Charter School Developers Conference
Agenda
January 16 to 18, 1997
Teachers College - Columbia University
co-sponsored with
The Metropolitan Center for Urban Education
New York University, School of Education
and the
United States Department of Education

Thursday, January 16

9:00 **Welcome** .... **Arthur Levine**
President, Teachers College

9:05 **Remarks** .... **Jon Schnur**
Special Assistant to the Secretary, US Department of Education

9:30 **Equity Issues and Charters Schools** .... **Teddy Shaw**
Assistant Director and Counsel
NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund

10:00 **Creating Schools** .... **Peter Cookson**

Discussion with charter school operators and developers of their models.

Model	Developer	CS Operator
Core Knowledge Foundation	Connie Jones	TBA
Council on Basic Ed.	Christopher Cross	TBA
Comer	Norris Haines	Gloria Hagopian
Accelerated Schools	Henry Levin	Migdalia Maldonado
Essential Schools	TBA	Eric Nadelstern
Success for All	Randy Suppe	Kathy Garibaldi
Paideia	Buzz Nimbirkow	TBA

Presenters will incorporate the following issues, among others, into discussion of their models:

        Program nature and standards
        Equity
        Assessment
        School Accountability
        Staff Development

12:30 Lunch .... Panelists join attendees for lunch

1:30 Introduction to Special Topics .... **Dr. Peter Comeau**
                                            Teachers College

1:45 School Design .... **Prof. Frank Smith**
                                            Teachers College

2:15 Designing School Programs .... **Small Group Discussion**
        Panelists and charter school developers work together on the 29 school development questions

5:30 Reception

        Welcome .... **Dean Karen Zumwalt**, Teachers College
        The Role of the University in School Reform .... **Prof. LaMar Miller**, NYU

Friday, January 17

9:00 Plenary

Each work group leader (following) will make a brief presentation on the substance of his topic.

10:00 Creating A School: Issues and Skills .... **Seminars**

        Exceptional Education .... **Prof. Jean Fleischner**

        Community-Building and Equity .... **Dr. John Cawthorne**
        Legal Issues in Operating Charter Schools .... **Prof. David Bloomfield**

        School Budget and Finance Models .... **Prof. Jon Hughes**

        Board of Directors Development .... **Prof. Pearl Kane**

        Assessment Approaches .... **Prof. Frank Smith**
                                       Prof. Henry Levin (Stanford)

1:00   **Lunch**

2:00   **Special Topics 2: Creating A School** .... Small Group Discussion

4:00   **Sources of Support and Technical Assistance** .... Everett Barnes
Co-Director, New York Technical Assistance Center at New York University
President, RMC Research Corporation
Partner in Region III Comprehensive Center at George Washington University

5:30   **State Meetings**

States may arrange catered dinners on the campus, meet at a local restaurant or meet prior to
participants leaving for dinner.

Saturday, January 18

9:00   **The Two "B"s--Buildings and Bucks**   **Panel Discussion**

9-10   **Partners** ....
William Baird Paterson on opportunities presented by military base closings
Norman Adler on building a coalition in the community
Stacy Miller on partnerships with museums and schools of education

10-12   **Sources of Support** .... Foundations
Corporations
States
Federal Government

12:00   **Issues and recommendations for future action** .... Group Discussion

CHARTER SCHOOL DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE

BUILDING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
AND
BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

In the major approaches to the development of charter schools, there are two different sets of underlying assumptions and social purposes. The first set of assumptions may be referred to as *Free The Teacher* and the second as *Build The Community*. Both systems endorse teacher professionalism and greater, more active learning on the part of students. They differ in their assumptions about the relations among parents, teachers, schools and community.

The *Free The Teacher* system assumes that we can achieve more successful schools by freeing teachers to create the school they already know how to construct. Doing this requires that we eliminate the bureaucracy—the rules, regulations, the administrators and the politics of parental involvement. This system assumes that effective and workable school models are known to professionals, and that they should be left to make them work. This model reflects the old image of the medical doctor as an independent professional.

