that I’ve had, and I know that some of my colleagues have even said, “how did you know to do that.” If there are enough people who know that it’s important and know that it’s working here, then it can also work someplace else.

Board of Trustee #3B: I hope they would have a big influence that we could work together. I can see that we could work together and the public schools would say, look at the class sizes and it’s going to make a difference… I think the Board of Education needs to give the charter school more cooperation…

Board of Trustee #4B: I hope that the charter schools and the public schools will be able to work together in the sense that if there is a student whose needs are not being met by the general public schools that perhaps they could direct the student to the charter school. There are all different types of learning styles out there, and the charter schools have the ability to work with students with certain needs or certain interests…

Board of Trustee #2C: We like to think that because we’re small and very personally involved in the program with the charter school that we have the opportunity to try out new programs, new ideas, new projects..

Board of Trustee #3C: I think it’s very simple. I think charter schools should be the motivator for public schools to look at themselves and say rather than the charter school as the enemy, is what can I learn from what they are doing and how do I make myself better. I think competition is a great, even in education. I think competition makes you keener and sharper. I think I would hope that this was used as an incentive for public schools to go out and say I will learn how to do it better and I will do it better, and I’ll beat the charter schools at their own games…

Board of Trustee #4C: …I think the other public schools are probably somewhat jealous at the amount of equipment that is there at School C.

Transcriptions from Parents

Question #1. Can New Jersey Charter Schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21)? Explain.

Parent #5A: In pupil learning, yes. I know that my own child has motor skill problems, and if he was in a 2 ½ hour program, he would not (sic). He can almost write his whole entire name now. He is doing very well and it is because he’s all
day... I like the individual learning plans because each child is different...

Parent #6A: It sounds to me like everything that you have said is what the charter school is all about. As far as my son being here, I like it because it is a smaller class. He does much better than being thrown in with a bigger class of kids.

Parent #7A: Yes. I think they’ve done what they said they were going to do. She’s my only child, I have no other children in the public kindergarten, so I can’t compare in that sense.

Parent #5B: One that I feel the most qualified to comment on is the second one: increase for students and parents the educational choices available... When I had children I realized that I was not going to send them to the public schools. The only choice that I had was to send them to a parochial school. That really wasn’t my preference since we are not of the Catholic persuasion. So, it was a trade off... When the charter school became available, that gave us another option where we could have our children learn.

Parent #6B(two parents): ... I don’t know what they’re doing here. It seems to me that the charter schools have a better method or maybe if it’s the one on one or the fact that the class is small that he is getting the special attention that the public schools or the private school wasn’t giving him...

Parent #7B: Yes, I think that the charter schools can accomplish what they were designed to achieve in terms of having a more selective learning environment, in terms of encouraging the use of different and innovative learning methods because the class sizes are smaller. The school itself is smaller. The administration itself is smaller. The fact that each teacher is allowed to operate somewhat independently allows her to change her methodology as may be needed in a particular class...

Question #2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

Parent #5C: Yes...

Parent #6C: Yes, I do. The classes are much smaller. The kids are able to be broken up into different levels of math or science or computers. The help is there after schools where that’s not always available in other school systems.

Parent #7C: I really believe that the format of the charter school allows for greater flexibility on both the teachers part and parent involvement...
Parent #5A: They can be achieved as long as the state would let us achieve the goals... The problem with charter schools is people don’t understand the charter schools. The people who are fighting against charter schools are people who want things the way they always were and always have been and they don’t want any change...

Parent #6A: He is doing really well, I’m very happy with his improvement since the beginning of September... He’s come a long way. I’m happy with him in the program, extremely happy. He’s learning.

Parent #7A: Yes. They are very conscientious with what they had set out to do...

Parent #5B: The subject skipped this question, having children here only since September.

Parent #6B(two parents): This is great because my kindergarten kid, my little one, has a problem pronouncing letters. We laugh about it at home. He’s been getting tutored in the afternoon...

Parent #7B: Under the subheading of the academic educational goals, the expected achievements at this charter school are realistic... Under the subheading non academic educational goals and objectives, where it states all learners, including staff members, will demonstrate an ever increasing ability to communicate with understanding by listening, examining, exploring, clarifying, modifying and evaluating both the verbal and nonverbal communications of themselves and others, it’s quite a task. It’s a tremendous goal to set for oneself and for one school. But it’s a goal that is good to work toward...

Parent #5C: ...I think the staff at the charter school has set high goals, but achievable goals. I see the students achieving those goals.

Parent #6C: ...As far as the academics, yes, they can definitely achieve that. It’s there, the teachers are willing to teach them, they’re willing to give them extra help...

Parent #7C: I had a child there last year, and I have two children there this year. I think the curriculum is extremely challenging, but I think your child rises to the expectations of the teachers...

Question #3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration and the board of trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the
Parent #5A: The school is successful because of the parent involvement. The school keeps going because the parents care about the school. The school itself is fine, school is a good school, my son has learned a lot since he's been here. As an only child, he doesn't have anyone to play with at home and when he comes here, he's with other children, and teaching social skills the way they do is so much better.

Parent #6A: ...For my son, I thought that would be a better choice, and I ended up making the right choice. He had problems prior to coming to the charter school with bigger groups. He has done remarkably well. I've been thoroughly happy with the program and my son being in the school.

Parent #7A: I believe they can. Everyone I've seen has given 150% to meet the goals.

Parent #5B: ...one of the things that I like about this particular school is the size. I like it because I think it gives the teacher more opportunity to build a relationship with the children. They have more attention. I compare that to how my daughter learned in kindergarten. I think that my son is learning more in a short amount of time than my daughter learned in the parochial school.

Parent #6B(two parents): Yes, I believe it could. Especially that the teachers don't have the overload of 25 students in a class, it's one on one. They have more of a chance to study the student as individuals, to find out what the problems are so they could help him. With the small classrooms, they can achieve the goals. I think the goal will be met because they have that one on one or that five on one or that ten on one compared to 15 and 20 on one.

Parent #7B: My child is a special child, and I expected implementing her development and academic skills because of the more intimate setting of the classroom and learning environment. I have not been disappointed...Some of them will be able to achieve some of these goals. Some of the will be able to achieve almost maybe all of these goals. I think that this is more realistic to say that we would expect the learner to begin to develop self management skills...As for developing workplace readiness skills,...they can begin to develop those skills which would include how to research material, how to look up things, how to follow instructions.

Parent #5C: Based on my expectation as a parent, my son is learning disabled. My son is reaching very high goals...He's not being told he can't do it, he's being told you can do it, you put our head to it and you can do it. He's becoming very self assured. I think it's very good for his self esteem.

Parent #6C: Yes, I do believe they're doing better... The ability is there for them
to learn, because it's there to be taught where in other school systems, it's not.

**Parent # 7C**: I think with the curriculum being so challenging, it involves a lot of extra work on both the child's part and the parent's part. I think the teachers are willing to help out whenever necessary, and I think the extra involvement really helps you to learn what's going on in your child's schools and become involved with your child more and I think they're learning a real lot. I don't think the expectations are unrealistic at all. I think a child will rise to the expectations we put before them.

**Question #4**: Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

**Parent #5A**: I can say for myself as a parent it's improving his achievement much more than it would be in a half day school definitely. The constraints are outside people. The only constraints the charter school has are outside forces that either don't understand or are worried about money and not children it's too much about money and not about education...

**Parent #6A**: The financial problems are that the schools don't want the charter schools to have the money and, therefore, they don't have the different supplies needed for the children to be able to accomplish certain goals. I think they are doing a remarkable job. I wish they could get the money they should get from the township.

**Parent #7A**: I believe she is achieving a lot. She seems to be learning which is a clear plan, what she is learning, what the format is. She was in Head Start last year actually, and they had no where near the same kind of comprehensive guidelines to what they were doing.

**Parent #5B**: I do believe that the charter schools are able to improve student achievement because of the class size. I also believe the teachers need to have more concern in making sure the students achieve. Teachers are always here at all the functions. Most of the teachers are also here on Saturdays. That demonstrates to me the level of commitment, because of that desire to make sure that the school accomplishes its goals, that certainly gives ownership to the teachers.

