

PUBLIC SERVICES REDESIGN PROJECT

A GUIDE TO CHARTER ACTIVITY (AUGUST 1996)

That new part of public education often called "the charter movement" continues both to grow and to evolve. We're seeing new ideas in the laws and innovations in the learning programs. There're new twists on governance and on management. Lots of energy; people working very hard. Lots of mistakes but lots of dynamics. All typical of any new movement.

This guide tries to provide the names and phone numbers of the key people involved, and some sense of the program and the politics in each state. This gets harder as new states come in, as programs grow and as people move. So, again, my apologies for any errors and omissions. I'd appreciate corrections; in the names and phone numbers or in my reading of the situation.

Mostly this is a guide to people involved with the live laws that can have real system effects . . . the strong programs in which the state opens the way for some public body other than the local board to offer public education in the community, as well as for some entity other than the district to start and run a public school.

The National Scene

Since 1994 this idea -- of the state opening the way for more than one organization to offer public education in the community -- has moved increasingly to the center of the national search for an effective strategy. In mid-1996 the level of 'national' attention to the charter idea is quite remarkable.

Meetings -- The U.S. Department of Education brought (mostly) people running charter schools into Minneapolis July 26-27 for a how-to discussion; about common problems of start-up and operation. The fascinating networking-session organized by the Association of Educators in Private

Practice (August 1-3 in Milwaukee) was important for Howard Fuller's successful effort to link charter and contract with the interest of inner-city constituencies. The Sept. 16-17 meeting in Boston of the Education Leaders Council, the non-establishment group pulled together by Jeanne Allen, will include 'charter'. A group of rather more establishment (mostly Colorado-based) organizations is putting together a meeting "on policy" in Denver Sept. 19-21. Carla Dietsch 206/669-5073 is planning a national meeting in Seattle October 25-26; the first meeting of the National Alliance for Charter Schools -- perhaps a national association of state operators' associations -- which Jim Alverson 602/985-6112 is forming.

Directories of Schools -- The best nationwide directory -- names, addresses, phone numbers and brief descriptions -- of charter schools appeared this spring from the Center for Education Reform in Washington. For a copy call 202/822-9000. CER plans to keep it current, probably in print form only.

Electronic discussions -- Persons interested in the charter idea can connect through a forum put together by Frank Dooling, a former naval person in Tacoma WA 206/539-3669. AOL subscribers will find a message board and two libraries by hitting keyword /CHARTER/return. There's a weekly live conference every Sunday afternoon: details are in the "monthly update" file in the main menu of the forum. Dooling and others say "Charter Researching: Net Stations and Resources", which identifies and links to most others, is a wonderful resource: <http://csr.syr.edu>. The Center for Education Reform, which finds itself increasingly drawn into the charter idea, has material available at <http://edreform.com>. For California see <http://www.csus.edu/ier/charter.html>. Charter is in the Hudson Institute site: <http://www.edexcellence.net>.

Good basic information -- A solid introduction to the charter idea, laws and schools on videotape has been put together by Dr. Joe Freedman (see below re: Canada). The 56-minute tape and an accompanying 112-page book are available (together) for US\$19.95 from: Society for Advancing Educational Research, 57 Allan Close, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada T4R 1A4 or by faxing an order to 403/343-7042. Phi Delta Kappa did one of its Fastback booklets on "Understanding Charter Schools": Call 812/339-1156. The Hudson Institute 800/483-7660 publishes a very helpful 'briefing packet' with a good bibliography. Good basic advice on how to start a school is available from Joe Nathan at the Center for School Change 612/625-3506 and from Pam Riley at the Pacific Institute 415/989-0833. Some of these contain recommendations.

A model bill from this Public Services Redesign series is available in Frank Dooling's AOL forum (see above), at the CER site and perhaps elsewhere.

"What's happening?" -- It's too early really to know much about student achievement. But a picture is emerging at least of what the schools are and who their students are. The Little Hoover Commission report in California in early '96 was full of information and almost a proxy for the country: Ask Kathleen Beasley 916/445-2125. The first-year report from the Hudson Institute on seven states (under its grant from the Pew Trusts) is now available: 800/483-7660.