In the *Build the Community* approach, we assume that we can achieve more successful schools only by utilizing the knowledge of all stakeholders to design and operate schools. We focus on constructing shared meanings about what education is to be and how the various educators of the community interact to create knowledgeable students. The *Build The Community* model assumes that through public discourse, new forms of schooling may be created. This strategy is evident in the work of James Comer, but is also reflected in Coleman's idea of the "functional community."

Essentially, the issue is whether we intend to develop new school communities through public discourse, or whether we will only legitimize professionals to establish schools. Central to these differences is the implicit stance taken towards four underlying social issues:

1.   Our intention regarding building **functional communities**;

2.   Our intention regarding **inclusion of diverse voices**;

3.   Our intention regarding structuring **public discourse**;

4.   Our intention regarding the **implementation of new school designs**.

Functional Communities

Since the advent of free, universal schooling in the middle of the last century, schools have been designed by experts. Within the ethos established by the Progressive Movement, school staff were increasingly removed from influence by local politics. Schools were organized as bureaucracies, with individuals assigned to a responsibility, and following "standard operating procedures" in all aspects of school management, from selecting textbooks to teacher observation protocols. Schools were not alone in this; indeed, the model was adopted from that of the new business corporations being established during this same period.

1

Coleman and Comer's work, however, suggests that the model of schooling offered by the isolated, standardized bureaucracy undermines successful education. Instead, in locales where there is broad public discussion of educational issues and practices, and where there is meaningful public support for school staff and parents, student learning and civility flourish. When people work together on common responsibilities, they develop shared ways of interpreting life. In short, they construct communities.

Inclusion of Diverse Voices

The second issue to address is the role of individuals previously excluded from discussions about schooling, by being subordinated to specialists or moved into marginal positions as observers. Do we intend to place more chairs at the table, or do we continue the model in which the vast audience is addressed from the podium? Research suggests that all stakeholders have expertise and resources to share in a new education system. It also suggests that the broader education community is capable of increasing student achievement.

Public Discourse

Professionalized bureaucracies have developed professional languages with specialized ideas, terms and acronyms. While this language may add precision to professional thinking, it excludes non-specialists from discussions about education and schooling. Furthermore, this specialized language attempts to make questions of education design appear value-neutral, as simple matters of "scientific expertise." We have, for example, developed an elaborate set of building specifications to govern school construction, without consulting with family members or business people. We have created "diagnoses" of behaviors that are not pathological in any context but a school. Because we have not talked about these issues as a public, we no longer know how to talk about them.

Is the public discussion of schooling to include a broad range of issues, including values, spoken in a language accessible to the broad public, or will professionals dominate and limit public discourse? Only by allowing the public to raise a broad range of issues, to participate in discussion of these issues, and to acknowledge differences in values can we encourage the development of communities of meaning. Only through discussion will communities of shared meaning be able to create themselves.

Reform

Change is ordinarily incremental: the basic model stays intact while projects adapt different aspects of the whole. Reform is radical: it calls for rethinking the basic assumptions of an effort or institution, redefining the problem or the solution. In seeking to improve education, the public must decide whether incremental change is adequate, or whether reform is necessary.

We believe that reform is necessary, and that the purpose of this reform effort should be to

- *create functional school communities*

- *include diverse voices in the education design process*

- *structure inclusive public discourse with a broad agenda*

- *encourage the implementation of new school designs.*

However, recent school improvement efforts, particularly school choice initiatives, have a limited ability to promote these purposes. Twenty states have passed legislation authorizing charter schools, and already these laws have been divided into "weak" laws and "strong" laws. Strong laws make it possible for groups to establish charter schools and to implement the founders' educational designs. Weak laws place so many impediments in the way that charters are not granted, or the resulting school lacks the resources or flexibility necessary to implement its educational vision.

Further, some state laws inadequately incorporate stakeholders in the design and implementation of charter schools. The existing New York State Compact for Learning, for example, requires some public participation in school teams, but structures the debate into narrow channels by assuming that the existing institutional model of schooling will not change. The Compact does not ask the same question that modern corporations are asking, whether their way of doing business needs to be rethought, and whether that rethinking has to include customers, suppliers, and employees.