**Parent #5B(two parents)**: If they keep growing, more parents are going to say why go pay for education when you could give him a better education in a charter school. We were once those parents who thought by paying for Catholic school it would give my son a better education. No. Charter schools gives them a better education.

**Parent #7B**: I think that lack of parent participation and lack of open communication with the educators would be the two things that would constraint
my child from blossoming at the charter school.

**Parent # 5C:** I see this particular charter school as being very successful. It has very good academics mixed in with the technology portion which enhances the academics.

**Parent # 6C:** not important response – deleted

**Parent # 7C:** I think the public school environment the children have come from, the district schools at least in my case, have been non supportive of charter schools... But what a charter school offers is hard to pass up.

Question #5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation, etc, need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Explain. Please note that the elements referred to those constraints in the N.J. Charter Act, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

**Parent #5A:** Maybe when we bring parents into the charter school, other parents let them know that it is a community involvement school, it is a parent run school... I've never heard of anyone having a choice in what happened in their school before a charter school came along... I feel good about this school because I went there I spackled, I painted, I put down border, I did all that for my child... We have a lot of good parents who have helped this school from their involvement.

**Parent #6A:** I don't really know to be honest with you. I think everything is doing ok.

**Parent #5A:** I wouldn't change anything. They only sad part is that a lot of the parents say they are going to be involved and they aren't. Other than that, I think everything is great.

**Parent #6B:** I think that there is a number of elements that are essential in order to assure the success of charter schools. I think the commitment of the director and teachers are basic elements to assure success of charter schools. Funding and community participation. I think all of those characteristics are important. If they had funding, the could do a lot more. Facilities cost a great deal of money...

**Parent #6B(two parents):** To make a charter school more successful in the future, it's hard to say. The charter school is an infant child compared to public schools and Catholic schools. We need more parents, volunteers... You need parents, you need teachers, you need assistance and most important, you need funding. Without those factors, charters schools will fail. Or community assistance. The most
beautiful thing about this school is that they do not have to go by what the public school system says. They (charter schools) have their own members, their own charter, their own bill of rights, their own tradition.

**Parent #7B:** The charter schools should not be more autonomous than a regular public schools. The charter itself leaves a certain amount of autonomy to the charter school anyway, because they can come up with innovative educational methodology... As far as community involvement, the way it is now it seems to be okay. We could always have a little more... ...yes. We do need additional funding in the charter schools, especially in the area of facilities... Increasing funding can maintain such a facility. It keeps us comfortable and the learning environment is more conducive to learning.

**Parent #5C:** ...The parents who are sending their children to this particular charter school in district C, they want their children there and are very much involved in what is going on. They are very pleased and involved. They see a change. I have spoken to several parents myself, and they definitely see a change in their children when they go to the charter school, because more is expected of them. They're expected to be a little more responsible, they're expected to achieve higher goals, and the students are responding to that expectation...

**Parent #6C:** ...The main thing for our school would be more parent participation.

**Parent #7C:** I think our charter school in particular is a huge success already. I think the facility we are lucky enough to be in School C is beautiful. They're extremely enthusiastic about having the charter school there...

**Question #6.** What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public school in your community?

**Parent #5A:** I would hope that it would enlighten(sic). These are children that need to learn. This is not dollars and cents. This should be about five and six year old children who need to learn how to write their names and numbers and learn colors and shapes. I feel like my son has a big dollar sign on his forehead because he came here.

**Parent #6A:** I think one of the really big things the charter school can show the public schools starting right off from kindergarten is that the parent/teacher communication to me is so important... I know on a day to day basis what he is doing. His teacher has a communication folder which I think is excellent. I send things to her, she sends things to me. Not one day since he's been there has anything been missed...
Parent #7A: I would hope they would learn from each other. I hope the public schools can learn from the charter schools. The public needs to know what the charter school is about.

Parent #5B: My hope for the charter schools is that it somehow improves the level of education being offered by the traditional public schools. I think to a certain extent the charter schools are a competition. I think charter schools establish a standard that I hope the public school decide that they would like to see in their school.

Parent #6B(two parents): We feel that the charter school could influence the public schools especially with one on one that the teacher has with a child. If the kid has a problem in a charter school, the teacher will call the parent and tell you your child’s needs...They have communication... They see communication with the parent and for the teachers to learn who we are, how our child is being raised. Here, they know what I do, they know my wife, here they know what kind of situation we’re in, and the public school system you are just a number, and it’s not hands on. Over here, I go to the school when my son has a problem. They say, this is what you need..

Parent #7B: I guess when my daughter graduates from here and enters the public school system, I would like her to have self confidence when faced with a test or assignment. I would like her to have research readiness skills knowing that whatever question is asked of her, she does not know the answer, she can always find out...

Parent #5C: I would hope that the charter school could influence the regular schools to the point where maybe they can expect more out of their students. I think if they were to set higher goals, they would find that the students would reach those goals rather than telling students they can’t do it.

Parent #6C: Mainly the tech end, the computer end, because that is the way of the future.

Parent #7C: I think one of the things the charter school stresses is the writing curriculum, and I think that is lacking in the public schools.

Transcriptions from Teachers

Question #1. Can New Jersey Charter Schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21)? Explain.
Teacher #8A: I feel that the charter schools, specifically, the charter school that we have created, are able to do many of the same things that we were established for. The specific way innovative learning methods, accountability and I think all that we are able to accomplish in the short amount of time of being open. As far as educational improvement as a whole, I think that there are some things that are going to take time in any charter school.

Teacher #9A: ...Facility funding does interfere with a lot of things we are trying to accomplish as a building and learning for the children in our classroom. Learning methods, because of lack of funding, we don’t have as much outside workshops coming in to further our education in the school...

Teacher #10A: I think that it truly depends on the school. I know in our school, our whole situation deals with our funding, and the funding limits the choices made by parents and the teachers ... I think that they offer a lot and it seems really good, but in reality, if you don’t have the funding to back you up then it doesn’t hold water.

Teacher #8B: With respect to the line in the law offering different and innovative learning methods, I do believe that, at least in our school is doing that. By being here I’ve learned a different approach to teaching phonics which I hadn’t at my other school. We use Orton Gillingham here and I’ve never used that before... Our school is based on communication models, so we’re supposed to promote communication and by doing that it lends itself to another entity. I stop and listen more to the kids.

Teacher #9B: I think that School B can offer many of these things that the state has set out for us to do. For example, when it refers to parents choice, we offered applications to the whole city and we worked very hard to make sure that all areas of the city were able to receive... As far as the use of different and innovative learning methods, we try to work with educating the whole child. We don’t focus on any one specific kind of learning modality. We do phonics, we do whole language and we try and tailor the education to the individual child, and because our classes are small, we feel we are able to do that. I’ve had many professional opportunities since I’ve come here. Last year I attended at least ten workshops that I wouldn’t have known about if I were in the district...

Teacher #10B: I do believe that charter schools can accomplish what they set out according to the law. I feel that charter schools are more accountable for test scores, because in a charter school if your school does not produce, you go on probation then lose your charter.

Teacher #8C: I do think that the charter schools can achieve those guidelines as far as offering new opportunities for teachers, as far as offering a different type of public education...
Teacher #9C: ...I see the charter schools as something similar to an experimental school where the state has allowed us certain lee way as not having a union would be an example, to try to create more collaborative relationships between administrations, teachers, and parents... I think we have the potential to really be a testing ground for innovative education, and I’m hoping that’s why the charter was written that way. We need to find ways to have innovative education. We need to find ways to create more collaborative discussion between teachers, parents, administrators and students...

Teacher 10C: Yes, I believe that the charter school can accomplish that... I believe that it opens a lot of opportunities for teachers to their professionalism and try new things...

