Focus Groups with DC Charter School Operators
February 12, 2003

KEY POINTS

1. Irasema: We can't predict the needs ahead of time; we call people for help rather than organizations
2. Wendell: Pretty self sufficient
   - Nothing in this movement prepares you for challenges of a small business
   - Daily challenge: No infrastructure. The support groups are helpful but there's no formal infrastructure in place.
   - There are a number of groups out there that are dancing as fast as they can, but none have been truly successful.

3. Susan Schaeffler: We're outnumbered. We draw from a whole host of consultants; we call on each other for help as well. We should model as association like that (draw from a whole host of consultants)
4. Anne Herr: No one has time for advocacy. You wonder what you're risking by being an advocate.
5. Cathy: Need help communicating. Need help writing grants. Not sure we know what all the organizations out there are doing – seems they want to tell us what we need.
6. Problem: Organizations that tell us what to do..."no more assignments."
7. I need someone who can come in and help me with special education
8. Parents are pushing schools to do what DCPS didn't – we need parent training.
9. A place to go for an evaluation of programs from Day 1 so we can show results. It's very expensive but important. It would be nice to have someone who can sort it out.
10. Need an organization that does good government relations, PR, marketing. Not aware of a good venue where charter networking goes on.
11. Need parent networking and parent support. There is an ignorance of information.
12. Authorizers have become unchecked bureaucracies – we need an association but can't let it become another bureaucracy.
13. Ana Maria: If you're a school in trouble it's hard to get help. Example: Resource Center only wants to help schools if excellent (i.e. the Nexus program).
14. Outreach is very difficult.
15. Technical assistance exists and is available – always provided but need time to get it. (Organizations here are helpful).