When the Ford Motor Company undertook this reassessment process, it made a commitment to the Taurus series. By bringing all stakeholders into the design process—consumers, insurers, assembly line workers and local mechanics—Ford was able to access important knowledge about what a car should be and how it could be constructed. By teaching the stakeholders to participate in the product design process, the company was able to rethink not only the goals of the design, but the means of achieving those goals. The result of this new approach to design was a car that has led the top ten list of best selling American cars since its introduction ten years ago.

We can expect similar results from a charter schools development strategy. Using the old process to achieve new goals, we can build an Edsel. Bringing in the broader education community, we can produce a Taurus. The need for a strategy commensurate with the task of producing a top ten school is clear. How do we stimulate and frame that public discourse as the essential element of the development strategy?

Advocacy Design

We suggest that the charter school development strategy follow an Advocacy Design approach, the purpose of which is to create a set of designers and advocates for each school. In addition to inviting applications from the professionals who know how to apply, we should form diverse core groups and provide support if requested.

The charter design process will include three phases: **Exploration, Design** and **Implementation**.

In the exploratory phase, we would need to assert:

♦ First, that **institutions are the creations of society's values**, not the product of scientific or economic expertise. This fact legitimizes public discourse.

3

♦ Second, that **the school is a holistic institution,** and that the design process must address a set of questions that recognize that fact. These questions should deal with the interdependent beliefs and practices guiding instruction, governance, organization and accountability. By framing the discourse, design questions permit participants to discover their personal preferences, and to come to a common understanding of their concept of the "good school."

♦ Third, to inform the discussion and to provide a basis for informed comparison among good schools, **we need to make known some models.** Our description of these models would illustrate the design questions and possible responses to those questions. We will also need to provide ways for core groups to study the models first hand, by visiting sites where interesting models function.

After the exploratory period, the core groups move to the design phase. In this, each group will create, or select and adapt, a model. In each case, the core team would offer a rationale for the design, and present the design for broader public discussion. Such a strategy has been undertaken in several New Jersey districts in which schools have faced a diverse array of issues to resolve. In the implementation phase, the core group begins implementation of a school and initiates action to broaden the participation of stakeholders in school and learning activities.

ENABLING PUBLIC DISCOURSE

The charter school effort can take any of several approaches to public discourse. First, it can let professionals dominate and limit the discussion leading to the creation of charter schools. Second, it can allow schools to be designed by people acting on their own. Third, and our preference, we can attempt to establish a public framework for discussion about schools and we can teach the public how to engage in that discussion. Central to that discussion would be making clear the value judgements that accompany charter school design options.

By putting forward a set of design questions that refer to the school as a whole, and that serve as a conceptual framework within which the debate about preferences is conducted, we can foster both more inclusive and more informed public discourse about preferred school models. In effect, we can professionalize public discourse by letting other educators and stakeholders in on the discussion, and we can build stronger community values by sharing values in the discourse. Communities can only exist when stakeholders engage in public discussion that, paradoxically, both makes our differences and agreements explicit. Schools will not be part of a community if we have excluded debate about the values that serve as the basis for organizing social life.

We believe that it is possible to create for each charter school an expanded team of stakeholders who can engage in school design. We refer to this design team as the core group. The core group can actively participate in the school design process, while reporting to their constituents in the community. The process of designing a charter school should be based on our expanded definition of discourse, described above: to wit, the education community should be broadly defined, and the discussion should be accessible to parents and community leaders, as well as educators. Charter schools, from their definition to their creation as public policy, should be the creation of the community. And to ensure

4

that this community is involved in the broad range of educational issues, the following questions should be raised and answered by a charter schools development team. In order to make our assumptions and suggestions more explicit, we will offer our preferred answers to the key questions.

Focus: The School Culture--What belief system underlies life in the school community?

The following questions will serve as the agenda for discussion in the Special Topic discussions of the agenda.

    I.   **What is instruction/the learning process to look like within the school?**

        A.   **What does it mean to work?**

        1.   What are desirable work strategies and practices?
            individual workbook? cooperative learning? collaborative?