Question #2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

Teacher #9A: Many of the goals were very easily achieved, and therefore, I think were realistic: the school day, kindergarten program, the limiting class size, individualized instruction with having relatively small classrooms is easier to individualize... As far as parent training and teacher accountability: I think that is probably an area that has to be looked at also. I think they’re very achievable at this point.

Teacher #9A: Basically, from last year to this year it is realistic (goals). Our before and after school program is one of our goals. Maximize student learning by limiting class size: ...individualized instruction for each child: I think we do achieve that, sometimes it is difficult... Mastery of kindergarten levels. Yes, we definitely do the kindergarten curriculum and the children are ready to go out into the other schools and get into the flow of the other schools if not on a higher level. 85% of all students achieve benchmark standards. ...85% of parents attend curriculum seminars: they do get a turn out at the seminars. Seminars definitely are helpful, but there are a lot more working parents this year, and I think that is causing a problem with parent involvement... Individualized learning plans for each student. One child might need a little more help with letter recognition and other child, her goals might be to be able to read by the end of the year. Master teacher involvement: we have a wonderful master teacher but because of a lack of funding, she is not able to come into our classrooms and give mentor support on a daily basis. She is actually being moved in so many different directions...

Teacher #10A: I would say the goals in general are met but specifically I think some of the goals set are unrealistic as in goal number 5 where the objective that 85% of all students will achieve benchmark standards... I think that is all great and
fine, but if you have a really low achieving class and you work hard and your children are not up to that 85% level, I don’t think you should suffer and not get a raise. I also thought that goal number 3, the goals set for the master teacher, are also unrealistic. She has no time to come and intervene in the classroom. She is doing more administrative work. The job of the master teacher should be more than one person...

**Teacher #8B:** With respect to the goal 2, “learners will demonstrate self management skills and develop career planning and workplace readiness skills”, that’s relevant at least for me and my classroom. Just this week, we’ve been preparing for mid terms and teaching study skills. If they don’t develop those now and we’re teaching them how to, then how can they get workplace readiness skills, their skills of getting ready for work. It teaches them effective responsibility for themselves. I try and help them manage their time and I ask them what exactly they do at home and what can they do here to make the most of their time.

**Teacher #9B:** Our first school year when the charter was written got the school up and operational and last year was definitely a learning year. We tried very hard to accomplish all of the goals and objectives we had set out to do...

**Teacher #10B:** I do feel that our goal is realistic, especially our communication goals. Our philosophy is to try to work on our communication with our students. It’s in their feeling relaxed and comfortable that helps provide them a safe learning... The technology is the wave of the future. We are working toward that now by trying to be connected to the Internet and hopefully we’ll get a new computer room downstairs and that will also help us. We do readiness skills to our tutoring program which has been a great success for our school. We’re focusing on that...

**Teacher #8C:** ...Last year on the EWT, the scores were very high. We had a small group. We had a large number of exceptionally bright students. This year we’re a little bit bigger, a little more mixed as far as where are levels are for our students. The preparation we’re doing for the GEPA, for the 8th grade as well as the 7th grade to prepare them for the CTBS and the GEPA for next year, we’re doing the best we can. We’re waiting until we see what happens...

**Teacher #9C:** ...But for the most part, I think our students are really excelling in terms of the technology that they’re beginning to incorporate into their everyday work. I know students across the board are becoming more computer literate... In terms of innovative or experimental teaching, however you want to phrase it, I think we’ve come a long way.

We have this year a humanities based course that’s integrated in social studies...

**Teacher #10C:** I believe that all of the goals are achievable...
Question #3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration and the board of trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the department of education? (NJ Charter School Program Act - line 5 to 54) Explain

Teacher #8A: As far as the success compared to the expectation of the Department of Education or other areas, I would have to say I really am not that involved in the policies.

Teacher #9A: As in how closely we are following what the state wants from us, I think we follow it, but it comes back to the facility funding problem we have. The facility and funding is the biggest problem. It all ties together. If we had the funding, we'd have a better facility. That is the hardest to attain all of our goals to 100%. We manage, the children are learning, and they are growing, but I think it's difficult.

Teacher #10A: I think that the level of success has been achieved because we had no children retained. And based upon the 85% or more if the teacher doesn't get the raise, everyone here received a raise last year. I feel that everyone was at the 85% mastery level or above.

Teacher #8B: Not until I looked at some of these goals did I realize that our expectations are the same as the department's expectations. We do have a Spanish program now that we didn't have last year. As far as assessing the kids' progress, they have to take the same tests that the other public schools have to take. We're testing the 4th grade for ESPA.

Teacher #9B: Last year we were working with students who had come from other places so I feel the students that did the best academically were the kindergartners because they came in fresh... This year we developed baseline testing in kindergarten, first and second grades as opposed to just letting them take the test starting in second grade because we needed to see the achievement for ourselves based on what we've been doing. We are expecting this year that scores will go up because we have worked with them for a year so they know our routines better and we've been working on a lot of test preparation as far as memory and being able to learn the testing skills, not teaching to the test, but teaching the kinds of skills that are necessary for taking tests.

Teacher #10B: ...They way we maintain goals, it is through our tutoring program... We have about 40 of our students coming to tutoring. We work one on one with children. We're also doing it for ourselves and students. One of the main things we focus on is the achievement of the schools and we're focusing on trying
to make our kindergartens read at the end of kindergarten, and we did that last year.

Teacher #8C: ...From what I know from last year, I think a lot of the students feel as though they were successful. I think a lot of the parents feel their children were successful here. ... We've doubled in size this year, so we've had a great turnout as far as enrollment, we have a waiting list for students waiting to come in. I think as far as an outside view from the parents and faculty, I think everyone would agree overall we're doing fairly well.

Teacher #9C: ...I definitely think, and I, in general, am used to teaching higher end academic students, and I think definitely the kids here last year and this year are getting a high academic education. And again, I'm only going to speak for my course. I have a high school textbook for the 7th grade, and it's difficult for them. But they're achieving with it. Their writing from the beginning of the year has improved beyond belief, but we have lots of really motivated students ...

Teacher #10C: It's difficult for me to answer, but I believe they're on their way to attaining the expectations.

Question #4. Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

Teacher #8A: I feel that the curriculum and the resources that we have for student achievement are available. Being a full day kindergarten and having all these resources, I definitely feel that we are going to attain more than mastery level achievement, especially in the reading area. The constraint would focus right now on any kind of support services that we could use, children that use special services or any specially trained assistance that we could use in the classroom.

Teacher #9A: Yes, I feel our charter school is improving student achievement. We use Math Your Way for math. The children are not sitting with dittos and doing math lessons, they're working in centers, working in groups. As a teacher I love teaching here because I don't have to follow chapter 2 in a textbook. So I get to be creative, and working with the other teachers, we get to do a lot of creative, hands-on things which I love...

Teacher #10A: I think that it is improving student achievement because we offer such a wide range of different opportunities for children to learn. If we want to purchase educational resources, we don't have the funding. That's the only part that I can see that prevents achievement.

Teacher #8B: I believe our school is improving its student achievement. I see when the kids get that twinkle in their eye that they get it. They know how to
figure out what the word looks like and how to spell a word. Are there any
constraints that prevent that achievement? Off the top of my head, I could think of
maybe computers. If we had the computer set up in our lab we would be in a
better situation.

Teacher #9B: I believe our school is improving student achievement to the extent
it can but only because we've been looking to do that. We know that the state will
be looking at our test scores. We developed a tutoring program which began last
year and it ran from October until the end of May and we continued it again this
year. The constraints that would have prevented their achievement was the fact
that we are a brand new school and the kids had to get to know each other and us
and that was very difficult. Last year, all the teachers were playing dual roles. We
were teaching and we were administrating. I feel that because it was a new year
last year that we did a lot with the students as far as trying to bring in a well
rounded education but it was very stressful. This year I feel more relaxed with the
education. We're able to concentrate more on teaching and we're looking to make
sure the children are able to do well and feel comfortable.