Summaries of State laws -- A map attached to this memo includes the new '96 laws and shows the number of charters approved by state. Eric Premack 916/278-4600 is currently bringing the analysis of the laws up to date, for the RPP International report to the U.S. Department of Education. ECS, NCSLand the Center for Education Reform will probably be updating their summaries as well. Existing summaries are useful 'through '95'. A "National Survey and Analysis of Charter School Legislation" is available from the Institute for Responsive Education in Boston 617/373-2595. The Education Policy Center at the University of Indiana 812/855-1240 has "Legislation and Results after Four Years". Dean Millot in the Washington office of Rand Corporation 202/296-5000 has a legal analysis. Mike Mintrom 517/355-7682 at Michigan State has a report on "Charter Laws Across the United States".

Advocates, designers -- The group that began by proposing strong laws has remained active and has grown as others have joined. Joe Nathan at the Center for School Change in the Humphrey Institute 612/626-1834 is very helpful: His new book Charter Schools (published September '96 by Jossey-Bass) contains an outline for a 'strong' law. Eric Premack, who has been helping schools, their sponsoring districts and the state work things out in California, is especially realistic about operational problems and how to avoid them. Louann Bierlein 504/342-1608, is busy now as education aide to the new governor of Louisiana but remains a good source on "the first 20" laws. She's at 504/388-5006. Howard Fuller 414/288-7351, now in the school of education at Marquette University, is an articulate advocate for 'charter' as a way to improve schools for black and poor children.

The state legislators who got through the strong laws are among the most useful resources. In Minnesota Sen. Ember Reichgott Junge 612/296-2889. In California (former) Sen. Gary Hart 916/278-4600. In Colorado Rep. Peggy Kerns 303/866-5523. In Florida Rep. Joe Tedder 941/683-0064 and in

New Jersey Sen. Jack Ewing 908/766-7757 and Assemblyman Joe Doria 201/437-5150.

Some organizations earlier advancing other ideas about education reform quickly developed an interest in charter laws. At the Center for Education Reform in Washington talk to Jeanne Allen 202/822-9000. They go into states to do work and are well-informed about developments. The Rand Corporation is active mainly through Dean Millot 202/296-5000 and through Paul Hill 206/543-0190 who moved to Seattle in 1994 to set up a joint center with the University of Washington. Hill's interest in the autonomy and accountability of contract arrangements intersects with the charter idea.

As the laws come into place a whole new industry is developing, to help people start and run schools; offering advice, designs and services, for free or for a fee. This will have to be the subject of another memo, another time.

Mainline organizations now involved -- As the growing support makes it increasingly credible the major policy groups are giving the charter idea more and more attention; though this may be controversial with their constituencies. The National Conference of State Legislatures began early to collect the laws passing and to schedule discussion at its meetings: Ask Koprowicz 303/830-2200x136. The Education Commission of the States has come into the discussion in a major way: Talk to Alex Medler 303/299-3635 or go to its site <http://www.ecs.org>. At the National Governors Association talk to Patty Sullivan 202/624-7723. Nationally the teachers unions are now for charter schools (while their state affiliates work hard to block the 'live' laws that create them). At the National Education Association Andrea DiLorenzo 202/822-7334 handles the issue and with Bob McClure works on the NEA's program to help teachers start schools with charters from local boards (where the state affiliate approves). At the American Federation of Teachers ask Joan Buckley 202/879-4400 for the report released at the Cincinnati convention August 2. It recommends the Rhode Island law, which charter advocates consider the nation's weakest.

The U.S. Department of Education is now helping finance the start-up of new charter schools. From a \$6 million appropriation in '95 the program will grow to \$18 million in '96. The program provides block grants to states, which will subgrant to schools. Only if a state declines to apply would grants be retailed from Washington. In a breakthrough for federalism the law accepts the state's decision about what public bodies may grant a charter and

what organizations may, if approved, run a school. Jonathan Schnur 202/401-3598 (jonathan_schnur@ed.gov) in Secretary Riley's office is the lead person on 'charter'. John Fiegel 202/260-2671 handles grants. Pat Lines 202/501-7564 has the national study.

The Scene in the States

It really is pointless to talk about "states with charter laws". With eight states having chartered 95% of the schools and another eight states having chartered 5% of the schools it does remain essential to distinguish between strong laws and weak laws, live laws and dead laws. This memo is laid out that way.

