

Charter School Survey Results Analysis

The Center for Education Reform

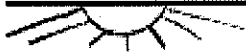
Memo

Date: Tuesday, April 25, 2006

To: **Jeanne Allen**

From: **Dan Kidder**

RE: **Analysis of School Survey Results for the Tennessee Charter School
Resource Center**



Methodology

This segment of the project included a series of 16 questions asked of the 12 charter school operators in the state of Tennessee from April 10-24, 2006 by staff of the Center for Education Reform.

The questions asked respondents about their particular experience with charter school resource providers in the state, and to describe their experience with these providers, to qualitatively express their satisfaction level with these providers, discuss the issues with which these providers assisted, and which issues of any with which they would desire assistance.

Each survey lasted approximately 15-20 minutes, and was conducted by Cameron Coursen of the Center For Education Reform Staff.

Key Findings

Every one of the schools interviewed, or 100 percent of the charter schools in the state of Tennessee, was able to identify the Tennessee Charter School Resource Center as an organization that serves as a resource for, or provides assistance to charter schools in Tennessee. This question required the respondents to give the name of the Resource Center without prompting from the interviewer.

Of the 12 interviewees, 10 of them had utilized the Resource Center in the past and 8 of them were currently utilizing services of the Resource Center with three using them Very Often, three using them often, one using them occasionally, and one seldomly.

The services provided by the Resource Center varied, but most commonly noted were *their efforts to create a collaboration among the schools by hosting a Charter School Leadership Roundtable at Vanderbilt University*, assistance with interpreting laws, and

assistance with meeting legislators. Additionally, the schools cited funding issues, professional development, networking, and special education assistance as the most frequent issues with which they received assistance.

Of the nine schools who had utilized the Resource Center, seven claimed they were very satisfied with the quality of service provided, and two said they were satisfied with the quality of service provided.

Eight of the nine who had used the Resource Center cited service as the quality with which they were most satisfied, with one saying responsive was the aspect with which they were most satisfied. The other choices available were expertise, quality, and cost. When asked the aspect of the service with which they were most DISSATISFIED, none of the respondents provided an answer.

Next, the respondents were asked whether the assistance they were receiving was sufficient or insufficient, all of the nine of the respondents who were currently receiving assistance said the assistance is INSUFFICIENT.

When asked what services were most needed, the schools again gave varied answers, but the most common responses included funding, staff development and recruitment, and improved legislation. Other answers were:

- Legislation to create more schools.
- Better development of existing schools before more schools are created.
- Better definition of "at risk children."
- Broader pools of eligible students.
- Facilities and contracting issues.
- Better public relations and marketing of the good done by charters.
- Best practices.
- Job fairs.
- Assistance with school district conflicts.

Next, the schools were asked to rank 9 different issues in importance, with 1 being very important and 10 being not important at all. The choices were special education assistance, accounting needs, management procedures, teacher recruitment, board issues, legal advice, start-up assistance, networking with legislators, and public relations.

Special Education Assistance

Eight of the 12 listed special education assistance as a number one priority, with only one school listing it as not important at all. The remaining two listed it as a two and a three.

Accounting Needs

Of the 12 respondents, five listed Accounting Needs as a one, or extremely important. Two listed it a three, and the rest rated its importance between five and ten.

Management Procedures

Of the 12 respondents, only one listed Management Procedures as extremely important, with three rating it between two and four. The rest placed it between five and ten.

Teacher Recruitment

Three of the 12 respondents listed teacher recruitment as a number one priority, one as a three, and the rest placing it between five and ten.

Board Issues

Board issues also received a low priority rating with only two schools listing it as a one. The rest placed its importance between four and ten.

Legal Advice

Six of the 12 responded that legal advice was either a one or a two in importance. The remaining half of the respondents placed it between four and ten.

Start-up Assistance

Eight of the 12 respondents rated start-up assistance as very unimportant, presumably because they are all ready operating, and no longer need such assistance. Four of the schools list this issue as extremely important or very important, perhaps thinking back to their own start-up challenges.

Networking with Legislators

Nine of the 12 respondents said that networking with lawmakers, was very important, with five of them rating it a one. The remaining three respondents listed it as very unimportant.

Public Relations

Half of those interviewed rated public relations as extremely important (1 or 2), while four more listed it as very important (3 or 4). Two respondents rated it as unimportant or very unimportant.

Outside Groups

Eleven of the 12 respondents have worked with organizations other than the TN Charter School Resource Center during their time in operation. Four of those schools listed the Hyde Foundation as a one of the organizations with which they have been working. Services provided varied from funding to volunteers.

Other groups include:

- Memphis Bioworks Foundation
- The TN Department of Labor
- KIPP Foundation
- Stax Soulsville, USA.
- Local community groups (Kiwanis, Rotary, Etc.)

Greatest Challenges

Challenges faced by the responding schools were varied and frequent. Answers included:

- Food service
- Transportation
- Facilities funding
- Student retention
- Budgeting
- Under prepared new students
- Teacher recruitment
- General funding
- Student assessment
- Inability to recruit at risk children regardless of whether their conventional school is failing

Demographics

The 12 schools serve a diverse population totaling 1,716 students covering all grades K-12.