Teacher #10B: We are working toward improving all student achievement.
Unfortunately, with the charter school you get students from all over the city, so
most of our students with the exception of our kindergarten class, are still learning
how to work together. So the first thing we have to do and what we spent last year
doing is identifying the students' weaknesses as a whole through testing, through
tutoring, through classes. And what we're starting to do this year is try to work on
each child's struggles, whether it's test taking, whether it's comprehension or
whatever their struggle may be. What we're trying to do to help ourselves is we're
giving the MATs we gave them in the fall to all the new students so that would
give us some kind of understanding on the new students.

Teacher #8C: I think as far as the constraints that would prevent reaching the
fullest achievement is again the acceptance of those lower level students. We've
had students come into our program that have been self contained since first or
second grade, and all of a sudden, they're being mainstreamed into a mainstream
program...

Teacher #9C: I think the biggest thing that's gotten in our way of achieving what
we need to do is the fact that people are still looking at the charter school as
traditional education... Our principal is hugely supportive in terms of being
innovative and trying new things...

Teacher #10C: I absolutely believe that the charter schools are improving
achievement. I believe that the students are required to achieve a higher level of
critical thinking skills... I think it's preparing them more for real world
experiences.
Question #5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation, etc, need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Explain.

Please note that the elements referred to those constraints in the N.J. Charter Act, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

Teacher #8A: I feel that the autonomy that we have in the charter school is an asset.... The funding in our particular circumstance I think is something that could be looked at. Although, I have come from a background where I have used very little for a long time .... but there obviously is a basic need for money in education. The big thing right now that I think is going to make or break the charter schools is community participation. I think that if the community in special areas that have businesses available, I think that we can make well use of those resources.

Teacher #9A: Basically, we do have community participation. We do get outside community help, and the parents do get involved. We have a very strong PTA which is great. The whole thing with funding: last year we were running on a half day funding for a full day program and this year we are running on a half day funding for a full day program but we have actually more complications. That is very stressful and it does cause a problem for our school to be totally successful....

Teacher #10A: Definitely, the funding needs to be modified in our situation. Everything we do falls back on the funding, every place we go, every activity we do. I think funding definitely needs to be modified. The community participation and the parental participation: I think that parents go into it with the idea that they’re going to come in and participate and the community says that they are too, but they’re not held responsible

Teacher #8B: Definitely our funding needs to be the same. Without our funding we wouldn’t be here. Working on grants and getting more money and making sure that we keep our charter. We are always working on it. It’s not something that we can let rest. Community participation would be great if all the parents participated. If we had an increase in parent participation, it would be wonderful.

Teacher #9B: It would be wonderful if we could have more money and if the state would allow us to use some of the funding to purchase a building or to renovate a building. Community participation is very difficult because we’re such a small place and pretty much an unknown entity. It’s very difficult to get the community involved...The parents have been happy. Funding is a big thing. We would have had the computers last year if we had more money. We would have had to build bigger buildings if we had more money. There’s always a what if. We began as teachers and we learn to be administrators and we’re still learning.
Teacher #10R: For me the main thing which I'm learning especially this year, would be the funding, which is also community participation. That is a main struggle for the charter school because everyone is fighting for the funding... That's the main constraint. Because you are not allowed to use any of the money that you received from the state and local for a building so any funding that you get, you have to raise yourself...

Teacher #8C: ... I have to believe that the autonomy as far as working together, we work very closely with our administration. They walk in and out of our classroom to be a part of projects, become a part of our class discussion, almost on a daily basis. In the other programs I've worked in, I've never encountered it. If an administrator walks in, he comes announced or he comes with a pad and paper... We do in-class support for one another, where I might be doing in-class support for a humanities class, whereas I teach math. It gives me a more round about view of what the students are doing. I think all of that is unique to what a charter school is. It helps the students understand a little bit more about how to put everything together.

Teacher #9C: The funding has to be changed. As it stands now, putting the sending districts in the middle man position is only going to perpetuate the idea that charter schools are bad... I see that frustration but I think that frustration is the public schools against the charter schools is going to keep the charter school from being able to accomplish any goals...

Teacher #10C: I think that everything that is listed on the paper, autonomy, funding, community participation, as well as the parent participation, especially the board members, all need to be kept... Community participation, I think we need to add more of. I think that comes with time though as a matter of having the community realize exactly what our needs are what we need from them... We're looking at actually having the students go out to the community more often. Once a month we do community outreach.

Question #6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public school in your community?

Teacher #8A: I hope that this charter school as well as any other charter school works with the community and I hope the community works with them. I think that obviously with me taking the plunge into the charter school, I believe strongly that we should offer a variety of options to people to educate their children... I hope that it is a positive competition and not a negative. I really feel that we could learn a lot from each other...

Teacher #9A: I think our charter school and other charter schools form a sense of competition for the public schools and I really think a lot of schools, not
necessarily the public school in this district, are a little lax maybe and feeling very comfortable and not trying to improve their methods. If parents have a choice where to send their child and chose where their money is going, it does cause competition and for the benefit of the children... I think this district here doesn't want us because they are looking at the dollars and not at the children...

**Teacher #10A:** I would hope that we would set higher standards that the community would follow. I would hope that the public school would see the need for full-day kindergarten and be embarrassed because they’re not providing that for so many students in their community... We’ve had so many kids go on from last year who are high achievers and achieving much more than the half-day public schools...

**Teacher #8B:** I would hope that we would set up a relationship with the public school now and show that we’re not seen as THE charter school or we’re taking money away from their school. It should be a friendlier relationship and something where we can foster...

**Teacher #9B:** I would hope that they would see us as a friend extending a hand of friendship. I know that X City is such a large district and there are so many teachers there that are so jaded and they saw us as a huge threat...

**Teacher #10B:** I hope that our charter school, the effect that it has in the public schools are the class sizes. Especially in your younger grades, class sizes I think for me is the main influence I would like to see be modified drastically in the public schools.

**Teacher #8C:** ...I would also hope that just as far as the smaller classroom settings, the different autonomy the teachers have, and I think part of that is because of the relationship with the administration. They trust us to do our job without always constantly looking over our shoulder and saying, do you have this done, are you doing this. It gives the kids a little bit more of a feeling of freedom also...

**Teacher #9C:** My whole push with the charter school and what I have seen lacking in the public schools is the whole idea of consensus building... The mandate of charter school is to increase communication between all those groups, so the next logical step is to say, okay let’s together build something.

**Teacher #10C:** I think community influence alleviates a lot of what we do. Students are part of the community and would want to make them feel that they’re responsible for the actions as part of the community and try to teach them respect for each other and that they all are part and united... I don’t think that happens in public schools.
Appendix B

Letter of Introduction
Dear,

As per my phone conversation with you last night, I am seeking your Board of Trustees’ approval to perform a case study on three charter schools, and in particular, Charter School as part of my completion of my doctorate studies from Seton Hall University.

My intentions are to relate the charter school law (policy) to existing charter schools (practice). I hope to include your school in my study. This study would be under the guidance of my mentor, Dr. Mel Shay, Assistant Dean in the Department of Education and must be approved by Seton Hall’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Any and all questions would be submitted before a visitation, letters of confidentiality and permission must be granted before I would schedule any interviews. My complete dissertation will be given to your school for your files. All matters will be approached with strict confidentiality.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; however, I would appreciate the chance to study your school as one innovative educational system in New Jersey. I will be calling you in a few days to clarify any questions that you may have regarding this study. I am pleased that you are considering granting me approval to interview your staff, parents and board of trustees.

Any questions please call me at my home (732) 747-8267 and/or work (732) 323-9600 for any additional questions you may have.

Many thanks for your cooperation

Sincerely,

Frances R. Scudese
Appendix C

Questions in the Study
1. Can New Jersey Charter Schools actually accomplish what they were designed to achieve according to the guidelines established in the charter law (NJ Charter School Program Act - lines 8 to 21)? Explain.

2. Do the goals and expected achievements that were stated in your application continue to be realistic now that you are in your second year of operation? Explain.

3. Based upon the perception of the parents, staff, administration and the board of trustees, how closely did the level of achievement (success) attained in your school compare to the expectations stated in your application as approved by the department of education? (NJ Charter School Program Act – line 5 to 54) Explain

4. Is your charter school improving student achievement to the extent intended? Explain. What constraints prevented your achievement?