        2.   With whom are students to work, and what is their reciprocal role?
            Teacher
                Purveyor/checker . . . Coach/facilitator
            Other students
                Parallel workers . . . Interdependent peers
            Other adults
                Sources of information . . . Interactive learners

        3.   What kinds of **materials and tools** do students use in their work?
            Workbooks, sheets . . . multi-source, multimedia

        4.   What are the **work spaces** and how are they to be **organized**?
            Classrooms, isolated seats . . . teams, temporary groups

        5.   What is the **environment** of the classroom to be?
            How is the class to be **managed**; what is its constitution?
                Play vs. work, controlled . . . active, collaborative
                Teacher enforced . . . self-directed

        6.   What are the **work patterns** to be within the class?

        B.   **What does it mean "to know"?**

        7.   How do students **create knowledge**?
            Recalling text . . . constructing knowledge from curiosity
            Individual subjects . . . integrated, problem-based

        8.   How are students to **demonstrate their learning**?
            Artificial exercises . . . authentic assessment, multi-products

9. How are **students' curiosities** and competencies to be considered?
    Individualized work . . . community topics, team projects

10. What **order thinking skills** are emphasized in student work?
    Simple recall . . . problem identification, divergent opinions
    Facts . . . cognitive schema and concept driven

11. How will students **relate** their learning to life in their **community**?
    Private thoughts . . . active community development
    Delayed, abstract . . . contextualized, occupational link

12. What is the frame or format for organizing learnings into a meaningful
    instructional **program sequence**?
    Random courses, tracked . . . coherent theme
    Separate courses . . . interdisciplinary frameworks

II. **How is the school organized?**

13. How does the school group or place students, thereby controlling **access** to
    instruction and services? Who makes this decision?
    Categorical, pullouts, age graded . . . inclusive, multi-age
    Specialist teams . . . Teacher based with engaged parents

14. How are **facilities and school time** to be used? What will be the flow and cycle
    of activities?
    Rigid schedule . . . flexible schedule
    Assigned standard places . . . space determined by activity

15. How will students be organized for their **school career** and what will be the
    program sequence?
    Random groups annually constituted . . . continuing cohorts of students
    Individually selected courses . . . core studies for all

16. How do **adults relate** to each other within the context of the school?
    "My job" orientation . . . broadened roles in community
    Specializations noted . . . integration of instructional and support teams

17. What do the **staffing patterns** look like within the school?
    Regular teachers . . . interdisciplinary teams
    Individuals . . . collaborative teams with theme leaders

18. How do **external agencies** relate to the schools and families?
    Loosely linked by referrals . . . collaborative planning

III. How is the school governed?

19. Who **plans** and/or implements the model or design?
   > Administrators, specialists . . . core group, team

20. How is the governance system **representative** of the stakeholders? What **commitment** are stakeholders to bring to the table?
   > Appointed representatives . . . selected by constituency
   > Official elites . . . comprehensive, community-based
   > Bring goodwill . . . field experiences, mentors, jobs

21. Who controls **development or training** of participants?
   > Centralized authority . . . stakeholder interpretive planning
   > Officials, employees . . . student leadership, parent training, staff

22. Who participates in **inquiring** into the success of the model?
   > External experts . . . core group, teacher researchers

23. How is **authority distributed** among the participants? How ill decisions be made? Who can veto?
   > Elected elites vote . . . stakeholder consensus

IV. How does the school account for education?

24. How will this model make the school **community better** for all adults, as well as for children? What will it do to build a sense of community?
   > Narrow scope of claimed impact and evidence . . . broad focus on civic capacity
   > Official standardized measures . . . school year portfolio
   > Limited information . . . process visualization and interpretation
   > Limited information to parents . . . indicators of family satisfaction

25. How does the school account for **adult growth**?
   > Limited expertise . . . developing the learning organization

26. How will the unit **monitor the quality of daily life**?
   > Informal random talk . . . organized family-style advisories