In states with live laws this memo tries to identify key persons from (1) the state department, which administers the law and provides information to applicants and to sponsors about the chartering process; (2) the "friends' group" outside state government that helps applicants get charters and helps schools get going; and (3) the associations of school operators.

In the states with live laws, then:

Arizona: This is the wild west: the largest program after California (and the largest population considered); probably lots of good things but also big potential for trouble. A '96 change moving the term of the contract out to 15 years pretty well removes the accountability to public authority. Opponents who would normally challenge this (as in Michigan) may have decided they'd rather see the program blow up than have it fixed. The state superintendent is Lisa Graham Keegan 602/542-5460. In the department talk to Jeff Cohen 602/542-5206, or to Kathi Haas 602/542-5344 re: finance. Sen. Tom Patterson was a key author of the '94 law 602/542-5955; Chris Smith is helpful, on the Senate staff 602/542-5418. John Kakritz now heads the association of charter schools 602/261-7911: At the Goldwater Institute, still the "friends group", talk to Mary Gifford 602/256-7018.

California: A strong, dynamic program; the largest 'conversions' state. All 100 charters originally authorized have been issued so (with the CTA still strongly resisting proposals in the Legislature to move up to, say, 300) the state board has begun to raise the 'cap' administratively. Louis Caldera, an Assembly member from Los Angeles 213/680-4646, has emerged as a key author; as, also in the Assembly, have Kerry Mazzoni 916/445-7783 and Steve

Baldwin 906/445-3266. Gary Hart, the Senate author in '92, now heads an education policy institute for the California State University system 916/278-4600 where Eric Premack (e-mail :eric_premack @calstate.edu) now also spends part-time. In the department of education Dave Patterson is now happily back on 'charter'. Other helpful sources include Pam Riley at the Pacific Institute 415/989-0833 and Sue Bragato 415/598-8192 at CANEC, the association of charter schools. Its newsletter circulates beyond California.

Colorado: The original appeals process, unique to Colorado (in which the state board, if it approves, does not then become the school's sponsor but orders the local board to do it) had created a lot of conflict. Rep. Peggy Kerns 303/866-5523 was able this session to get changes which should improve the process (assuming the supreme court does not side with Denver, which has challenged the legislature's authority to set up such a process). Gov. Romer has been important from the start: His education aide is now Deborah Lynch 303/866-2656. In the department talk to Bill Windler 303/866-6631. Jim Griffin is the 'association' person, with the Colorado League of Charter Schools 303/985-7092. Colorado's is not a law to 'model' from.

Connecticut: New in '96. A split program, like Texas'. Half a strong law, maybe. Twelve charters may be issued by local boards and 12 by the state board. The state-chartered schools are limited in size (to 250 students) and get less money; a pattern typical of New England. The law results largely from the persistence of Sen. Kevin Sullivan 203/240-8600 and, in the Republican Senate, from Sen. Judi Freedman. Yvette Thiesfield 203/566-1233 will manage the program for the state department. The Center for School Change, spun off from the Graustein Foundation, is operating as a friends' group: Ask Gordon Bruno 860/586-2340.

Delaware: The Math and Science High School in Wilmington (for which the '95 law was apparently created) will open in fall '96 with about 300 students; a separate entity within the district high school. Several others should open fall '96. Call Ronald Russo 302/651-2727. Sen. David Sokola 302/739-4139 was the author of this short, clean law. Or talk to Paul Fine, the president of the state board 302/984-1700. Doug Archibald at the University might help: 302/831-6208.

District of Columbia: New in '96. Resuming its role as legislature for the District, Congress passed a school-reform bill which included a strong charter program (dropping the voucher program the House wanted). Ted Rebarber, aide to Rep. Gunderson, was key in the final solution. Applicants may

approach either the D.C. board of education or a new "chartering board": seven persons appointed by the mayor of Washington from a list of 15 submitted by Secretary Riley. Much of the law is based on language drafted by Jim Ford on the city council staff 202/724-8119. The Federal City Council has worked hard for improvements: Ask Dave Perry 202/223-4560. Ken Campbell with COPE 202/223-4560 is helping applicants start schools.