5. Which charter elements, for example autonomy, funding, community participation, etc, need to be modified for a charter school to be successful? Explain. Please note that the elements referred to those constraints in the N.J. Charter Act, the charter application and the charter guidelines.

6. What influence would you hope the charter school would have on the public school in your community?
PREGUNTAS SOBRE ESCULAS DE CHARTER EN NEW JERSEY


2. Pueden los objectos y esperanzas, como estan escritos en la aplicacion, de las escuela de Charter, alinearse con logros realísticas ahora que estn en el segundo año de operacion? Explique.

3. Usando el percepcion de los padres, empleados, adminstration y los fideicomisarios, como de efectivo es el nivel de exito en la aplicacion aprovado por el Deparatamento de Education? (NJ Charter Esculas Ley- lineas 5 a 54). Explique.

4. Estan las escuelas de Charter mejorando los logros de los estudiantes. Explique. Que obstaculos previnieron sus logros?

5. Que areas de el Charter, por ejemplo autonomia, patrocinamiento, participacion de la comunidad, etc. necesitan continuar or deben de cambiar para que las escuelas de Charter prosperan? Explique.

6. Que efecto esperas que las escuelas de Charter tengan sobre la sistema de educaion publica?
Appendix D

Demographic Form
NEW JERSEY CHARTER SCHOOLS IN OPERATION

FROM

POLICY TO PRACTICE

TO BE COMPLETED BY SUBJECT:

DATE OF SESSION: ____________________________

TIME OF SESSION ____________________________

SUBJECT INTERVIEWED: PLEASE CIRCLE APPROPRIATE LABEL

BOARD OF TRUSTEE: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
PARENT: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
TEACHER: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
ADMINISTRATOR: 1 2 3
SCHOOL: A B C

DEGREE ______________________________ (OPTIONAL)

TOTAL YEARS IN EDUCATION (PARENTS WOULD NOT BE ASKED TO COMPLETE THIS PART)
YEARS IN EDUCATION: __________________
Appendix E

Permission Letter from Subject
FRANCES R. SCUDESE  
460 MARL ROAD 
COLTS NECK, NJ 07722

Fall, 1998

Dear Colleague,

Presently, I am completing my doctoral study at Seton Hall University and working towards an Ed.D degree in administration and supervision.

I am requesting your participation in a doctoral dissertation research project. The purpose of the research is to analyze the relationship between the charter school law and charter schools in New Jersey. The results will hopefully provide important information to researchers regarding this innovative non-traditional public education.

You will be asked to participate in a individual session with six (6) questions that you will receive ahead of time. This process should take no more than twenty (20) to thirty (30) minutes. Your participation is voluntary and all responses are completely confidential and anonymous. The dissertation will be given to the schools when the research is completed. If at any time during the session, you feel uncomfortable, you may withdraw without prejudice. If you have any questions, please contact me.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that this project will adequately safeguard your privacy, welfare and rights.

For your participation in this project, please sign the waiver form below and return it to the school by December 23, 1998.

Thanking you for your cooperation with this project.

Sincerely,

Frances R. Scudese

+----------------------------------------+
I have read the above material and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the study and understand that at any time I may withdraw without prejudice.

Signature of Participant             Date
Appendix F

Copy of Charter School Program Act
I AN ACT establishing a charter school program and supplementing
Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the
State of New Jersey:
1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Charter
School Program Act of 1995."
2. The Legislature finds and declares that the establishment of
charter schools as part of this State’s program of public
education can assist in promoting comprehensive educational
reform by providing a mechanism for the implementation of a
variety of educational approaches which may not be available in
the traditional public school classroom. Specifically, charter
schools offer the potential to improve pupil learning; increase for
students and parents the educational choices available when
selecting the learning environment which they feel may be the
most appropriate; encourage the use of different and innovative
learning methods; establish a new form of accountability for
schools; require the measurement of learning outcomes; make the
school the unit for educational improvement; and establish new
professional opportunities for teachers.
3. The Legislature further finds that the establishment of a
charter school program is in the best interests of the students of
this State and it is therefore the public policy of the State to
encourage and facilitate the development of charter schools.

a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a charter
school program which shall provide for the approval and granting
of charters to charter schools pursuant to the provisions of this
act. A charter school shall be a public school operated under a
charter granted by the commissioner, which is operated
independently of a local board of education and is managed by a
board of trustees. The board of trustees, upon receiving a
charter from the commissioner, shall be deemed to be public
agents authorized by the State Board of Education to supervise
and control the charter school.

b. The program shall authorize the establishment of not more
than 135 charter schools during the 48 months following the
effective date of this act. A minimum of three charter schools
shall be allocated to each county. The commissioner shall
CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM ACT
OF 1995

Title 5A.
Chapter 38A.(New)
Charter Schools
§51-18 -
C.18A.36A-1 to
18A:36A-18

SCS for A592 [ACS]

actively encourage the establishment of charter schools in urban
school districts with the participation of institutions of higher
education.
4. a. A charter school may be established by teaching staff
members, parents with children attending the schools of the
district, or a combination of teaching staff members and
parents. A charter school may also be established by an
institution of higher education or a private entity located within
the State in conjunction with teaching staff members and parents
of children attending the schools of the district. If the charter
school is established by a private entity, representatives of the
private entity shall not constitute a majority of the trustees of
the school, and the charter shall specify the extent to which the
private entity shall be involved in the operation of the school.
The name of the charter school shall not include the name or
identification of the private entity, and the private entity shall
not realize a net profit from its operation of a charter school. A
private or parochial school shall not be eligible for charter school
status.

b. A currently existing public school is eligible to become a
charter school if the following criteria are met:
(1) At least 51% of the teaching staff in the school shall have
signed a petition in support of the school becoming a charter
school; and
(2) At least 51% of the parents or guardians of pupils attending
that public school shall have signed a petition in support of the
school becoming a charter school.

c. An application to establish a charter school shall be
submitted to the commissioner and the local board of education
or State superintendent, in the case of a State-operated school
district, in the school year preceding the school year in which the
charter school will be established. The board of education or
State superintendent shall review the application and forward a
recommendation to the commissioner within 60 days of receipt of
the application. The commissioner shall have final authority to
grant or reject a charter application.

d. The local board of education or a charter school applicant
may appeal the decision of the commissioner to the State Board
of Education. The state board shall render a decision within 30
days of the date of the receipt of the appeal. If the state board
does not render a decision within 30 days, the decision of the
commissioner shall be deemed final.
e. A charter school established during the 48 months following
the effective date of this act, other than a currently existing
public school which becomes a charter school pursuant to the
provisions of subsection b. of section 4 of this act, shall not have
an enrollment in excess of 500 students or greater than 25% of
the student body of the school district in which the charter school
is established, whichever is less.

5. The application for a charter school shall include the
following information:
a. The identification of the charter applicant;
b. The name of the proposed charter school;
c. The proposed governance structure of the charter school

including a list of the proposed members of the board of trustees of the charter
school or a description of the qualifications and method for the appointment or
election of members or the board of trustees;
d. The educational goals of the charter school, the curriculum to be offered,
and the methods of assessing whether students are meeting educational goals.
Charter school students shall be required to meet the same testing and academic
performance standards as established by law and regulation for public school
students. Charter school students shall also meet any additional assessment
indicators which are included within the charter approved by the commissioner;
e. The admission policy and criteria for evaluating the admission of students
which shall comply with the requirements of section B of this act,
f. The age or grade range of students to be enrolled;
g. The school calendar and school day schedule;
h. A description of the charter school staff responsibilities and the proposed
qualifications or teaching staff;
i. A description of the procedures to be implemented to ensure significant parental
involvement in the operation of the school;
j. A description of, and address for, the physical facility in which the charter school will be located;
k. Information on the manner in which community groups will be involved in the charter school planning process;
l. The financial plan for the charter school and the provisions which will be made for auditing the school pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S. 18A:23-1;
m. A description of and justification for any waivers of regulations which the charter school will request; and
n. Such other information as the commissioner may require.
6. A charter school established pursuant to the provisions of this act shall be a body corporate and politic with all powers necessary or desirable for carrying out its charter program, including, but not limited to, the power to:
a. Adopt a name and corporate seal; however, any name selected shall include the words "charter school;"
b. Sue and be sued, but only to the same extent and upon the same conditions that a public entity can be sued;
c. Acquire real property from public or private sources, by purchase, lease, lease with an option to purchase, or by gift, for use as a school facility;
d. Receive and disburse funds for school purposes;
e. Make contracts and leases for the procurement of services, equipment and supplies;
f. Incur temporary debts in anticipation of the receipt of funds;
g. Solicit and accept any gifts or grants for school purposes; and

h. Have such other powers as are necessary to fulfill its charter and which are not inconsistent with this act or the requirements of the commissioner.
The board of trustees of a charter school shall comply with the provisions of the "Open Public Meetings Act," P.L.1975, c.231 (C.10:4-6 et seq.).