27. How does the school account for **student competencies**? Will it include a community service component?
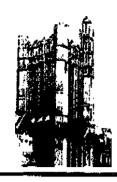   > Traditional standard measures . . . authentic assessment, product exhibitions, multimedia portfolios

28. How does this model make **use of data** to determine what the children know? How are data analyzed and presented?

    Cross sectional tests, slices . . . public career portfolios

29. What types of **information** are collected, how is it distributed, and who receives it?

    Personal printed report card, test results . . . cumulative competency portfolio, school community development

Charter Schools Developers Conference

January 16, 17, 18, 1997

TRANSPORTATION AND LODGING

WHERE WE ARE

Teachers College, Columbia University is located in a section of the northern end of Manhattan known as Morningside Heights. The Teachers College campus, consisting of ten connected buildings, occupies one city block between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue and West 120th and 121st Streets. The primary entrance to the College is through Main Hall, which is located midway between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue on West 120th Street.

HOW TO GET TO TEACHERS COLLEGE

1. BY AIR: Three international airports with convenient bus and taxi connections serve New York City. From John F. Kennedy Airport and LaGuardia Airport, economical bus service to Grand Central Terminal and various hotels is available. From Newark Airport there is New Jersey Transit bus service to the Port Authority Bus Terminal at West 42nd Street and 8th Avenue. New York City cab fares vary with traffic conditions, but average one way fare from LaGuardia is about $25; from JFK the average fare is $35. Designated airport passenger pick-up locations usually have cab dispatchers available to assist you.

2. BY TRAIN: Penn Station, at West 34th Street and Seventh Avenue, is the New York City terminus for most Amtrak service and the Long Island Railroad, New Jersey Transit and the New Jersey PATH train commuter lines. Grand Central Terminal, located at East 42nd Street and Park Avenue, is the terminus for two commuter train lines, as well as for some Amtrak service from Canada and upstate New York.

3. BY BUS: From outside New York City most bus routes terminate at Port Authority Bus Terminal at West 42nd Street and 8th Avenue. Within New York City, four bus routes include a stop at Teachers College: M4 (available from both Grand Central Terminal and Penn Station), M5, M11 and M104 (available from the Port Authority Bus Terminal and Grand Central). The $1.50 fare is required in exact change or a Metropolitan Transit Authority token.

TRANSPORTATION AND LODGING

4. BY SUBWAY: Teachers College lies on the Broadway line of the New York City subway system, the IRT Broadway LOCAL. The #1 or #9 subway trains (Red lines) stop at Broadway and 116th Street, a four-block walk from Teachers College. There are subway entrances at Penn Station and the Port Authority Bus Terminal. From Grand Central, the Shuttle (S) goes to Times Square, 42nd Street, where there is access to the #1 and #9 lines.

5. BY CAR: The Henry Hudson Parkway/West Side Highway in New York City runs parallel to the Hudson River and offers convenient access to Teachers College. The highway can be accessed from most of the main routes entering New York City. Driving North or South on the Henry Hudson Parkway/West Side Highway, exit at 95th Street. At the first traffic light turn north (left) onto Riverside Drive; at West 120th Street turn east (right) to reach Teachers College.

PARKING

Nearby off-street parking facilities include: PJ & A Garage, 532 West 122nd Street (near Broadway), and Riverside Church Garage on West 120th Street (between Claremont Avenue and Riverside Drive). Parking on New York City streets in the Columbia University area is limited and metered.

LODGING

Lodging arrangements are the responsibility of each participant. Hotels listed below are located along the #1 or #9 Broadway Local subway line and the M104, M4 or M11 bus lines.

- The Hotel Beacon, 2130 Broadway at 75th Street, (800) 572-4969

- Edison Hotel, 228 West 47th Street (Broadway), (800) 637-7070

- Empire Hotel, 44 West 63rd Street (Broadway) (800) 333-3333

In addition, the *New York Hotel Guide* lists a wide range of hotel accommodations. For a free copy of that guide call the New York Convention and Visitors Bureau, (212) 397-8222. If you have any special needs or problems, please give us a call at (212) 678-3987.