Florida: New in '96. Rep. Joe Tedder 904/488-2270 got his bill through on his second try. There will be no 'alternate sponsor' -- in Florida, uniquely, public schools are assigned to the counties by the constitution -- but other factors may produce a significant program, at least in some counties. Quickly, a Charter School Resource Center has appeared and is raising money for start-up grants: Call Jon Hage 954/927-2870. Dade County has moved quickly to receive applications. The state superintendent, Frank Brogan 904/487-1785, is supportive. Tonya Lemon 904/244-1022 is the aide for Gov. Chiles. Tom Watkins, who got the first school started in Detroit when he worked for Wayne State University has moved to Florida: 954/345-3008. Caroline Herrington 904/644-2573 is a good source at Florida State.

Massachusetts: The first 15 schools finished their first year; others from the 25 authorized in '93 will open in fall '96 and '97. More have been approved (the state board is now the chartering authority) but the Legislature has yet to raise the cap. Scott Hamilton 617/727-1313 is now in charge of charters, as associate commissioner of education. Outside, the "friends' group" is the resource center at the Pioneer Institute: Its how-to-do-it book and 'profiles' report on schools are models. The handbook is available online. Talk to Linda Brown 617/723-2277. Karen Byars 508/635-1800 directs the new operators' association. Tom Loveless follows the charter program for the Kennedy School at Harvard 617/495-9846. This is the only law to offer the local board no role, so districts have been especially hostile. Their attitude has led the state to pay them for students in fact no longer attending; which takes out a key dynamic. Boston did create its own "in-district charter" program in response: Ask Bob Pearlman at the Boston Teachers Union 617/288-2000.

Michigan: A high-profile, dynamic -- and contentious -- program; the least bipartisan among the states. Gov. Engler has provided tremendous drive: In his office talk to Mary Kay Shields 517/335-7824. Clark Durant 313/396-4200 chairs the state board. In the state department talk to Gary Cass 517/373-4631. Many of the charters have come from Central Michigan University: Talk to Robert Mills in its Charter Schools Office 517/774-2100. CMU also has, separately, a 'resource center': Ask Leonie Rose 517/774-2590. The Michigan

Partnership for New Education, once the principal "friends' group", will now run two schools. Barbara Barrett and Bob Wittmann are still there: 517/432-3165. Anna Amato 810/632-7293 and Larry Patrick 313/961-8380, formerly on the Detroit board, are active in getting schools chartered. An "operators' group" has appeared, run by Jim Goenner 517/774-3315. There's an invitation out nationally for an 'Expo' to show off Michigan's charter schools; May 29, 1997 in Lansing. Ask Mamie Thorns 517/774-2590.

Minnesota: A slowly but steadily developing program; gradually improving from the restricted law that was the nation's first when passed in 1991. The original authors, Sen. Ember Reichgott Junge 612/296-2889 and Rep. Becky Kelso 612/296-1072, have been joined by Rep. Mindy Greiling 612/296-5387 and, on the Republican side, by Rep. LeRoy Koppendrayner 612/389-1490. Susan Heegaard 612/297-1622 is important in policy development for Gov. Carlson. In the Department (now of Children, Families and Learning) Jessie Montano 612/296-2181 is in charge of "learner options", with Bill Allen 612/296-4213 on charters and John Bulger 612/296-9613 on charter finance. Joe Nathan at the Center for School Change 612/625-3506 is an active "friend". A Minnesota Association of Charter Schools is just now forming: Ask John Schultz 507/665-4033 at the New Country School, where the teachers design and operate the learning program under contract with the charter school. Dan Mott 612/291-9310 set up their cooperative; essentially a professional partnership.

New Jersey: New in '96. A bipartisan coalition led by Sen. Jack Ewing 908/766-7757 and Assemblyman (former Speaker) Joseph V. Doria, Jr. 201/437-5150 -- and joined in '95 by Gov. Whitman -- got through a bill on the final day of the session. The governor's education aide, David Hespe 609/777-2450 was very helpful. The NJEA was able to restrict conversions so the potential is mainly in new-starts. The commissioner, Leo Klagolz 609/292-4450, will be the chartering officer. Frank Esposito 908/527-2004 represented Klagholz in all the policy and the political discussions about the law. In the department call Dahlia Georgitas 609/292-5850. Legislators mean to form a clearinghouse: Ask Jason Teele 609/292-7065. Outside, local foundations are helping form a "friends' group": Ask Sarah Tantillo 908/932-7490x230. The charter idea may hold some potential for the districts taken over by the state: Jersey City, Paterson and now Newark; an alternative both to state-operation and to conventional contract management.