[IRi SCS for A592 (ACS)]

1. A charter school shall be open to all students on a space available basis and shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a handicapped person, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district; however, a charter school may limit admission to a particular grade level or to areas of concentration of the school, such as mathematics, science, or the arts. A charter school may establish reasonable criteria to evaluate prospective students which shall be outlined in the school's charter.
2. a. Preference for enrollment in a charter school shall be given to students who reside in the school district in which the charter school is located. If there are more applications to enroll
in the charter school than there are spaces available, the charter
school shall select students to attend using a random selection
process. A charter school shall not charge tuition to students
who reside in the district.

b. A charter school shall allow any student who was enrolled in
the school in the immediately preceding school year to enroll in
the charter school in the appropriate grade unless the appropriate
grade is not offered at the charter school.

c. A charter school may give enrollment priority to a sibling of
a student enrolled in the charter school.

~ If available space permits, a charter school may enroll
non-resident students. The terms and condition of the enrollment
shall be outlined in the school's charter and approved by the
commissioner.

e. The admission policy of the charter school shall, to the
maximum extent practicable, seek the enrollment of a cross
section of the community's school age population including racial
and academic factors.

9. A student may withdraw from a charter school at any time.

A student may be expelled from a charter school based on
criteria determined by the board of trustees, which are consistent
with the provisions of N.J.S.A:37-2, and approved by the
commissioner as part of the school's charter. Any expulsion shall
be made upon the recommendation of the charter school
principal, in consultation with the student's teachers.

10. A charter school may be located in part of an existing
public school building, in space provided on a public work site, in
a public building, or any other suitable location. The facility
shall be exempt from public school facility regulations except
those pertaining to the health or safety of the pupils. A charter
school shall not construct a facility with public funds.

11. A charter school shall operate in accordance with its
charter and the provisions of law and regulation which govern
other public schools; except that, upon the request of the board
of trustees of a charter school, the commissioner may exempt the
school from State regulations concerning public schools, except
those pertaining to assessment, testing, civil rights and student
health and safety, if the board of trustees satisfactorily
demonstrates to the commissioner that the exemption will
advance the educational goals and objectives of the school.

[iRI SCS for A592 ~ACSJ

b. A charter school shall comply with the provisions of chapter
46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes concerning the
provision of services to handicapped students; except that the
fiscal responsibility for any student currently enrolled in or
determined to require a private day or residential school shall
remain with the district of residence.
C. A charter school shall comply with applicable State and
federal anti-discrimination statutes.
12. The school district of residence shall pay directly to the
charter school for each student enrolled in the charter school who
resides in the district a presumptive amount equal to 90% of the
local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level in the
district. At the discretion of the commissioner and at the time
the charter is granted, the commissioner may require the school
district of residence to pay directly to the charter school for
each student enrolled in the charter school an amount equal to
less than 90% percent, or an amount which shall not exceed 100%
of the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level in
the district of residence. The per pupil amount paid to the
charter school shall not exceed the local levy budget per pupil for
the specific grade level in the district in which the charter school
is located. The district of residence shall also pay directly to the
charter school any categorical aid attributable to the student,
provided the student is receiving appropriate categorical
services and any federal funds attributable to the student.
13. The students who reside in the school district in which the
charter school is located shall be provided transportation to the
charter school on the same terms and conditions as transportation
is provided to students attending the schools of the district.
Non-resident students shall receive transportation services
pursuant to regulations established by the State board.
14. 8. The board of trustees of a charter school shall have the
authority to decide matters related to the operations of the
school including budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures,
subject to the school's charter. The board shall provide for
appropriate insurance against any loss or damage to its property
or any liability resulting from the use of its property or from the
acts or omissions of its officers and employees.
b. "The In the case of a currently existing public school
which becomes a charter school pursuant to the provision of
subsection b. of section 4 of this act, all school employees of the
charter school shall be deemed to be members of the bargaining
unit defined in the application agreement and shall be represented
by the same majority representative organization as the
employees covered by that agreement. In the case of other
charter schools, the board of trustees of a charter school shall
have the authority to employ, discharge and contract with
necessary teachers and its employees subject to the
school's charter. The board of trustees may choose whether or not to offer the terms of any collective bargaining agreement already established by the school district for its employees, but the board shall adopt any health and safety provisions of the agreement. The charter school and its employees shall be subject to the provisions of the "New Jersey Employer-Employee

[IR] sCS for A5~2 [ACS]

1 Relations Act—P.L. 1941, c.100 (C.34:13A-1 et seq.). A charter school shall not set a teacher salary lower than the minimum teacher salary specified pursuant to section 7 of P.L.1985, c.321 (C.3A:29-5.6) nor higher than the highest step in the salary guide in the collective bargaining agreement which is in effect in the district in which the charter school is located.

7 C. All classroom teachers and professional support staff shall hold appropriate New Jersey certification. The commissioner shall make appropriate adjustments in the alternate route program in order to expedite the certification of persons who are qualified by education and experience.

d. A public school employee, tenured or non-tenured, may request a leave of absence of up to three years from the local board of education or State district superintendent in order to work in a charter school. Approval for a leave of absence shall not be unreasonably withheld. Employees on a leave of absence as provided herein shall remain in, and continue to make contributions to, their retirement plan during the time of the leave and shall be enrolled in the health benefits plan of the district in which the charter school is located. The charter school shall make any required employer's contribution to the district's health benefits plan.

e. Public school employees on a leave shall not accrue tenure in the public school system but shall retain tenure, if so applicable, and shall continue to accrue seniority, if so applicable, in the public school system if they return to their non-charter school when the leave ends. An employee of a charter school shall not accrue tenure pursuant to N.J.S.1A:17-2, N.J.S.1A:17-3, or N.J.S.1A:2B-5, but shall acquire streamlined tenure pursuant to guidelines promulgated by the commissioner, and the charter shall specify the security and protection to be afforded to the employee in accordance with the guidelines.

f. Any public school employee who leaves or is dismissed from employment at a charter school within three years shall have the right to return to the employee's former position in the public
school district which granted the leave of absence, provided the
employee is otherwise eligible for employment in the public
school.

15. Any individual or group may bring a complaint to the board
of trustees of a charter school alleging a violation of the
provisions of this act. If, after presenting the complaint to the
board of trustees, the individual or group determines that the
board of trustees has not adequately addressed the complaint.
they may present that complaint to the commissioner who shall
investigate and respond to the complaint. The board shall
establish an advisory grievance committee consisting of both
parents and teachers who are selected by the parents and
teachers of the school to make nonbinding recommendations to
the board concerning the disposition of a complaint.

16. The commissioner shall annually assess whether each
charter school is meeting the goals of its charter, and shall
conduct a comprehensive review prior to granting a renewal of
the charter. The county superintendent of schools of the county

[IR] SCS for A392 [ACS]

1 in which the charter school is located shall have on-going access
to the records and facilities of the charter school to ensure that
the charter school is in compliance with its charter and that
State board regulations concerning assessment, testing, civil
rights, and student health and safety are being met.
6 b. In order to facilitate the commissioner’s review, each
charter school shall submit an annual report to the local board of
education, the county superintendent of schools, and the
commissioner in the form prescribed by the commissioner. The
report shall be received annually by the local board, the county
superintendent, and the commissioner no later than August 1.
12 The report shall also be made available to the parent or
guardian of a student enrolled in the charter school.
14 c. Six years following the effective date of this act, the
commissioner shall hold public hearings in the north, central, and
southern regions of the State to receive input from members of
the educational community and the public on the charter school
program. The commissioner shall submit to the Governor and the
Legislature a report on and an evaluation of the charter school
program which shall include a recommendation on the advisability
of the continuation, modification, expansion, or termination of
the program and any recommendations for changes in the
structure of the program which the commissioner deems
advisable,

17. A charter granted by the commissioner pursuant to the
provisions of this act shall be granted for a four-year period and
may be renewed for a five-year period. The commissioner may
revoke a school's charter if the school has not fulfilled any
condition imposed by the commissioner in connection with the
granting of the charter or if the school has violated any provision
of its charter. The commissioner may place the charter school on
probationary status to allow the implementation of a remedial
plan after which, if the plan is unsuccessful, the charter may be
summarily revoked. The commissioner shall develop procedures
and guidelines for the revocation and renewal of a school's
charter.

18. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and
regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedures Act,"
P.L.~1968, c.410 (C.52:14B1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the
provisions of this act.

19. This act shall take effect immediately.

The "Charter School Program Act of 1~95."
Appendix G

Copy of Charter Application Form
1997 APPLICATION SUMMARY

The information contained in this summary will provide the State Department of Education with basic information needed to review the application as well as an overview of the proposal for a charter school.

Name of Charter School
(Shall not include the name or identification of any private entity and must include the words Charter School in the title.)

LOCATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL

Address
City/Town
District of Residence or Districts in Region of Residence

Type (urban, suburban, rural)

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICANT REPRESENTATIVE

Name First
Middle Initial
Organization/public School Requesting Conversion
Address
City
Telephone

FOUNDERS

Indicate number of persons involved in each category:

Teaching          Conversion
Higher            School
Staff             Education
Parents:          Members:
Members:          Teachers/Parents:
Institutions:     Private Entities:
Community Groups:
                 others:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Levels*</th>
<th>Projected Student Enrollment</th>
<th># students grade(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Projected Student Enrollment - 1998-99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Projected Student Enrollment - 1999-00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>Projected Student Enrollment - 2000-01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Projected Student Enrollment - 2001-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>Projected Class Size</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Total Number of Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher/Student Ratio Goal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 1: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Follow directions for completion of the Implementation Plan found in the Application Instructions section of this 1997 New Jersey Charter School Application.

1. MISSION
   a. List the complete, proper name of the charter school.
   b. List the district of residence or the districts in the region of residence of the charter school and provide a description of why that area was selected.
   c. Describe the mission of the charter school and how that mission provides a clearly articulated vision for an innovative public school.
   d. Identify and describe any specific area(s) of concentration or theme(s) upon which the charter school may be focused (for example, math and science, technology or the arts).

   **Review Criteria:**
   This subsection should present an understanding of the charter school mission and a clearly articulated vision for an innovative public school that would promote educational reform. Compliance with N. J.S.A. 18A:36A-5(b), 36A-5(n) Charter School Program Act of 1995 should be demonstrated.

2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
   a. Describe the broad academic goals of the charter school which will promote high student achievement. Include non-academic goals which will also promote high student achievement.
   b. Under each goal, list measurable objectives/anticipated outcomes that will be realized in implementing that goal.

   **Review Criteria:**
   This subsection should present the goals of the charter school and their measurable objectives/anticipated outcomes leading to high student achievement. Compliance with N. J.S.A.- 18A:36A-5(n) Charter School Program Act of 1995 should be demonstrated.

3. FOUNDERS
   a. Provide the following information on each founder:
      - name and
      - city/township of residence.
b. Provide the following information for these specific groups of people:
   • For teaching staff members, list school and district where each person is teaching.
   • For parents, list the school(s) each person's child/children attend in the district(s) in which the charter school will be located.

c. For a charter school operating with a region of residence, include as founders representatives from each of the communities served by the contiguous district boards of education that comprise the region.

d. Describe any partnerships with existing public schools, institutions of higher education, private entities and/or community groups. If none, so state.

Review Criteria:
This subsection should describe a well-rounded group of charter school founders from various backgrounds as well as participation of any institutions of higher education, private entities, community groups and/or existing public schools. Compliance with N.J.S.A. 15A:36A4(a) Charter School Program Act of 1995 should be demonstrated.

4. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

a. Provide the following information on each member of the board of trustees:
   • name;
   • address;
   • business/industry/education affiliation(s); and
   • state certification(s) and/or license(s) (if applicable).

b. List the qualifications sought in members of the board of trustees.

c. Describe the board of trustees as follows:
   • number of members and numbers who will be voting members and who will be ex officio (non-voting) members;
   • officers positions to be filled;
   • process for selection (appointment or election) to the board and office; and
   • length of terms as member of board and in each officer position.

d. Describe the role of the board of trustees and outline its responsibilities.

e. Describe the involvement of teachers, parents and students in the governance of the school.

f. Specify the extent to which any private entity will be involved in the operation of the charter school and the percentage of the board of trustees that
are members of that entity.

g. Describe the selection process whereby an advisory grievance Committee, consisting of both parents and teachers, will be established and outline the procedures for complaint review.

Review Criteria:
This subsection should define the role of the board of trustees along with the involvement of teachers, parents and students in the governance of their school. The charter school’s governance model with specifics on the involvement of private entities and partnerships with existing organizations should also be described. Compliance with N~SA. I~A:36A4(a), 36A-S(c), 36A-6, 36A44, 36A-IS Charter School Program Act of 1995 and applicable state law and regulation should be demonstrated.

5. ADMISSIONS POLICY AND CRITERIA

a. Chart the number of students to be admitted by grade or age range during each of the first four years of its charter beginning with the 1998-99 school year.

b. Describe the student admissions policies and the criteria for evaluating the students to be admitted.

c. Define any policies which will focus admissions to particular grade level(s) or to area(s) of concentration reflecting the mission and goals of the charter school.

d. Describe the random process that the charter school will use to select students if there are more applicants than there are spaces available. Provide a tentative date when this random process may occur.

e. Outline the procedures for enrollment priority (if applicable) for siblings of students enrolled in the charter school.

f. Define the reasonable criteria which will be used to evaluate prospective students.

g. Define the terms and conditions of non-resident student enrollment (if applicable).

h. Define how the admissions policy of the charter school will, to the maximum extent practicable, seek the enrollment of a cross section of the community’s school-age population including racial and academic factors.

i. Provide the dates of the recruitment period, application period and the enrollment period (after admission is offered). Indicate when district of residence or region of residence students and non-resident students (if applicable) will be recruited and will apply and enroll.

j. Outline a plan for outreach to publicize the charter school in order to attract a
cross section of students.

Review Criteria:
This subsection should present a match between the charter school's mission and educational program and the unique educational and personal needs of its applicants. The admissions policy should foster a diverse student body, should have a non-discriminatory impact and demonstrate a solid plan to attract sufficient students to open and maintain a school. Compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-4(e), 36A-5(e), 36A-7, 36A-8, 36A-11(b), 36A-11(c) Charter School Program Act of 1995 and applicable state law and regulation should be demonstrated.

6. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

a. Outline the grade range or ages that the charter school will serve during each of the first four years of its charter beginning with the 1998-99 school year.

b. Outline the school day schedule and hours of operation. Provide the school calendar for the first year listing opening and closing dates, holidays, vacations, etc.

c. Describe in detail the curriculum to be offered. Include measurable student objectives/anticipated outcomes by grade level and subject.

d. Describe how the curriculum addresses all areas of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and how it meets the mission of the charter school.

e. Describe the innovative strategies for learning and teaching of the charter school that will promote high student achievement.

f. Describe any partnerships through support services in the areas of health, nutrition and counseling which would enhance student achievement.