North Carolina: New in '96. Sen. Wib Gulley 919/733-5651 set out to get "the first strong law in the South" and may have succeeded. He and Republican

Rep. Steve Wood 919/733-5807 came to a compromise just before the session ended. Applicants will be able to go to the local board, the state board or to the boards of the 16 units of the University of North Carolina for sponsorship. Ann Berlam in the department 919/715-1266 is expecting "a lot of applications". Thelma Glynn 919/682-8341 works on the group working on guidelines. Vernon Robinson 910/768-3567, a candidate for state superintendent, is positive.

Texas: All 20 of the "open-enrollment charters" permitted by the '95 legislation were taken by the second meeting of the state board. Much less interest is reported in the so-called "campus charters" for which applicants go to the local board. A legislative author was Sen. Bill Ratliff 512/463-0101. In the Texas Education Agency talk to Brooks Flemister 512/463-9575. David Dunn at the Legislative Budget Board was in the discussion early: 512/305-9579. Rey Garcia 512/463-0190 is in the office of (Lieutenant) Governor Bullock.

In the weak-law states:

Alaska: Talk to Sheila Peterson in the Department of Education 907/465-2803.

Arkansas: Jim Boardman in the department 501/682-4204 will handle any applications and will know the law and its history.

Georgia: In the department, John Rhodes 414/657-7637. Existing public schools apply, with district approval, to the state board. Grants for planning have encouraged applicants and 10 such charters have been granted. Interest in a strong law is growing outside and among legislators: Ask Rep. Kathy Ashe 404/656-0116 or Sen. Sallie Newbill 404/656-0036.

Hawaii: In the Legislature Sen. Mike McCartney 808/586-6910 still wants to improve the law enacted in '94. He's quite candid about its weaknesses. In the department Marge Gaza 808/586-3285.

Illinois: New in '96. After the '95 law turning over the Chicago schools to Mayor Daley the Legislature came back in '96 and without much further discussion passed Sen. O'Malley's bill; a local-board-only bill with some killer provisions. Parents disappointed with the local schools have little chance when the only sponsor is the local board. The law may operate as a strong law, however, in Chicago which now does not have a conventional board with conventional attitudes. In Chicago Olivia Watkins 312/535-7500 is

assigned to 'charter' by schools CEO Paul Vallas, who seems most interested in conversions and in high schools. Leadership for Quality Education, now headed by John Ayers 312/853-1210 is emerging as the "friends' group" both for the "small-schools" initiative and for charter. Fred Hess at the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy 312/346-2202 and Jeanne Nowaczewski 312/641-5570 are both involved and knowledgeable. At the state board Sally Vogl 217/782-0541 is good help.

Kansas: Ask Rodney Bieker, counsel for the department, about the law passed in '94 by Sen. Dave Kerr 913/296-7368.

Louisiana: The '95 law offered eight parishes broad opportunity to convert existing schools, but the boards have so far shown virtually no interest. A few schools proposed by community people are approved for '97 start. The new governor, Mike Foster, tried to add an appeal to the state board but lost on the Senate floor. Foster has named Sen. Cecil Picard 504/342-3607, the law's author, state superintendent and has brought in Louann Bierlein 504/342-1608 as his education aide, however, and will try again in '97. In the department talk to Bob Miller 504/342-3603. The Louisiana business community has supported a strong law: Ask Jackie Ducoate, now with the Public Affairs Research Council 504/926-8414.

New Hampshire: The law authored by Sen. Jim Rubens 603/642-6059 requires a town-meeting vote to activate the program; and this is proving difficult in a state with small districts, the lowest level of state support in America and a long tradition of hostility to state authority. One proposal passed and four were defeated (two by one vote). Despite this, Susan Hollins 603/643-6476 at the Charter Schools Resource Center reports 30-40 groups 'in planning'.

New Mexico: Only existing public schools may apply. Four now have charter status and 28 were competing for the fifth spot authorized. Rep. Bob Perls 505/764-9077 hopes to start all over again with a new bill in '97. In the department talk to Michael Kaplan 505/827-6576.

Rhode Island: Little was expected from this law, and no expectations have been disappointed. Ken Fish in the department 401/277-4600 should know if anybody does decide to apply.