Review Criteria:
This subsection should describe innovation in learning and teaching methods and curriculum approaches. An overview of curriculum that is consistent with the mission and that promotes high academic achievement should be provided. This subsection should reflect curriculum which incorporates the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Compliance with N. J.S.A. 1-1:36A-5(d), 36A-5-.s, 36A-5(g) Charter School Program Act of 1995 and applicable state law and regulation should be demonstrated.

7. STUDENT ASSESSMENT

a. Outline the participation of the charter school in the required Statewide
Assessment Program and how it will ensure high academic achievement.

b. Describe any assessment indicators that the charter school has established which are in addition to those established by law.

c. Describe the methods of assessing whether students are meeting the objectives/anticipated outcomes of the educational program of the charter school.

d. Outline the process by which assessment will be developed.

e. Outline a plan for addressing the needs of students who do not perform at acceptable levels of proficiency on the Statewide Assessment Program.

Review Criteria:
This subsection should explain how the charter school will demonstrate a commitment to high academic standards for all students and to the measurement of learning outcomes. This subsection should also demonstrate that student assessment is consistent with the educational program of the charter school and is in compliance with the established Statewide Assessment Program. Compliance with N.J.S.A. 1:A:364-5(d), 364-11(a) Charter School Program Act of 1995 and applicable state law and regulation should be demonstrated.

8. AT "RISK STUDENTS, BILINGUAL STUDENTS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

a. Describe how the charter school will meet the needs of at-risk students.

b. Outline the plan of the charter school to meet the needs of limited English proficient (LEP) students.

C. Describe how the charter school will meet the needs of students with disabilities who are classified as special education.

Review Criteria: This subsection should describe a plan to meet the needs of at-risk students, bilingual students and students with disabilities. Compliance with N.J.S.A. :364-11(b), 364-11(c) Charter School Program Act of 1995, applicable state law and regulation and federal law should be demonstrated.

9. STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY AND EXPULSION CRITERIA

a. Describe the criteria the charter school will follow to suspend or expel
students.

b. Describe the charter school's disciplinary policy.

c. Outline any rules or codes of conduct which will govern student behavior.


10. STAFF

a. Chart the organizational structure of the charter school.

b. List the title of the lead person of the charter school.

c. Describe the proposed qualifications for the charter school staff and list each person's responsibilities.

d. Outline the targeted staff size and the teacher-to-student ratio.

e. Provide a copy of the certificates for classroom teachers and professional support staff.

f. Specify security and protection to be afforded to employees of the charter school in accordance with the streamline tenure guidelines established by the Commissioner.

g. Provide an explanation and justification for any adjustments which the charter school may request to expedite the alternate route program which will provide for the certification of persons who are qualified by education and experience.

h. Describe the criteria and standards to be followed in the hiring of charter school staff.

i. Outline the policies and procedures regarding the following:
   - salaries;
   - contracts;
   - hiring and dismissal; and
   - benefits.

j. Describe outreach efforts to publicize the charter school in order to recruit
Review Criteria:
This subsection should present a commitment to high professional standards for the charter school staff and to the professional development of staff. Compliance with the guidelines established by the Commissioner regarding streamline tenure and with N. J.S.A. 36A-5(h), 364-11(c), 364-14 Charter School Program Act of 1995 and applicable state law and regulation should be demonstrated.

11. PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

a. Describe the procedures to be implemented to ensure significant involvement in the operation of the charter school by the parents/legal guardians of the students.

b. Provide information on the manner in which community groups will be involved in the charter school planning and development process.

Review Criteria:
This subsection should demonstrate how the charter school will encourage the participation of parents/legal guardians and other adults in the education of its children. Compliance with N. J.S.A. 364-5(i), 364-5(k) Charter School Program Act of 1995 should be demonstrated.

12. FACILITY

a. If the charter school has a facility,
   • provide its address and
   • describe the physical facility in which the charter school will be located.

b. If the charter school does not have a facility,
   • describe the present options for designating a school facility and
   • outline the timeline for its acquisition.

c. Describe financing plans for the acquisition of a facility.

d. Describe renovation needs for the facility, including the estimated cost and anticipated source of funding for the renovations.

Review Criteria:

13. TRANSPORTATION

a. Describe the procedure for notifying the district board(s) of education in
which the students reside of the charter school’s transportation needs.

b. Describe the process for certifying enrollment of the students in the charter school who receive transportation services or aid in lieu of transportation to the district board(s) of education in which the students reside.

c. Outline the timeline for transportation notification to the district board(s) of education in which the students of the charter school reside and to their parents/legal guardians.

**Review Criteria:**

*This subsection should reflect a timely process for notification to the district board(s) of education regarding transportation of charter school students. Compliance with N.J.S.A. 364-13 Charter School Program Act of 1995 and applicable state law and regulation should be demonstrated.*

14. **WAIVER OF REGULATIONS**

a. Describe any waivers of regulations (not statutes) which the charter school is requesting.

b. Provide a justification for each waiver requested explaining how the exemption will advance the educational goals and objectives of the school.

**Review Criteria:**

*This subsection should satisfactorily demonstrate that the requested exemption(s) advance the goals and objectives of the charter school. Compliance with N.J.S.A. 364-5(m), 364-11(a) Charter School Program Act of 1995 and applicable state law and regulation should be demonstrated.*

15. **CHARTER SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

a. Describe the process which will be used for charter school self-evaluation including the role of the board of trustees, administrative and teaching staff, parents, students and consultants.

b. Describe how the charter school self-evaluation process will support development and dissemination of the required annual report.

c. Describe the system the charter school will use to maintain school records and disseminate information regarding that system to the community.

d. Describe how the charter school staff will be evaluated and provide the standards/criteria for staff performance evaluations.
Review Criteria:
This subsection should present the establishment of a new form of accountability for the charter school. It should also demonstrate a responsiveness to the community, parents and students. Compliance with N. J.S.A. ISA: 364-5(h), 364-16(a), 364-16(b) Charter School Program Act of 1995 should be demonstrated.

16. TIMETABLE

a. Provide a plan of the tasks and activities to be completed between January 1998 and June 1999.

b. Detail the timetable of projected activities with dates.

Review Criteria:
This subsection should describe a well-developed plan of action for starting a charter school. The feasibility of the projected school opening should be demonstrated. Compliance with N. J.S.A. ISA: 364-5(n) Charter School Program Act of 1995 should be demonstrated.

17. LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

Describe the following insurance coverage plans for the charter school:

- health;
- general liability;
- property;
- officer and employee liability, including any performance surety; and
- automobile liability for pupil transportation.

Review Criteria:

This subsection should describe the insurance plans to be purchased by the charter school to reduce its risks and to provide health benefits for its employees. Compliance with N. J.S.A. ISA: 364-14(a) Charter School Program Act of 1995 should be demonstrated.

18. DOCUMENTATION

a. Submit copies of the following documents:
   - Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) for the charter school;
   - copies of the School Ethics Commission Financial Disclosure Statements
   - for each member of the board of trustees;
   - bylaws of the board of trustees once adopted;
• Certificate of Incorporation for the charter school;
• identification of its facility and lease, mortgage or title to its facility;
• certificate of occupancy issued by the local municipal enforcing official;
• sanitary inspection report;
• fire inspection certificate; and
• certifications of classroom teachers, principals and professional support staff.

If a document is not available at the time of submission of this application, provide a brief explanation as to why the document is not available and when it will be available.

b. For an existing public school converting to charter status, submit with this application the originals of the petitions in support of the school becoming a charter school from at least 51 percent of the teaching staff in the school and at least 51 percent of the parents/legal guardians of students attending that public school.

**Review Criteria:**

This subsection should provide the documentation needed to ensure the proper organization and operation of the charter school Compliance with NJSA :36A4(b), 36A-5 Charter School Program Act of 1995 should be demonstrated.