South Carolina: New in '96. The law has an extremely complex process for approval and appeal and it's hard to tell how autonomous the school would really be (and who, on appeal, the sponsor would really be). An amendment

from the black caucus requiring enrollment to be within 10% of the racial composition of the district, intended to block a school at Hilton Head, will also block any effort to form schools for black kids. The authors are Sen. Nikki Setzler 803/212-6250 and Rep. David Wilkins 864/232-5629. A helpful source is Sandy Smith on the House committee staff 803/734-3053. The state superintendent has not been positive. Outside, Steve Suits at the Palmetto Family Council has been interested 803/731-4313.

Wisconsin: A strange law which imposes no duty even on the local board to consider proposals from citizens (including teachers). Charters are granted, in effect, by the board to its own administration. It is essentially district contracting, often for alternative schools. Six schools operated in '95-96. Talk to Senn Brown 608/257-2622 at the school boards association. Progress toward a 'strong' law is slow, though Gov. Thompson and others continue to press for improvement. Some stronger features are appearing for Milwaukee; as, to let an applicant appeal to the state. This reflects largely the effort by Howard Fuller, the former Milwaukee superintendent and long an advocate for change in the city. In Thompson's office Jennifer Fox 608/266-1212 is handling these issues for Bob Wood 608/267-3839 until after the election. Tom Stefonek 608/266-5728 handles the charter law in the state department. Fuller's institute may emerge as the friends' group in Wisconsin.

Wyoming: David Nelson 307/777-7881 in the Legislative Service Office says nothing is happening.

In Canada

Alberta -- The province will have seven schools open by fall, under its 1994 charter legislation. The Aurora School in Edmonton will be the first for mainline students; most have been for niche populations. The person in charge for the province is Ron Babiuk 403/427-2952. A good source both about Alberta and about the charter movement elsewhere in Canada is a medical doctor in Red Deer, Joseph Freedman 403/343-6172.

Teachers for Excellence in Education held a conference in '95 in Vancouver to highlight the charter idea: Talk to Helen Ranham 604/763-0852. Maureen Somers at the Coalition for Education Reform 905/939-2035 plans a similar meeting for this fall in Toronto. Both say the political opposition is intense.

In states where bills are still under consideration:

Idaho: For the third year in a row the bill sponsored by Rep. Fred Tillman 208/322-1133 cleared the House; to be killed again by the chair of the education committee in the Senate. Tillman plans to try again in '97.

Indiana -- The mayor of Indianapolis and CLASS (a business-organization) merged their ideas into a bill that would have let districts, universities and the state grant charters. Nothing passed. Talk to Rep. Phil Warner 317/232-9760, chair of the House education committee, or to Sen. Teresa Lubbers 317/232-9400. Carol D'Amico at the Hudson Institute in Indianapolis 317/549-4160 may know.

Maine: Discussion is only beginning: an early bill from Rep. Allen Barth had no luck in '96. Greg Scott in the department 207/287-8134 knows the situation.

Maryland: The president of the state board, Christopher Cross 202/347-4171, brought up the charter idea at the April meeting. Maryland's problem is Baltimore. With EAI gone the 30 problem schools will apparently now be put out to contract individually. The question is: by whom? Perhaps by 'Baltimore City' but perhaps by the state, in a non-managerial version of state takeover that would create a kind of 'learning zone'.

Montana: Sen. Daryl Toews 406/392-5377 introduced a bill in '95 for the school boards association. The unions amended it in the Senate to require union sign-off on a school, so the House killed it. Ask Bob Anderson at the association: 406/442-2180.

Nevada: The Legislature did not meet in '96. Talk to Sen. Raymond Rawson 702/687-8164, chair of Human Resources; or Sen. Maurice Washington 702/687-3652.

New York: In '96 the charter idea began to stir in New York City. The state Democratic Leadership Council sponsored a forum. The City Council had a hearing: Talk to the chair of the finance committee, Herbert Berman 212/788-6984. Columbia University has a group designing a bill: Ask Peter Comeau 212/678-3366. Joe Viteritti at New York University 212/998-7507 is active. The Manhattan Institute may be, as well: Talk to Seymour Fliegel, Coleman Genn or Carlos Medina 212/599-7000. The New York City Partnership will pick up the idea this fall: Talk to Gaynor McCown 212/493-7414. An early, weak bill

was introduced in the Assembly by John Faso 518/455-5314. The interest comes on top of the charter-like program for new, small schools that goes back to the 1970s. Something like 60 new, small high schools have been set up in New York City in the last few years. The problem, as Ray Domanico at the Public Education Association 212/868-1640 points out, is that these have no institutional basis: They are formally inside the system and exist at its sufferance.

Ohio: A major, high-profile debate is still under way, with a final decision likely late in the fall. A bill authored by Rep. Sally Perz 614/466-6017 cleared the House fairly easily. She struck a deal with the OEA along New Jersey lines but in the Senate action was blocked, mainly by the superintendents. Cooper Snyder 513/393-5177 having retired, the Senate chair will now be Sen. Dick Schafrath 614/466-8086. Gov. Voinovich's aide is Tom Needles 614/466-3555. Randy Anderson 614/466-0339 in the Legislative Service Bureau is exceptionally well-informed as is, on the Senate side, Liz Connolly 614/466-5221. The most recent thinking is targeting on the big cities, where fewer than 35% of the ninth graders pass the state proficiency tests. Cleveland, where 15% pass the proficiency tests, will be an important case. Frustration with the unwillingness of the interim superintendent to use the powers provided by the court may raise the community's interest in dynamics that can be provided only by state law.

Oklahoma: A bill based on the minority report from a task force chaired by Ron Bogle, president of the Oklahoma City board of education 918/749-0902, passed the House in '96 but got no further. The author is Rep. John Bryant 405/521-2711.

Oregon: A bill authored by Rep. Patty Milne 503/378-8854 fell short, in '96. Both strong bills and weak bills are being drafted, for '97. A ballot initiative, which also fell short, will be refiled for '98 vote. The state superintendent continues to represent the state's waiver law as a "charter" law, which may be what led Portland's superintendent to apply to be "a charter district". Dick Meinhard in Portland 503/234-4600 is always close to what's happening. The continuing interest in vouchers creates interest among some Democrats (now the minority) in a charter alternative: Ask Phil Kiesling, the secretary of state 503/986-1500, or Bill June 503/228-6816.

Pennsylvania: Gov. Ridge failed twice to get through a package which included both voucher and charter. When he declined to take the bill apart the Legislature decided to do so itself. A local-board-only bill authored by

Rep. Ron Cowell 717/783-1905, now a minority Democrat, is waiting action in the Senate, where the chair is Sen. Jim Rhodes 717/787-2637. Charles Zogby 717/772-5300 is Ridge's policy director. There is growing interest in the two big cities. In Pittsburgh a Charter Schools Project has been set up with help from the Heinz Endowments and the Grable Foundation: Ask Jeremy Resnick 412/362-4515. In Philadelphia interest rises as the conventional improvement effort bogs down. John Claypool at Greater Philadelphia First 215/575-2200 is close to things. A 'cluster director' in the district, Karen DelGuercio 215/299-7823, has been talking with Supt. David Hornbeck about taking all her schools into charter status. Statewide, there is growing interest on the part of the Pennsylvania School Reform Network: Jan Hoffman 717/238-7171, its director, is very well-informed.

Vermont: Sen. Jeb Spaulding, chairman of the education committee 802/828-2231 picked up support from the state board this year and will try again in '97 to get approval in the House.

Virginia: A (fairly weak) bill failed on a tie vote in the Assembly this year; opposed by the school boards, superintendents and by the majority leader. Delegate Phillip Hamilton 804/249-2580 says he is finding interest outside the Legislature, and plans to introduce a bill next year. Michelle Easton, vice president of the state board, will be working on a bill again in '96. A teacher in Newport News, Joan Wilt 804/874-8926 has been trying to help the cause along.

Washington: The Legislature thought seriously about a charter bill in '96 after Jim and Fawn Spady succeeded in getting on the fall ballot a far-reaching initiative measure which they call 'charter'. The Senate decided, however, to kill the bill and to hope the Spady initiative would fail. Rep. Dave Quall 360/786-7800 was the House author. Mary Fleckenstein 360/786-7215 in House Democratic Research knows this issue. On the Senate side Leslie Goldstein 360/786-7424. Outside, Paul Hill at the University 206/685-2214 is a good source. Carla Dietsch 206/669-5073 means to be active on both the local and national scene. Bill Porter, formerly Gov. Romer's education aide in Colorado, is now in Seattle to head the Partnership for Learning 206/625-9655, a key business group.

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